

# THE ADVOCATOR

A quarterly newsletter for Self-Advocates

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## Self-Advocacy

### What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-Advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about your own life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem solving, listening and learning, reaching out to others when you need help and friendship, and learning about self-determination.

### Why is Self-Advocacy Important?

So that you have the knowledge needed to succeed and are given the chance to participate in decisions that are being made about your life.

## Articles & Resources

[Self-Advocacy: Know Yourself, Know What You Need, Know How to Get It](#) by Nancy Suzanne James Johnson. "Self-advocacy is the ability to understand and communicate one's needs to other individuals. Learning to become an effective self-advocate is all about educating the people around you. There are three steps to becoming an effective self-advocate.

[Self-Advocacy: Strategies for All Ages](#). Students who know how to self-advocate have an important skill that supports lifelong success. Tips to help your child acquire the skills that will help them understand their needs and communicate those needs to others.

## Organizations & Websites

[Advocating Change Together \(ACT\)](#) is a grassroots disability rights organization run by and for people with developmental and other disabilities. ACT's mission is to help people across disabilities to see themselves as part of a larger disability rights movement and make connections to other civil and human rights struggles.

[Position Statement on Self-Advocacy from the Arc of the U.S.](#) People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities must be able to act as self-advocates, to exercise their rights by speaking and standing up for themselves. This means people must have a voice in decision-making in all areas of their daily life and in public policy decisions affecting them.

# Consumer Corner



## PeopleFirst Of Orange County

People First of Orange County is one of several chapters of the statewide self-advocacy organization, People First of California.

People First is a national self-advocacy organization and international, national, and statewide movement of people with developmental disabilities. People First means that we are People First and our disabilities are second. The members of People First chapters work to increase their self-advocacy skills by learning how to speak for themselves and others and build decision making skills about what is important in their own lives and lives of their peers. As a self-advocacy / self-help organization members help each other with problems, make friends, and reach out to people with severe disabilities. Members of People First work together to advocate for their rights, train others about disabilities, participate in community projects, hold social events, take political stands and/or plan conferences, conventions, or events.

The purpose of People First is to assist members in building self-confidence by providing a safe place to say how they feel and what they think. It is believed that a person who is given opportunity, training, and support with a peer group can learn to be a strong self-advocate for themselves and others. In People First meetings, members are given the opportunity to learn, practice, and develop their skills in public speaking, decision making, and problem solving.

People First educates people in the community to understand that people with developmental disabilities have the same citizen rights and responsibilities as others. As well, we help show others that we are capable of learning, working, living independently, and contributing to the community in great ways. Disability awareness is used by People First to change negative attitudes and build confidence in the abilities of people with disabilities. Working together and building up People First around the world also gives people with developmental disabilities a voice. A voice at the table gives us power to help change our lives and our world to be a better place for all people with disabilities to have live, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

For more information please visit, [www.peoplefirstca.org](http://www.peoplefirstca.org).

# Advocator Cafe



**MY VOTE by Jeff Ridgeway**

They say I can't vote

They say the decision is not mine

They say I don't understand

I guess they think they're being kind

I wonder what they would say or think if they only knew

That when they call the President "Our President",

I want to Call him mine too.

If I never get the chance to Vote –

Pulling the lever, punching the card, or writing the name down.

I stay the same – dumb, misinformed, unchanged, unempowered.

That is what this world expects me to be.

But I want so much more

I want to be the most educated – the most informed – the most totally changed – the most totally empowered person that I can be when I vote.

I can make a difference and then I can say with pride,

"Not Yours,

not theirs,

but My President

because I helped put him there."



## GoVoter

In 2000, SABE discovered that people with disabilities were not exercising their right to vote and wanted to give everyone the opportunity to vote. To address this need, the GoVoter project was established.

The National Technical Assistance Center for Voting and Cognitive Access helps protection and advocacy systems, election officials and people with disabilities to make voting accessible for all citizens. The Center is managed and operated by leaders in the self-advocacy movement.

## GoVoter Project's Two Primary Components

To help encourage more people with disabilities to vote, GoVoter established two primary areas of focus:

**Training:** GoVoter provides distance training to self-advocacy groups to help them more effectively educate people with disabilities on the voting process and prepare them to vote. The training is provided through the Voter Education Toolkit, which includes a Trainer Manual, PowerPoint slides, handouts, tips for successful training, and supporting videos.

**Surveys:** The GoVoter Survey is designed to learn about the experience voters with disabilities have when voting to better understand where issues exist and how to address them. Survey results help educate the public on voting barriers and allow SABE to improve its voter education training.

### Voter Education Toolkit

The Voter Education Toolkit can help your self advocacy group teach others about voting rights and the voting process. The Toolkit has many different parts, the most important being the Facilitator or Trainer Manual. [Download the Toolkit](#), learn how to use it, and help teach people with disabilities how to have a successful voting experience.

### GoVoter Survey

The GoVoter Survey intends to learn about experience of voters with disabilities — everything from getting information about candidates and issues, poll workers attitudes, to registering to vote and completing a ballot.

The survey was completed in 2014, 2016 and 2018. The next survey will be in 2020. Learn more about the GoVoter Survey and its findings.



# THE SELF-ADVOCACY TREE

Original design by Erica-Rachael Fiel

**GET TOGETHERS** (top left)

**POLITICAL ACTION** (top right)

**NEWSLETTERS** (left side)

**PRESENTATIONS** (right side)

**WEBSITES** (bottom left)

**ADVOCATING** (bottom right)

**Branches**  
Topics the group is interested in

**Trunk**  
Principles and mission of the group

**Roots**  
People who participate as self-advocates

**Fruit**  
Actions taken to achieve goals

Technology School  
Health & Fitness Transportation  
Places to Live Real jobs  
Romance Fun Support  
Friendship  
Respect us  
Contribute  
Listen to us  
Community first  
Support each other

Erica imagined this tree to help people see how everyone can work together.

Produced by The Riot at HSRI based on work at the Virginia SALT Forum in April 2010. Visit The Riot at [www.theriotrocks.org](http://www.theriotrocks.org)

## Upcoming Events:

**AL-APSE Conference**

**July 10-12, 2019**

**Renaissance Hotel & Spa  
Montgomery, AL**

**Alabama disAbility Conference**

**September 9-11, 2019**

**The Wynfrey Hotel  
Birmingham, AL**

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