



## Tips for Helping Your Teen Develop Self Advocacy Skills

Start by making sure your teen has a clear understanding of his disability, his strengths, and his weaknesses.

If your teen is nervous speaking up alone, remind her that everyone gets nervous speaking up, whether they have a disability or not.

Encourage your teen to role play with you or someone else she is comfortable with. Use real life situations such as talking to a teacher about an assignment.

Some other ideas besides role playing are:

- ◆ Having your teen bring someone with her for support (but *not* to speak for her).
- ◆ Have him write down what he wants to say so he doesn't forget.
- ◆ Having her send an email or leave a note if she is uncomfortable speaking in person.

The most important thing to remember is that, like everything else in life, self advocacy skills and confidence will develop over time through practice.

*This fact sheet and others can be found at [www.mdtransition.org](http://www.mdtransition.org).*

*Questions?*

*Contact the Maryland Department of Disabilities*

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## Tips for Parents of High School Students with Disabilities

**Ages 14-21:** Attend IEP or 504 Plan meetings.

- ◆ Youth should participate in meetings.
- ◆ Identify necessary education and training to reach postsecondary goals.

**Age 14:** If youth has a developmental disability, contact the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) for information on post-school services (see regional listing at [www.ddamaryland.org/contactus.htm](http://www.ddamaryland.org/contactus.htm)).

**Age 16:** If college bound, identify supports and accommodations needed.

- ◆ Visit college campuses.
- ◆ Ask about documentation needed to qualify for accommodations at each college.
- ◆ Colleges expect the youth, not the parent, to take the lead.

**Age 16:** Contact the Workforce Development Office for potential employer and volunteer opportunities (see [www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/jobserv.shtml](http://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/jobserv.shtml) for local listing).

**Age 16:** Contact the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) for potential employment and training services (see [www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us) for local listing).

**Age 16:** Obtain a photo identification card or driver's license at your local Motor Vehicle Administration ([www.marylandmva.com](http://www.marylandmva.com)).

- ◆ Contact local jurisdiction about applying for reduced fare cards, where available (see [www.mta.maryland.gov/pwd](http://www.mta.maryland.gov/pwd) or [www.wmata.com/accessibility](http://www.wmata.com/accessibility)).
- ◆ Register for Paratransit Services, where available (see [www.mta.maryland.gov/mobility](http://www.mta.maryland.gov/mobility) or [www.wmata.com/accessibility/metroaccess\\_service](http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/metroaccess_service)).

**Age 17:** Review current medical coverage for youth.

- ◆ Depending on the provider, youth may need to change from pediatrician to adult provider.

**Age 18:** Youth has reached the age of majority (adulthood) in Maryland.

- ◆ Register to vote.
- ◆ Parents no longer have access to student's medical information/records unless given permission by the youth.

**Age 18:** Apply to the Social Security Administration for SSI, which if approved will entitle the youth to Medicaid ([www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)).

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# Self Advocacy Practice Questions for Teens

## In IEP Meetings

- ◆ This school year I am interested in learning more about \_\_\_\_\_. Can I take a class or get a job in this subject area?
- ◆ I learn best with \_\_\_\_\_ accommodations. Is this an accommodation that I will be able to use next school year and after I exit school?
- ◆ My post-school goal is \_\_\_\_\_. How can you help me to achieve this?

## For Service Providers

- ◆ What types of services does your agency provide?
- ◆ What are the eligibility requirements, how do I apply, and will I be able to select the services I want to receive?
- ◆ If I am not eligible, what other options are there?
- ◆ Is there a waiting list for services and how long will I have to wait?
- ◆ Do you offer benefits counseling?

## For Postsecondary Education

### Disability Support Staff

- ◆ I successfully used \_\_\_\_\_ accommodations in school. My disability impacts my ability to \_\_\_\_\_.

### Professors

- ◆ How can we work together to ensure that I am able to meet your expectations for the course?

### Campus Housing

- ◆ Have a physical disability that affects my ability to \_\_\_\_\_. What are my options for accessible housing?

## For Employment

### Employment Service Providers

- ◆ What kinds of employment assistance do you offer job seekers?
- ◆ Do I need to disclose my disability to an employer?
- ◆ How and when do I ask for a reasonable accommodation?

### Employers