

Introduction to Self Advocacy

Module 1: Developing Self-Awareness and Independence

Key Concepts: Independence: Understanding what tasks or activities you can do independently and which ones you might need help with. **Self-Awareness:** Identifying your own strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and how your disability affects your daily life. **Personal Strengths & Talents:** Recognizing what you are good at and how you can leverage these skills to enhance your independence. **Disability Understanding:** Learning about your specific disability, how it impacts you, and how to manage it effectively. **Intrinsic Motivation:** Developing internal motivation to take control of your own life and goals. **Activities:** Self-assessment exercises (e.g., “What are my strengths and talents?”). Reflection journals: Write about what independence means to you and areas where you feel confident.

Module 2: Communication and Assertiveness

Key Concepts: Assertiveness: Understanding the importance of speaking up for yourself in a respectful, clear, and confident manner. **Communication Skills (Oral and Written):** Learning how to express your thoughts, needs, and feelings effectively to others. **Listening Skills:** Developing the ability to actively listen to others, especially when receiving instructions or feedback. **Positive Self-talk:** Cultivating an inner dialogue that supports self-confidence and a growth mindset. **Activities:** Role-playing scenarios where students practice asking for help or clarifying instructions. Journaling exercises to focus on positive self-talk.

Module 3: Decision-Making and Problem Solving

Key Concepts: Ability to Evaluate Options: Learning how to weigh pros and cons to make informed decisions. **Problem-Solving:** Developing strategies for approaching challenges in school, work, or personal life. **Setting Goals:** Establishing clear, achievable goals and breaking them down into actionable steps. **Self-monitoring:** Keeping track of your progress toward goals and adjusting strategies when necessary. **Decision-Making:** Learning how to make decisions that align with your values, needs, and long-term goals. **Activities:** Practice decision-making with real-life scenarios (e.g., choosing between different accommodations or school/college options). Goal-setting worksheets to help students plan for success and monitor their own progress.

Module 4: Leading and Using Supports

Key Concepts: Leadership Skills: Taking charge of situations that affect you, learning to guide others, and becoming a resource for peers. **Leading Support Plans:** Developing and managing a personal support plan that identifies necessary accommodations, resources, and strategies for success. **Natural Supports:** Recognizing and using the help from family, friends, and other informal networks. **Requesting and Utilizing Accommodations:** Understanding your rights and how to request accommodations that support your academic, social, or career goals. **Knowledge of Rights and Responsibilities:** Becoming familiar with the legal rights and responsibilities that come with having a disability, such as through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Activities: Create a personal support plan that lists available natural supports and accommodations. Group discussions or role-playing to practice advocating for accommodations in different settings (e.g., school, work).

Module 5: Disability Disclosure, Self-Determination, and Career Exploration

Key Concepts: Disability Disclosure: Deciding when, how, and to whom to disclose your disability in various settings, such as in the workplace or during education. **Self-determination:** Taking responsibility for your own choices and actively participating in decisions that affect your life. **Career and Employment Exploration:** Identifying career interests and exploring how accommodations and self-advocacy will impact your future employment. **Requesting Help & How to Accept Help:** Understanding that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness, and learning to accept assistance when offered.

Activities: Research and explore different career paths and how accommodations might apply. Practice disability disclosure scenarios, focusing on when and how to disclose in educational or work settings.

Module 6: Building a Supportive Network and Reaching Out

Key Concepts: Identifying Supports: Recognizing the formal and informal supports available to you, including teachers, peers, family members, and professionals. **Reaching Out for Help and Friendship:** Understanding the importance of building a strong, supportive network and knowing how to ask for help when needed. **Learning to Speak Up:** Practicing the skills necessary to advocate for yourself in difficult situations. **Reaching Out to Others When You Need Help:** Knowing when to ask for help and how to access appropriate resources.

Activities: Create a support network map that includes people you can rely on for help, advice, and friendship. Group discussions or workshops on the importance of social connections and reaching out.

Module 7: Problem Solving and Self-Advocacy in Action

Key Concepts: Problem Solving: Developing strategies to overcome obstacles and find solutions. **Self-Advocacy in Action:** Using the skills learned in earlier modules to advocate for yourself in real-life situations, such as navigating school, the workplace, or social settings. **Leadership in Self-Advocacy:** Taking on leadership roles that help improve your situation and guide others in their advocacy efforts.

Activities: Work through real-world problem-solving scenarios, such as requesting accommodations or handling conflicts. Encourage students to participate in leadership roles, either in group projects or advocacy activities.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Self-advocacy is an ongoing journey. By developing the skills outlined in this curriculum, students will be better equipped to make informed decisions, lead their own support plans, and advocate for their needs in various settings. Continue practicing these skills, reflecting on progress, and seeking opportunities to apply them in daily life. Remember, self-advocacy is about empowerment, taking control of your own destiny, and creating a future where your needs and aspirations are respected.