

What SPAN Provides

- TRAINING
- TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
- INFORMATION
- SUPPORT

...to parents of children with disabilities and special health and emotional needs, or who are at risk of inappropriate classification.




2023 Parent Leadership Conference


Building & Supporting Youth Voice

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Why is Youth Voice Important?

- Young people are the experts in their own lives
- Engaging and listening to youth ensures a productive transition to adulthood
- As youth develop and form their views they can become more involved in decision-making.
- Ex. Youth Leadership Council
- Ex. Youth Steering Committee and Youth Development Initiative



Youth Voice Begins With Self Advocacy



Self Advocacy

Self-advocacy is the ability to understand your needs and to be able to get those needs met by assertively communicating to others not only what your needs are but **what you need** to get your needs met.

3 recommended steps to build self-advocacy.

- Understanding yourself and your disability.
- Know Your strengths, weaknesses, and needs.
 - Learn how to ask for what you need.



Benefits of Self Advocacy

- Learn how to speak and act for themselves.
- Decide what is best for them and taking charge of getting it.
- Making their own decisions about their life
- Standing up for their rights as a person
- Teaching others about their rights and responsibilities.

Self Advocacy = Self Determination

Building Independence = Self Advocacy

- Exploration
- Self Expression
- Self Esteem
- Emphasize Abilities
- Goal Process



10 Skills to Build Independence & Self Determination at a Young Age

Building Independence = Self Advocacy

- Goals
- Interactions
- Responsibility
- Choice
- Constructive Feedback



10 Skills to Build Independence & Self Determination at a Young Age

A Parent's Role in Self Advocacy

- Talk to them about their disability
- Bring them to IEP meetings early
- Include them in decision-making
- Value their voice, it's their future and they should have a say in it!



Skills to Build Self Advocacy

Building skills towards independence and beginning early. Two areas where you can include self advocacy goals within an IEP would be in accommodations and by writing them into social and emotional goals:

- *Introducing: Life Trajectory*

Building Self Advocacy Skills Should Happen Early Within Individualized Education Programs

Supported Decision-Making

Supported Decision-Making is a less restrictive option and alternative to guardianship. It is a way for people with disabilities to get support in making their own choices. The person with a disability is the ultimate decider and trusted family, friends, or staff, chosen by the individual, serve as supporters.

It is a fancy way of stating something we all do everyday! Every person can make choices and has a right to make decisions.



National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making

Students who have self-determination skills are more likely to successfully make the transition to adulthood, including improved education, employment and independent living outcomes.

(Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997)



Self Determination Goals

Use "I statements" in IEP goals/objectives to get student involvement and accountability

- "I will find ways to be sure I get to class on time"
- "I will ask for help when I don't understand something"

IEP Goals/Objectives Related to Self Determination

Healthcare Advocacy

- Staying healthy and making sound decisions about one's own health care involves many skills
- Start with the most basic:
 - Choosing your doctor
 - Knowing when to visit the doctor for illness and regular check ups
 - Taking over-the-counter and prescribed meds correctly
 - Knowing when (and whom) to call for emergency medical help.

Student-Led IEPs

- Begin early
- Make sure the student has a voice
- Encourage the student in the planning process
- Encourage the student to share in the meeting



Student-Led IEPs

Most often seen during transition years but can and should happen earlier

- **THE STUDENT** actually engages in self-determination - they have a voice in determining their IEP goals and what they are addressing at the IEP.
- **THE STUDENT** can practice different decision-making methods in a "safe environment", this is a good opportunity to practice the use of their assertive voice.

Student-Led IEPs

Most often seen during transition years but can and should happen earlier

- **THE STUDENT** leads the meeting - they bring their thoughts, goals, and concerns to the table which are addressed by the IEP team.
- **THE STUDENT** identifies goals and objectives with assistance from professionals and people THE STUDENT invites.



People who are self determined know what they want and how to get it. They advocate on their own behalf and are involved in solving problems, and making decision about their lives.

Self Advocacy = Self Determination



The Youth Steering Committee

How to find out more about:

- A group of youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities between the ages of 16-26 who meet virtually. The project engages diverse youth leaders in creating the virtual healthcare transition resource center. This Center is called the Center for Transition to Adult Health Care for Youth With Disabilities.
- The YSC will guide the development of resources that will assist people with disabilities in navigating through the obstacles of healthcare and healthcare transition.
- Contact Rachel Shandler, rshandler@spanadvocacy.org



Youth Development Initiative

How to find out more about

- For youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities between 12-17 who meet virtually. This learning opportunity will allow the youth to learn from older, experienced young adult leaders also with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- They will learn about transitioning into adult health care and preparing for adulthood. Training will include information on advocacy, health care, and transitioning into adult health care.
- Find more information and apply for opportunities here: [Center for Transition to Adult Health Care for Youth with Disabilities | SPAN Parent Advocacy Network](#)



The SPAN Youth Chat and Hub

How to find out more about

- A community of youth supporting youth. Chats begin with information sharing, followed by group conversations about the week's topic.
- A one-of-a-kind blog on self-advocacy, community engagement, empowering youth, supporting youth voices, and common-like themes.
- Contact Johan Mora Valverde, jmora-valverde@spanadvocacy.org
- Find more information here: [Youth in the Know | SPAN Parent Advocacy Network](#)



NJ YELL

How to find out more about

- The Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) is actively recruiting youth and young adults, with and without disabilities and/or special healthcare needs, ages 16 – 26, for our advisory council.
- NJ YELL provides the opportunity for advocacy training and participation in regional meetings, teleconferences, webinars, and events dedicated to improving the transition to adult life.
- Find more information here:
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/4feb50c10bb4a27a13aeb22831cc0a4>



For more information
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*Thank
you*

for joining us for
this presentation



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Past Life Experiences

What helps me UNDERSTAND the issues and my options?

What has helped me COMMUNICATE my preferences, choices, and decisions?

What has helped me FOLLOW THROUGH on my choices and decisions?

What were past barriers that made it hard for me to understand, communicate, or follow through with my choices and decisions?

Moving Forward

What do I need now to help me UNDERSTAND the issues and my options?

What do I need now to help me COMMUNICATE my preferences, choices, and decisions?

What do I need to help me FOLLOW THROUGH on my choices and decisions?

What needs to happen to avoid barriers that make it hard for me to understand, communicate, or follow through with my choices and decisions?

Vision for What I Want

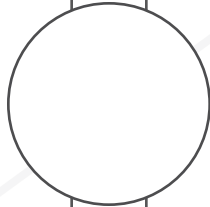
What decisions and choices do I want to make myself or with help from my supporters?

My vision for a good life

What I Don't Want

What decisions and choices do I NOT want someone else making for me or without my input or approval?

Not a good life



THE SPAN YOUTH PROGRAMS

Scan the QR code for more information:

*Any questions? Contact Johan Mora Valverde at
jmora-valverde@spanadvocacy.org*

YOUTH CHAT

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YOUTH HUB

A one-of-a-kind blog on self-advocacy, community engagement, empowering youth, supporting youth voices, and common-like themes.



SCAN ME

NJ YELL

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