

# **The Role of the Advisor**

## **Facilitating Self Advocacy**

The number one rule:

**Facilitate,**  
**don't dictate!**

**The advisor works for the Self  
Advocacy group, not the other  
way around**

# **1) Tips for Supporting Self Advocacy**

Respect the person's choices

**If the self advocates have all the information and they make a decision, your job is to support their choice**

# Empower the person

**Allow individuals to try things for themselves first. They will ask for your help if and when they need it.**

Remember:  
Everyone has the right to make  
mistakes

Speak in people first language

**Your language communicates more  
about your attitudes and opinions than  
you think!**



Perceptions can be different

**Understanding differences in perception is a key to communication. Your perception may be completely different than someone else in the same situation.**

Everybody has a disability

**Everybody has a disability—  
Some are just more visible than  
others.**

# Check for understanding

**When making plans, it is important to check for understanding. Some people are reluctant to admit that they don't understand something being discussed.**

# Teach Self Advocacy Skills

**Help people understand their rights and responsibilities. Help people advocate for themselves assertively.**

## **2) Characteristics of effective self advocacy advisors**

# The advisor is a positive role model

- Arrives at meetings and activities on time
- Is well groomed
- Is a good listener
- Respects the opinions and values of others
- Acts as a team member

# Helps provide information on community resources

- Housing, job and leisure opportunities
- Educational opportunities (workshops, conferences, continuing education)
- Policy making opportunities (board and committee planning)

# **Provides information on how to run a meeting**

- Leadership training
- Voting procedures
- Communication techniques



# Asks “key” questions to check for understanding

- Uses short words and sentences. Ensures information is easy to understand.
- Asks open ended questions. (Don't ask questions that can be answered with “Yes” or “No.”)

# Retains objectivity

- Lets the group make the decisions
- Gives advice only when asked or when additional information is needed to make an informed decision

# Assists the group in attaining “their” goals

- Helps the group understand the concept of delegating responsibilities
- Assists when asked by members or when members need assistance to make an informed choice.

An effective advisor does not  
“do it all”  
for the group.

### **3) Supporting Self Advocates as Council members**

**Be supportive of the challenges  
that self advocates face to attend  
your meeting**

# Areas of difficulty may include:

- **Transportation**
- **Remembering meeting times**
- **Note taking**
- **Organizing meeting materials**
- **Setting meeting times**

# Empower self advocates to discuss and make important decisions

If a self advocate is in charge of something or has a duty, allow them to perform that duty for their decisions and actions to carry real weight.



Assign a council member to new self advocate council members

Respect the opinions of self  
advocates and council members

Go over council packets and meeting materials prior to the meeting

# Have the highest expectations

Self advocates are full voting members of your council and should be expected to fulfill their commitment to the council.

## **4) Sample contract between self advocate group and advisor**