

Building Blocks of Self-Advocacy

Supporting youth and young adults to have a say when decisions are being made about their future.



What is Advocacy?

Advocates speak up for themselves or others to make things better.




What is Self Advocacy?

A self-advocate is a person who speaks up for themselves.

- Ask for what they need and want.
- Take responsibility for decisions they make.



Why is Self-Advocacy Important?

Self-advocacy skills will be needed in education, workplace and the community. They include the ability to effectively communicate, negotiate and assert one's own interests and desires.

When young adults can self-advocate, they are better equipped to take on life's challenges



Moving from Advocate to Ally

Skills and Opportunity



Why is self-advocacy important?

Their family has made decisions for them. They are becoming an adult. They need a chance to say:



Their Life, Their Future

Having Fun Spending Money
 Where to Live Setting Goals
 Getting Supports & Services Job
 Control Over Body & Health
 Healthy Relationships



Youth and Young Adults have IMPORTANT Thoughts and Information



This Session

1. Importance of Knowing Their Disability
2. Knowing Their Team
3. Having Information Organized and Available
4. Expressing Their Thoughts and Information
5. Knowing Their Rights
6. Resolving Disagreements: Special Education



Importance of Knowing Their Disability



Strengths, Interests, Preference and Needs

- We all want the chance to create a life based on our strengths, interests and preferences.
- People with disabilities need to be able to discuss their needs, based on their disability:
 - Requesting services
 - Requesting accommodations – at school, work and community living



Determining eligibility for services

- **Special Education**
 - 13 Eligibility Categories
- **Community Mental Health**
 - Mental Illness
 - Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
 - Medicaid

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Service**
 - Michigan Rehabilitation Services – MRS
 - Bureau of Services for Blind Persons - BSBP
 - An existing physical or mental impairment.
 - Vocational or work-related barriers because of your disability
 - Require vocational rehabilitation assistance.
 - Can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services that will lead to employment

All Adult Services: Share in Common

- **Person with a Disability:** need to know about their disability and why they are seeking services.
- **Disability Related Needs:** Beyond medical diagnosis or special education eligibility.
- **Families:** Supporting youth/young adults
- **Adult Service Systems:** Different vocabulary and definitions



What is I/DD?

Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD) are usually present at birth and that uniquely affect the trajectory of the individual's physical, intellectual, and/or emotional development. Many of these conditions affect multiple body parts or systems and begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime.



Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity.



If youth / young adults...

- understand how their disability impacts daily life, work, and education, then they can successfully self-advocate.

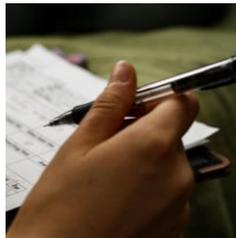
Knowing Their Team



Individualized Education Program

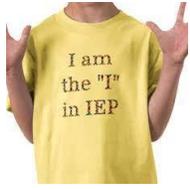
If they receive special education services, then:

- They have an IEP Team
- They have an IEP document



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Information, Support, and Advocacy

Who needs to be at an IEP meeting?



- How do you prepare a child to participate in the IEP meeting?
- Who can help prepare them?

Check out: [The IRIS Center](#) – Student Involvement in IEPs

The Student



Who else is an IEP Team Members?

Team Members

- Parents
- General Education Teacher (if a child will participate in a general education classroom)
- Special Education Teacher or Service Provider
- District Representative
- Someone who can interpret evaluation results
- People the parent, or student want to invite.

Does the student know:

- Names of people attending their IEP
- Purpose of them attending
- How to reach that person when the meeting is over



Understanding 4 Cornerstones of IEP



Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance



Goals & Objective



Accommodations and Modifications



Programs and Services

An IEP Covers



GENERAL
EDUCATION
CURRICULUM



EXTRA CURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES



NON-ACADEMIC
ACTIVITIES

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When to start planning for after High School

14

15

16



Grade

8

Transition Planning Process

Age-Appropriate Transition Assessments	Measurable Post-Secondary Goals	Course of Study	Transition Services	Coordination Adult Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths • Interests • Preferences • Needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education/Training • Employment • Independent Living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan Merit Curriculum • Personal Curriculum • Certificate of Completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specially Designed Instruction • Related Services • Community Experiences • Employment Skills • Living Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational Rehabilitation • SSI & Medicaid • Community Mental Health • Home Help

Michigan Resource for Families

If youth / young adults...

- understand how their disability impacts daily life, work, and education, then they can successfully self-advocate.
- understand how their IEP is developed, then they can successfully self-advocate!

Having Information Organized and Available



What do Service Systems have in common?

- **You must be determined eligible**
 - Evaluations
 - Records review
- **Once determined eligible, there is a written plan.**
 - Individualized Education Program (IEP)
 - Individual Plan of Service (IPOS)
 - Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)
- **You will need to take notes during meetings and phone calls.**
 - Paper notebook
 - Electronic file
- **You will have email messages, email attachments and text messages that you may need to save.**



Organization is Important

- Using similar system that their parents use.
- Asking the IEP Team to assist with developing a system that works best for the youth/young adult:
 - Paper
 - Electronic – computer, external drive, cloud
 - Combination of the two
- Take into consideration what service systems, beyond education, the student might access in the future.



Parent or Youth/Young Adult

It is common for parents to hold and store

- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Card
- Health, dental and vision insurance cards
- ATM/Debit Cards or Credit Card
- Bank account information
- Proof of Insurance (car)
- Passports
- Copies of IEP, IPOS, IPE and previous evaluations



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- understand how their disability impacts daily life, work, and education, then they can successfully self-advocate.
- understand how their IEP is developed, then they can successfully self-advocate!
- adults have access to important documents, then they can successfully self-advocate.

Expressing Their Thoughts and Information



Preparing Youth/Young Adults

Special Education

Meaningful involvement in IEP meetings must be intentional, individualized and required a process to prepare the Youth/Young Adult to contribute.

An IEP can include developing communication skills need to meaningfully participate.

- Communicating Strengths, Interests, Preferences and Needs
- Communicating what they want to learn or work on improving
- Address specific concerns or worries
- Communicating goals for after high school
 - Education
 - Work
 - Community Living/Involvement



Participation in an IEP Meeting

- Federal Law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requires students to be invited to their IEP meeting no later than the IEP covering their 16th birthday.
- Attending IEP meetings can look different as a youth/young adult each year. Potential ways to be involved:
 - Give important information to parents or teacher to share with the IEP Team
 - Review the results of the IEP meeting with parents or teacher
 - Come for just a few minutes rather than attending the whole meeting
 - Attend an entire IEP meeting
 - Understand what is written in the IEP
 - Student led IEP



IEP meetings require preparation

- Before the meeting
 - Supporting a youth/young adult to be ready prepared prior to the meeting
 - Read through last year's IEP or this year's draft IEP
 - Invite people they want to attend
 - Create a list of questions or concerns
- During the meeting
 - Asking questions from their list
 - Asking questions about anything they don't understand
- After the meeting
 - Read through the proposed new IEP
 - Discuss the IEP with parents; questions, comments, opinions



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Knowing Their Rights



Civil Rights

Three laws protect children and adults with disabilities from exclusion, and unequal treatment in schools, jobs and the community:

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – IDEA:** is a federal civil rights law to protect the rights of children with disabilities who meet requirements for special education services and the rights of their parents
- **Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – Section 504:** civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal financial assistance.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act – ADA:** civil rights law that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life.

RIGHTS ARE BASED IN THESE LAWS



Rights

- Rights give you protection when interacting with the federal, state or local government:
 - Public Education including Special Education
 - Community Mental Health
 - Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Michigan Rehabilitation Service (MRS)
 - Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)
- Required to provide a document explaining your Rights.



Know Your Rights

- Special Education:
 - Procedural Safeguards
- Community Mental Health
 - Recipient Rights
- Vocational Rehabilitation:
 - Customer Rights and Responsibilities



Disability Disclosure

One of the most personal decisions you will make as a person with a disability is whether or not to tell someone about your disability.

- Before disclosing consider what you need to share and why
- It allows you to receive reasonable accommodations so that you can pursue work, school, or community activities more effectively.
- It provides legal protection against discrimination (as specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act).
- It ensures that you are getting what you need in order to be successful (for example, through an accommodation or modifications).
- It needed when seeking services.



Resources:

Michigan Alliance for Families:

- [Procedural Safeguards](#)
- Webinars – Procedural Safeguards

Disability Rights Michigan: 800.288.5923 – drmich.org

- [Special Education](#)
- [Community Mental Health](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation](#)
- [Client Assistance Program \(CAP\)](#)



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Resolving Disagreements: Special Education

5 Tools

1. Informal Meeting
2. Review/Revise the IEP or Facilitated IEP
3. Mediation
4. State Complaint
5. Due Process Complaint/Hearing

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Resources

Michigan Alliance for Families Website

- [Dispute Resolution](#)
- Webinar: Working Together When We Disagree
- Disability Rights Michigan – 800-288-5923



[Special Education Mediation Services \(SEMS\)](#)

 833-KIDS-1st

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- understand how their IEP is developed, then they can successfully self-advocate!
- adults have access to important documents, then they can successfully self-advocate.
- are supported to prepare for their IEP meeting, then they can successfully self-advocate
- understand their Rights, then they can successfully self-advocate
- Know the formal processes for resolving disagreements, then they can successfully self-advocate.

Stay Connected

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