

Section 2 – Knowing What You Need



Living independently begins with self-determination and self-advocacy. In order to successfully live independently, you first must know what you want and how to get it.

Self-Determination, Here I Come!

Self-determination is the drive to determine our own thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and choices over life events. It includes the internal motivation and self-awareness that encourages us to define personal goals based on our interests, preferences, values, and needs. Life has more meaning for all of us if we can have control over our daily activities.

Self-determination begins at birth. All children need to learn about who they are and how they can act or react to life events in order to become self-determined. Children who are given choices about simple decisions in their lives such as what food to eat, what clothes to wear, and what to do for fun, will also experience consequences for their choices. They learn at a very early age that they do have control and responsibility for their lives.

Self-determination is not an all-or-nothing set of skills. As a youth with disabilities mature, they will probably experience different levels of skill and ability with regard to self-determination. Some may desire control over many life decisions, such as where they want to live, what kind of work they want to do, and what types of activities fulfill their recreational needs. Others may desire more support in order to take responsibility for certain aspects of their lives.

It is important to understand that self-determination is not just a verbal response to choice. Self-determination is also an intrinsic need of human beings. Never assume that a disability is too severe for communication. Even if an individual is non-verbal and not using a communication device, his or her body language, facial expressions, and behaviors will provide messages of choice, satisfaction, and future needs.

Self-determination isn't meant to be isolating. Individuals with disabilities may continue to seek assistance and support from others. Family members and professionals need to do what they can to provide ongoing support for individuals with disabilities to take risks, build resilience amidst failure, speak assertively, and develop the internal self-determination characteristics and the external self-advocacy community skills needed for success.

Self-Advocacy, Here I Come!

Self-advocacy is the first step in becoming an adult. Youth with disabilities must be provided with as many opportunities as needed to practice self-advocacy skills. A natural place to start practicing self-advocacy in school is at the IEP meeting. After all, the IEP is all about the student, so why shouldn't you practice advocating for yourself at these meetings?

Self-advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem-solving, listening and learning, reach out of others when you need help.



Resources

A Transition Guide by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	https://www.supportmydecision.org/assets/tools/postsecondary-transition-guide-may-2017.pdf
Self-Advocacy Start-Up Toolkit by Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center	https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Self-Advocacy-Start-up-Toolkit-more-power-more-control-over-our-lives-2018.pdf
Self-Determination by PACER's National Center on Transition and Employment	https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/independent-community-living/self-determination.asp
Think College Website	http://www.thinkcollege.net/

Checklist

Independent Living Skills	I Can Do This	I Need to Practice	I'm Going To Start	I Will Always Need Support	This doesn't apply to me	Notes
SELF-DETERMINATION & SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can explain my disability						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my strengths						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my challenges						
<input type="checkbox"/> I am comfortable about speaking up for myself						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my projected graduation or exit time from school.						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know what I want to do after high school						
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand what self-disclosure means						
<input type="checkbox"/> I believe I have control to direct my life						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my rights under the different disability laws						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know how to ask for help when I need it						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know how to be assertive when necessary						
SELF-DETERMINATION & SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS for IEP Meeting						
<input type="checkbox"/> I attend my IEP meetings						
<input type="checkbox"/> I participate in my IEP in a meaningful way						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my IEP goals						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can make suggestions for IEP goals						

Independent Living Skills	I Can Do This	I Need to Practice	I'm Going To Start	I Will Always Need Support	This doesn't apply to me	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand what I need to do to reach my IEP goals						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my IEP accommodations						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can describe or tell the types of accommodations I need						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know if my IEP accommodations are being provided						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can speak up if I think my IEP accommodations are not being followed.						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can describe my strengths						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can describe my challenges						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my learning style						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can describe the compensation skills I use						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know if I am making progress on my IEP goals						
<input type="checkbox"/> I was involved in creating my transition plan						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can ask for Pre-Employment Transition Services before I leave high school						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know I can stay in high school until I am 21 years old						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can facilitate my own IEP meeting						
<input type="checkbox"/> People at school listen when I ask for help						

Independent Living Skills	I Can Do This	I Need to Practice	I'm Going To Start	I Will Always Need Support	This doesn't apply to me	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> At school, educators listen to me when I talk about what I need						
<i>SELF-DETERMINATION & SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS at Post-Secondary Schools</i>						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know I need to apply for accommodations on my ACT test						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know I no longer have an IEP						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know I can register with the disability services office on the campus						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know I can disclose to teachers my disability and the accommodations I need						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know what to do if teachers don't give me my accommodations						
<i>SELF-DETERMINATION & SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS at HOME</i>						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can decide how I spend my money						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can decide what I wear						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can decide what I eat						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know what home modifications or accommodations I need						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can arrange transportation if I need to go somewhere						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can decide how I want to spend my down time						

Independent Living Skills	I Can Do This	I Need to Practice	I'm Going To Start	I Will Always Need Support	This doesn't apply to me	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> I can have open communication with my family about my wants and desires						
<input type="checkbox"/> At home, my parents and family listen to me when I talk about what I want or need						
<i>SELF-DETERMINATION & SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS at Work and in the Community</i>						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know I can work						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know my legal rights to work						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know what type of job I want						
<input type="checkbox"/> I have the skills for the job I want						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know the work accommodations I will need						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know what type of environmental accommodations I need						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can ask for help when needed						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can ask for accommodations in different settings						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can negotiate respectfully						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell others what I enjoy doing and what I don't enjoy doing						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can recognize and report abuse, neglect, or danger to family, school, or police						

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SELF-DETERMINATION & SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS in Provider Services						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, free of any abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to report any grievances						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to be free from coercion, restraint (physical or chemical), and seclusion						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to live where I want and with whomever I want						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to freedom of movement within my home						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to privacy in my home						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to decide who I spend time with and communicate with; I can have unrestricted access to a telephone, computer, cell phone, or other communication devices; I can have the privacy to send/receive unsupervised mail, email, text messages, and telephone calls						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to have visitors over to my home when I desire and to have privacy to meet with visitors						

Independent Living Skills	I Can Do This	I Need to Practice	I'm Going To Start	I Will Always Need Support	This doesn't apply to me	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to make decisions about my daily routine and activities						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right wake up and go to bed when I want to						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to choose what I want to eat and drink						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can tell a provider I have the right to do things outside of my home						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can change provider agencies if I'm not satisfied with the one I have						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can change Support Coordination agencies if I'm not satisfied with the one I have						
<i>SELF-DETERMINATION & SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS in Other Ways</i>						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can say no when I don't want to do something or someone requests me to do something inappropriate						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can recognize and report abuse, neglect, or danger to family, school, or police						
<input type="checkbox"/> I can negotiate respectfully						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know how to express an idea, question or feeling						
<input type="checkbox"/> I let others know what I need						
<input type="checkbox"/> I know how to arrange for a sign language or other interpreter, if needed						