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**Abstract**

This American paper is designed to provide a framework for people who wish to assist people who have severe disabilities better understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens. The material is designed to assist teachers incorporate self advocacy training within the context of the person's environment, e.g. home or work. Each training sheet lists objectives, rights and responsibilities. This material, however, does not provide information on HOW to teach people. **Keyword: Advocacy**

# **SELF ADVOCACY**

## **A GUIDE TO TEACHING PERSONS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES ABOUT THEIR BASIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITY**

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# SELF ADVOCACY

## INTRODUCTION

**Self Advocacy** means expressing preference, making informed choices, being assertive, and exercising control over your environment. Teaching self advocacy to persons with severe disabilities requires that they be:

- Provided with the means and opportunity to make choices and express preferences.
- Encouraged to set personal goals.
- Taught assertive communication skills.
- Provided with information about their rights, responsibilities, and options.
- Provided with experiences on which to base choices.
- Taught functional life skills which will help them exercise their options.

The intent of this document is to provide a framework within which persons with severe disabilities can better understand their rights and responsibilities as fully included members of their community. It is our recommendation that the teachers incorporate self advocacy training within the context of a functional skills curriculum taught in natural settings. To assist teachers in doing this we have organised the material according to the following environments:

- Workplace
- Residential
- Community
- Educational/Adult Support
- Social/Sexual
- Recreational

**Rights** are what make people equal. **Responsibilities** are the things that each person must do to protect their rights. The rights identified in this document are established by the Constitution. The corresponding responsibilities are established by federal and state law and social norms. Which rights a person exercises and how those rights are exercised are a function of the experiences and values of both the person and the significant others in their life.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Self Determination** means setting personal goals and taking steps to achieve those goals without undo influence.

**Self Advocacy** means expressing preference, making informed choices, being assertive, and exercising control over one's environment. Self advocacy is a way to achieve self determination.

**Rights** are what make people equal.

**Responsibilities** are the things you must do to protect your rights.

**Advocates** are persons you trust to help you exercise and protect your rights.

**SELF ADVOCACY  
IN THE WORK PLACE**

**OBJECTIVE**      Each student will know:

- Their rights in the workplace.
- Their responsibilities in the workplace.
- How to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- What to do if they think someone is taking away their rights.

<b>RIGHTS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
<p><b>You have the right to work.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to learn things in school that will help you work.</li> <li>• You have the right to have help if you need it in order to work.</li> <li>• You have the right to choose not to work.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to tell people you want to work.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to ask to do things in school that will teach you to work in the community.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to apply for services that will help you work in the community after you graduate from high school.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to do as much on your own as you are able to.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to try to be anything you want to be.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to try different kinds of jobs to find out what you like and what you are good at.</li> <li>• You have the right to learn things in school that will help you have the kind of job you want.</li> <li>• If you do not like the work you are doing, you have the right to have help finding a new one.</li> <li>• You have the right to apply for any job.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to do the things the employer needs done.</b> An employer does not have to hire you if you cannot do the work he needs done.</p>

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<p><b>You have the right to work in the same places and at the same times as everyone else.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to do the work the employer wants done, the way the employer wants it done.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to do your job without bothering others.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to know and follow the rules and procedures set by the employer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to safe working conditions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to medical treatment if you get hurt on the job.</li> <li>• You have the right to get paid for work you miss because of getting hurt on the job.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to follow safety procedures and tell someone if you see something that is unsafe.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to tell someone if you get hurt on the job.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to be paid for the work you do.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to get the same amount of money as others performing the same kind and amount of work. (How much you are paid depends on how much you do and what kind of work you do).</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to pay taxes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to obtain a social security card.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to report your income to the Social Security Office each month if you receive SSI.</li> </ul>

<p>SELF ADVOCACY WHERE YOU LIVE</p>
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**OBJECTIVE**                      Each student will know:

- Their rights with regard to where they live.
- Their responsibilities with regard to where they live.
- How to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- What to do if they think someone is taking away their rights.

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<p><b>You have the right to live where you want.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to learn things that will help you live where you want.</li> <li>• You have the right to pay a fair price for your place of residence.</li> <li>• You have the right to move if you do not like where you live.</li> <li>• You have the right to support if you need help to live in your home.</li> <li>• You have the right to reasonable access to your home.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to pay the utilities, rent/mortgage, and taxes for where you live.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to find out what the fair price for your residence is.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to express your desire to move and look for and secure a new place to live.</li> <li>• You are responsible to try to be as independent as possible in your home.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to notify the appropriate person if there are barriers that prevent you from getting into a home.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to have guests in your home.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to say "no" to people you do not want in your house.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You are responsible to know and practice the rules of your neighbourhood.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are responsible for the behaviour of your guests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to a safe place to live.</b></p>	<p><b>You are responsible to keep your home safe.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to lock your door.</li> <li>• You are responsible to tell someone if you see something in your home that is not safe.</li> </ul>

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**SELF ADVOCACY  
IN THE COMMUNITY**

**OBJECTIVE**      Each student will know:

- Their rights in the community.
- Their responsibilities in the community.
- How to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- What to do if they think someone is taking away their rights.

<b>RIGHTS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
<p><b>You have the right to use stores and services in your community.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to learn things in school that will help you do things in the community.</li> <li>• You have the right to have help if you need it in order to do things in the community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to act appropriately in the community.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to ask to learn things in school that will help you do things in the community.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to do as much on your own as you are able and to ask for help when you need it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to have access to your community.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to use public transportation.</li> <li>• You have the right to learn things in school that will help you get around in the community.</li> <li>• You have the right to live in a community which has curbs, buses, buildings and bathrooms that can be used by people in wheelchairs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to use the most normalised kinds of transportation available to you.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to pay for public transportation.</li> <li>• You are responsible to ask to do things in school which will help you learn to get around your community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to be safe in the community.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to know and follow the rules and laws while in the community.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are responsible to learn the safety procedures of the community.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to learn emergency procedures while in the community.</li> </ul>

SELF ADVOCACY  
ADDRESSING  
YOUR EDUCATIONAL  
SUPPORT NEEDS

**OBJECTIVE**      Each student will know:

- Their rights with regard to education and support.
- Their responsibilities with regard to education and support.
- How to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- What to do if they think someone is taking away their rights.

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<p><b>You have the right to a free appropriate education.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to attend public school until you are 22 years of age.</li> <li>• You have the right to attend the same public school as others your age in your neighbourhood.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to receive an education.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility by law to attend school until your 16th birthday.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to enrol in your neighbourhood school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) designed to address your needs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to invite anyone you want to the meeting to help develop this plan.</li> <li>• You have the right to tell others at the meeting what things are important to you.</li> <li>• You have the right to refuse to give consent to any part of the IEP.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to participate in the development for the IEP.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to tell your teacher who you want at the IEP.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to come up with things you feel are important.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to work with the team to write a plan everyone can agree to.</li> </ul>

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<p><b>You have the right to an Individualised Transition Plan (ITP) to assist you in moving from public school to adult life.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have a right to have help after you leave public school to do those activities that are important to you.</li> <li>• You have the right to invite anyone you want to the meeting to help develop this plan.</li> <li>• You have the right to tell others at the meeting what things are important to you.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to participate in the development of the ITP.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to ask for the help you need after graduation.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to tell your teacher who you want at the IEP.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to come up with things you feel are important.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to an Individualised Program Plan (IPP) to identify your support needs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to invite anyone you want to the meeting to help develop this plan.</li> <li>• You have the right to tell others at the meeting what things are important to you.</li> <li>• You have the right to refuse to give consent to any part of the IEP.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to participate in the development for the IPP.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to tell your case manager who you want there.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to come up with things you feel are important.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to work with the team to write a plan everyone can agree to.</li> </ul>

**SELF ADVOCACY  
 ADDRESSING YOUR  
 SOCIAL/SEXUAL LIFE**

**OBJECTIVE**      Each student will know:

- Their rights regarding social/sexuality.
- Their responsibilities regarding social/sexuality.
- How to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- What to do if they think someone is taking away their rights.

<b>RIGHTS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
<p><b>You have the right to choose your friends.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to spend time with friends.</li> <li>• You have the right to use the telephone.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility for your actions when you're with your friends.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to pay for long distance phone calls.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to be considerate of others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to have different kinds of relationships.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility for your actions.</b></p>
<p><b>You have the right to privacy.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to be alone in the bathroom with the door closed.</li> <li>• You have the right to close your bedroom door.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to respect the privacy of others.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to close the bathroom/bedroom door when you want privacy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to say "no".</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to say no when you are told to do something that might hurt you or someone else.</b></p>
<p><b>You have the right to information about your body and sexuality.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to ask for information about your body and sexuality.</b></p>
<p><b>You have the right to your body. No one has the right to touch you when you don't want them to.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to respect the rights of others with regard to their body. You do not have the right to touch anyone who does not want you to.</b></p>

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RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<p><b>You have the right to practice what ever religion you want or to choose not to practice a religion.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to exercise this right without interfering with the rights of others.</b></p>
<p><b>You have the right to vote.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to know what you are voting for.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to register to vote.</li> <li>• You have the responsibility to know and follow the rules and regulations for voting.</li> </ul>

SELF ADVOCACY FOR RECREATION AND LEISURE
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**OBJECTIVE**      Each student will know:

- Their rights with regard to recreation and leisure.
- Their responsibilities with regard to recreation and leisure.
- How to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- What to do if they think someone is taking away their rights.

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<p><b>You have the right to leisure time.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to get all of your work done.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to plan things to do during your leisure time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to choose how you spend your leisure time.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to learn to do the things you want during your leisure time.</li> <li>• You have the right to try different kinds of leisure activities to find out what you like.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to choose things that do not interfere with the rights of others.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to tell people how you want to spend your leisure time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to have fun in the same places and at the same times as everyone else.</b></p>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to know and practice the rules where you go to have fun.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the responsibility to pay for entrance, rental, or service costs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>You have the right to do things by yourself and with friends.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to do things with people you do not live with as well as with people you do live with.</li> </ul>	<p><b>You have the responsibility to plan activities with friends.</b></p>