



NADSP Competency 8: Advocacy

By Abdul Jallah, Community Support Specialist, Discoveries

1) What does Advocacy mean to you and why it is important? What does it mean to you as a staff member providing supports for a person receiving services?

Advocacy means to fight for someone's name and bring awareness to what is important to them. It is important to advocate for people who may not be able to communicate well for themselves because everyone deserves a voice in this world. Those we support need someone who has the voice and power to speak for them and raise awareness of what it is like to live in their shoes. They have unique lives and it is part of our job to show the world they are just as important and deserve to be treated with respect.

2) What advice would you give staff members that are learning about doing Advocacy?

Advocacy can be a simple to complex situation. Simple things such as allowing those we support to do activities on their own and feel empowered helps to advocate for them as a person. Complicated situations such as people who look down on those with IDD for example, will treat them differently in society. This is when we need to be their voice and show the community that they are no different.

3) What advocacy organizations/services are available in this community that might assist persons with disabilities.

A simple google search can show the number of organizations that help people with disabilities. One of the big ones is the National Disability Rights Network. It is a nonprofit organization that helps provide legal advocacy services for people with disabilities. Organizations like these are important because many people turn their backs on people with disabilities, they think they are lost cause. People, no matter what, deserve every basic human right and especially the ability to fight for their rights.

4) Tell me about a situation where you have advocated on behalf of another person or a time when someone else has advocated on your behalf. What made that advocacy successful or unsuccessful?

Often when I take the person I support to restaurants, the server comes and asks for our orders but they typically look only in my direction. Even when asking for his order the servers are focused me, so I simply direct the question to the person I support. It's imperative that we give them back their voices. Needless to say, it is ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL.

5) Describe a time when you advocated or assisted a person when they were being treated badly by another person.

It was more of a group effort. In high school, we had a big issue with people bullying and unfortunately many times people thought it was funny to pick on the special education students. They would take advantage and have them do their homework or get things for them or even make jokes knowing the student did not realize they were being made fun of. In response, a group of us started to befriend the students, walk them to and from classes and lunch and call out those picking on them. Eventually, after I had left, a club was formed to start working with these students. It helped the school a lot to know people were interested in being part of these student's lives.