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Self-Advocacy

What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-Advocacy is involvement in your own life. It is standing up for what matters to you. On behalf of yourself, you identify an unmet need, promote change, or remove a barrier.

Self-advocacy includes research. It also includes outreach and follow-up. Most of all, it includes dedication.

Who is a Self-Advocate?

You can be a self-advocate and work for change in your life. Sometimes changes are needed in relationships, the community, or at work. A self-advocate uses a five-step process.

Five Steps:

1. Know the Law

- Federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA)
- State laws
- Local laws

2. Develop and Use Your Resources

- Elected officials
- City or county officials
- Advocacy groups

3. Assert Yourself

- Contact your resources with letters, phone calls, e-mail, or visits

4. Ask for Change

- Write letters
- Set meetings
- Make specific requests
- Get others to join you

5. Follow-up

- Always follow-up. It can be in writing or by a phone call.

How you should expect to be treated

You should expect that agencies and people who provide supports or services to you in Virginia will use the following principles:

Listening: You are listened to. You have a voice. You listen to others. Your choices and your description of what a good life means to you are respected and followed.

Self-Direction: You have choices. You are responsible for your choices. You are respected. Your personal choice and control are supported.

Community: You have friends and family you see often. You are a part of your community. You find groups, organizations and social activities that interest you. Your relationships with families, friends, and people in the community are very important and at the center of planning.

Abilities: You contribute to your family and your community. You learn new things. You are respected. People are nice to you. You respect others. You are nice to others. Your experience, talents, and contributions, and those of your family and community are strengthened and supported.

Responsibility: You are responsible for your choices. You receive quality support. You and the agency or person who provides your support have a shared responsibility.

If you are interested in becoming a member of a Commonwealth of Virginia Board or Commission, visit the [Secretary of the Commonwealth website](#).

Where can I find out more?

- [A Step By Step Guide to Becoming a Self Advocate and Making A Difference](#)
- [Virginia General Assembly's "Who's My Legislator?" web page](#)
- [disAbility Law Center of Virginia](#)

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