

# Steps to Self-Advocacy

## **1. Accentuate the Positive**

Respond to at least as many positives as negatives. Begin by assuming the best of others.

## **2. Do Your Homework and Document Everything**

The first step in developing a position should always involve confirming your information. In addition, you should document everything you do as well as what others tell you—including phone calls, mail, meeting, etc. Documentation protects you from denials and countercharges.

## **3. Plan many Small Successes**

Successful efforts over time will build your competency and reputation.

## **4. Be Prepared**

Be clear on your facts and do your homework/research. Highlight the general principals of what you are promoting—this helps prevent personality conflicts stemming from disagreements over details of solutions. Once you have begun to address an issue, be prepared to follow through. Also, be prepared to try more than one approach.

## **5. Be Reasonable**

Cooperation and compromise must be addressed in resolving any issue. Listen to what others have to say when making your own decisions. Prepare to accept success.

## **6. Take Responsibility**

Participate in your own meetings—do not rely on others to make your decisions for you. Actively participate in discussions, decisions, meetings. Take an active interest in what is happening around you.

Advocate for your own proposals and ideas, but also be open to alternatives, compromises and ideas offered by others. Seek out others who have knowledge of the workings of systems you may not understand, which might lead to greater success. Remember that a mutually acceptable solution to a problem is a success for everyone.



Montana Youth Transitions ♦ 1617 Euclid Avenue ♦ Helena, MT ♦ 406-442-2576

[www.montanayouthtransitions.org](http://www.montanayouthtransitions.org)

## Student Rights

- I have the rights to know what my disability is and how it affects my ability to learn, live independently and be a part of a lifelong learning system.
- I have the right to be provided information regarding assessment, services and Individualized Education Program (IEP) in a language and format that I understand.
- I have the right to participate in my IEP meetings.
- I have the right to have individuals who understand my disability serve on my IEP team.
- I have the right to accept or refuse services.
- I have the right to disagree with my IEP and to receive help in writing a complaint, requesting mediation or a due process hearing.

## Student Responsibilities

- It is my responsibility to ask question, request help, seek self-advocacy training, and peer support so that I can learn about my disability and advocate for my needs.
- It is my responsibility to ask questions until I understand.
- It is my responsibility to attend all meetings and actively participate in planning for my adult life.
- It is my responsibility to invite people (i.e. friend, parent, grandparents, coach, teacher) I trust and who know me well.
- It is my responsibility to understand that refusing services may affect my school/work program, and I may not get those services back.
- It is my responsibility to follow through and be cooperative with any process that I request.

Adapted from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.



Montana Youth Transitions ♦ 1617 Euclid Avenue ♦ Helena, MT ♦ 406-442-2576

[www.montanayouthtransitions.org](http://www.montanayouthtransitions.org)