Homesteads for Hope Curriculum: Instruction in Self-Advocacy

#### **Program Overview**

The "Instruction in Self-Advocacy" program at Homesteads for Hope empowers students with disabilities (SWDs) to effectively communicate their needs, goals, and rights across educational, workplace, and community settings. Using nature’s classroom as a backdrop, the program promotes self-awareness, independence, and confidence while providing tools and opportunities for SWDs to actively participate in shaping their futures.

### **Curriculum Objectives**

1. Equip SWDs with the skills to understand and communicate their needs, strengths, and rights.
2. Foster decision-making, problem-solving, and self-determination skills to navigate various life settings.
3. Promote independence through self-awareness, advocacy, and peer-mentorship opportunities.
4. Enable SWDs to connect with and utilize community resources, accommodations, and support systems.

### **Program Components**

**2 sessions**

#### **1. Understanding Your Disability**

* **Activities:**
  + Guided self-reflection exercises to explore personal strengths and challenges.
  + Workshops on how disabilities affect learning, work, and daily life.
  + Group discussions on the importance of embracing differences.
* **Outcome:**
  + SWDs develop self-awareness and gain confidence in identifying their needs.

#### **2. Decision-Making and Problem-Solving**

**2 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Real-life problem-solving scenarios in Homesteads for Hope’s working farm and community spaces.
  + Role-playing decision-making exercises (e.g., handling workplace conflicts or setting personal goals).
  + Group decision-making activities to encourage collaboration.
* **Outcome:**
  + Improved ability to make informed decisions and solve problems independently or with support.

#### **3. Assertiveness and Communication Skills**

**2 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Assertiveness training through role-play, focusing on expressing needs effectively.
  + Practicing how to request accommodations or help in mock educational and work environments.
  + Feedback sessions where peers and mentors provide constructive input.
* **Outcome:**
  + SWDs gain confidence in self-expression and advocacy for accommodations and support.

#### **4. Goal Setting and Leadership Development**

**10 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Individualized goal-setting workshops that align with personal interests and future aspirations.
  + Setting personalized SMART goals.
  + Leadership opportunities in farm tasks or group activities to encourage taking initiative.
  + Reflective journaling to track progress and achievements.
* **Outcome:**
  + SWDs develop actionable plans and recognize their leadership potential.

#### **5. Civil Rights and Disability Accommodations**

**2 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Instruction on civil rights, workplace laws, and accommodations (e.g., ADA and IDEA).
  + Practice writing and presenting accommodation requests.
  + Interactive scenarios exploring workplace culture and how to adapt to varying environments.
* **Outcome:**
  + SWDs gain a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities and learn how to utilize resources.

#### **6. Peer Mentorship and Community Connections**

**6 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Peer-mentoring circles to discuss experiences, challenges, and successes.
  + Visits to local community organizations, bring in community member guest panel, or explore different job opportunities around the farm to learn about available services and how to apply.
  + Team projects that encourage peer collaboration and support.
* **Outcome:**
  + SWDs build supportive relationships and gain knowledge of community resources.

#### **7. Responsible Technology Use and Positive Self-Talk**

**2 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Workshops on the safe use of social media and internet tools, emphasizing boundaries and privacy.
  + Positive self-talk exercises and role-playing scenarios to build self-confidence and resilience.
  + Group discussions about handling online and offline feedback constructively.
* **Outcome:**
  + SWDs develop safe, responsible technology habits and maintain a positive self-image.

### **Program Format**

* **Unit of Service:** 30-45 minute sessions delivered in small groups of 3-5 people.
* **Duration:** 8–12 weeks, with flexibility based on participant needs and the number of sessions offered each week.
* **Delivery Method:** A combination of hands-on learning, group discussions, mentorship, and real-world application within Homesteads for Hope’s inclusive community setting.
* **Location:** Homesteads for Hope campus

### **Evaluation and Outcomes**

1. SWDs can articulate their needs, goals, and rights confidently.
2. Participants demonstrate self-determination and independence in decision-making and goal-setting.
3. SWDs actively engage with community services and utilize accommodations effectively.
4. Increased peer connection and participation in mentorship activities.

This curriculum will empower SWDs to advocate for themselves in all areas of life, fostering independence, confidence, and success in their future endeavors.