SEEC

Seeking Employment, Equality and Community for People with Developmental Disabilities

NADSP Competency #8: Advocacy

Question and Answer Session with Carola Gallegos,
Community Support Specialist

What does advocacy mean to you? What does it mean to you as a staff member providing supports for a person receiving services?

To me, the significance of advocacy means to provide and ensure a voice that correlates in agreement with the person who is having difficulty expressing matters that are important to them.

What advice would you give staff members that are learning about advocacy?

Advice I would give to further staff members that are learning about advocacy, would be to simply CARE about the issue that is troubling the [person you support], no matter how big or small. It truly makes a world of a difference when you take the person's personal desires and wishes for their own lives into consideration.

Where could you go to find information on agency policies and procedures related to the rights of people with disabilities?

If you ever need to find any information on agency policies and procedures related to the rights of people with disabilities, you can always turn to SEEC's most recent and updated Employee Handbook.

Tell us about some of the lessons and knowledge you've gained from providing supports in your role.

I just want to throw out there that I stepped into this career field with absolute zero experience, meaning I was clueless on how to interact with people with disabilities. Yes, the trainings helped tremendously, but there are just some things that you don't figure out until you are out in the field. A few of those things would be; I had to learn how to not take full control and to stop continuously putting in MY personal interest for the person I'm supporting. Just stop, and listen. Hear them out, come up with alternatives if it's not in their best interest. Throw out options for them to choose so they are in control of their life.

What are strategies you've used to advocate for a person receiving supports?

My strategy is quite simple. RESPECT. Once you build a foundation around respect, things will run a lot smoother. Try looking at the person you are supporting as a human being before someone with disabilities. . .[People you support] take as much pleasure in an ice cold soda no different than you and I. My point being is that we do not have restrictions and a thousand rules to follow when it comes to simple daily life decisions, keep that in mind.