

Self-Determination for Individuals with Disabilities

<http://www.ngsd.org/everyone/what-self-determination>

People with developmental and intellectual disabilities have the same rights to self-determination as all people. Self-determination is defined as characteristic of a person that leads them to make choices and decisions based on their own preferences and interests, to monitor and regulate their own actions and to be goal-oriented and self-directing. (Via <http://www.ngsd.org/everyone/what-self-determination>)

An individual with developmental disabilities, with assistance:

- Has the ability and opportunity to make choices and decisions;
- Has the ability and opportunity to exercise control over services, supports and other assistance;
- Has the authority to control resources and obtain needed services;
- Has the opportunity to participate in and contribute to their communities;
- Has the support, including financial, to advocate, develop leadership skills, become trained as a self-advocate and participate in coalitions and policy-making.

Unfortunately, many people with disabilities struggle with this for various reasons. We all have to do our part to promote self-advocacy and self-determination.

Here are a few tips on how we can be engaged/more engaged in the process:

1. Focus on an individual's strengths and abilities and less on their disabilities.
2. Realize that this is a process. Start small and build upon the successes.
3. Set realistic, yet ambitious, expectations and goals. Also, be fully engaged throughout the process.
4. Give the opportunity to the individual to make his/her own choices and make sure they're meaningful ones. Examples include: what to wear, what to eat, what activities to get involved with for the day, etc.
5. Allow the individual to take responsibility for his/her action. This applies to both successes and failures.

For more information on self-determination and how to be more involved in the process, visit the National Gateway to Self-Determination website at www.ngsd.org. There, you will find videos and fact sheets pertaining to Self-Determination for your reference. To see a joint statement on self-determination from the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and the ARC, visit <https://aaid.org/news-policy/policy/position-statements/self-determination#.WfjOt1tSzct>



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