



SELF-ADVOCACY

For Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Second Edition

Kristina English, PhD
The University of Akron/NOAC

UNIT 1

Introduction- What Is Self-Advocacy?

OVERVIEW OF UNIT 1

In this introductory lesson, students will learn the meaning of the terms *advocacy* and *self-advocacy*, and will learn three reasons for developing self-advocacy skills.

CONTENTS OF UNIT 1

[Lesson 1: Self-Advocacy: What Is It and Why Is It Important?](#)

[Unit Evaluation: Quiz 1](#)



LESSON 1

Self-Advocacy: What Is It and Why Is It Important?

PURPOSE OF LESSON 1

This lesson provides an overview of the concepts of advocacy and self-advocacy. The lesson describes how skills in self-advocacy can be used to protect the rights of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

1. Learners will define and give examples of the concepts of advocacy and self-advocacy.
2. Learners will state three reasons for the need for self-advocacy skills for high school students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Instructional Activities	Performance Activities	Materials
1. Warm-up activity: "What do I think?"	Students vote yes or no	Worksheet 1a
2. Core material	Students complete worksheet as note taking assignment	Worksheets 1a, 1b
3. Learning activity: Review "Think" questions	Group discussion	Worksheet 1a
4. Summary, homework	Homework assignment	Worksheet 1c

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL/ PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

1. State today's goal: Today you will learn what the words *advocacy* and *self-advocacy* mean and why they are important to high school students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

2. As a warm-up activity and informal "pretest," present "What Do I Think?" questions to class (Worksheet 1a) and ask class to answer/guess with true-false responses (take a show of hands and keep a tally on the board).

3. Present Lesson 1 Core Material while students follow along on Worksheet 1b.

4. Provide practice with new information: Ask students to review Worksheet 1a and compare answers with new information from lecture.

5. Lead group discussion.

6. Summarize with Worksheet 1c and describe homework assignment.

7. State topic of next meeting: Next time we meet, we will talk more specifically about your legal rights.

LESSON 1 CORE MATERIAL

Parents and teachers are concerned that a high number of students who are deaf or hard of hearing leave the relatively sheltered environment of high school with little or no information regarding their legal rights in educational and work settings. Typically, students are not familiar with the laws that protect their rights through their high school years and are unaware of the change in their legal status upon high school graduation.

This change in legal status will affect you whether you continue your education in college, attend vocational training, or seek employment. The cost of "not knowing" contributes to two major concerns: (a) a very

high dropout rate for students in college and (b) limited opportunities for students moving into employment.

High Drop Out Rate for College Students

Getting into college does not seem to present much of a problem for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The entry rates are nearly the same as for students without disabilities. However, once in college, students with hearing impairments are at high risk of dropping out. Approximately 71% of students who are deaf or hard of hearing leave college before completing a degree, compared to the withdrawal rate of only 47% for students without disabilities.

Why? We know that college students who are deaf and hard of hearing often experience difficulty in (a) getting the technical assistance (interpreters, FM systems) that they need to make good grades; and (b) integrating into the social system of college (establishing a circle of friends), even when doing well in the academic system (earning good grades).

College students who are deaf or hard of hearing typically report that they need help and often do not know how to obtain it. For example, they may easily recognize that they need a note taker but not know how to arrange for one, or whether they are expected to pay for the service. Or a student may ask a teacher to wear a microphone for an FM system but the teacher refuses. The student typically does not know how to proceed from that point.

In addition, students (with and without hearing loss) often are not aware of the importance of making friends and developing a sense of "belonging" to the college. Most students who drop out of college do so not because the academic work is too hard but because they have not

developed a social network of friends, faculty, and staff to help them when they are discouraged or tired. Given what we know about the difficulties of communicating with hearing loss and the effects on developing social relationships, it is easy to see why students who are deaf or hard of hearing need both information and skills before going to college.

Limited Opportunities for Students Moving into Employment

Employees who are deaf or hard of hearing have reported a variety of difficulties in work settings, including (a) problems obtaining reasonable accommodations such as interpreters, texting services, and amplified telephones, and (b) limited access to advanced training opportunities. Both issues result in workers feeling locked into entry-level positions with reduced opportunity for advancement. In addition, employers frequently are not familiar with collaborating with vocational rehabilitation services, and employees with hearing impairment are often not skilled in interpersonal skills such as negotiation and assertiveness, which could help them obtain accommodations and advanced training.

In this introductory lesson to self-advocacy, two definitions are necessary:

1. *Advocacy*: seeking support for

the rights of a person or a cause.

Examples from the news:

- a. Persons who raise money for food pantries are advocates for hungry neighbors.
- b. Persons who petition the government to pass laws protecting animals from cruelty or extinction.

2. *Self-advocacy*: understanding and seeking support for one's personal rights.

Examples from the news:

- a. Citizens who protest against limits on voting times or locations
- b. Other?

In summary, there are three reasons why students need to learn self-advocacy skills:

1. Employers may not know about the rights of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
2. College teachers may not know about the rights of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
3. Laws will protect persons with hearing loss, but individuals must look out for themselves once they leave high school.

WORKSHEET 1a

What Do I Think?

True or False?

1. T F The rights of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing are protected by law while in elementary and high school.
2. T F The rights of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing are protected by law after high school graduation.
3. T F Students in college who are deaf or hard of hearing have the right to a note taker or interpreter, but they have to pay for the service.
4. T F An employee who is deaf or hard of hearing has the right to an amplified telephone or a looped conference room at work if needed.
5. T F Employers usually know the laws that protect the rights of persons with hearing loss.
6. T F College teachers usually know the laws that protect the rights of students with hearing loss.

WORKSHEET 1b

1. Concerns about students who are deaf or hard of hearing after high school graduation:

a) A high drop out rate from college. Some reasons:

b) Limited opportunities in work settings. Some reasons:

2. *Advocacy* means:

An example: _____

3. *Self-advocacy* means:

An example: _____

4. Three reasons why self-advocacy is important:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

WORKSHEET 1c

Summary

1. There are laws that ensure that students who are deaf or hard of hearing receive an appropriate education through high school.
2. Different laws continue to protect a person's rights in college or work after graduating from high school.
3. Parents and teachers who help a student with hearing loss while in elementary and high school can be called advocates.
4. Before students graduate from high school, they should learn to advocate for themselves (learn to help themselves).
5. Persons with hearing loss often have difficulties in work and college.
6. Learning to be a self-advocate can help a person resolve those difficulties.

Homework Assignment

Read the following case study and be prepared to talk about it in class next time:

Case Study: Marcos

Situation: Marcos was 17 years old, a junior in high school. He decided to get a part-time job to earn money to buy a car. He knew there were some jobs at the food court at the nearby mall, but he was concerned because the food court was very noisy. Marcos had a moderate hearing loss and wore hearing aids, but understanding people in noisy places was very difficult for him. How could he understand people when they were giving their food orders?

One solution: Marcos decided to ask for help from his speech teacher, Miss Ross. She told him that employers are required to make "reasonable accommodations" for people who work for them, but it was helpful if the worker had a couple of suggestions from the beginning. *Accommodations* means changes in how things are typically done. *Reasonable* means the changes are not very expensive or complicated.

Miss Ross asked Marcos, "Do you have any ideas on what would help you do this kind of job?"

Marcos said, "Although the noise is a problem, I do OK with speechreading. I need to have people look at me – but how can I do that?" Miss Ross said, "You can ask them to look at you. People are usually very helpful if they understand the situation."

She had two suggestions: Post a small sign on the counter, or wear a button with the words, "Please face me – I lipread." Marcos didn't want to wear a button, so decided to suggest the small sign. That afternoon, he applied for a job at a hamburger shop and was hired the next day. When he met with his new boss, he explained his situation and his idea about the sign. The boss was surprised to learn that the noise was a problem, but he figured Marcos seemed to know what he was talking about. Placing a sign on the counter seemed very reasonable, and he agreed to that

solution. Marcos was relieved to see that customers did not make a big deal about the situation, either.

Discussion questions:

1. Did Miss Ross serve as an advocate? How?
2. Did Marcos learn to advocate for himself? How?

Begin developing a personal self-advocacy file: Keep these worksheets in a three-ring binder, folder, or electronic device. With each lesson, you will have more worksheets to add for future reference.

UNIT EVALUATION: QUIZ 1

Self-Advocacy: What Is It and Why Is It Important?

Complete the following sentences using these vocabulary words:

training	social system	advocacy
accommodations	self-advocacy	technical assistance

1. _____ means seeking the rights of a person or cause.
2. _____ means understanding and seeking support for one's personal rights.
3. One reason for high college drop out rates among students with hearing loss is their inexperience getting the _____ (like interpreters and FM systems) they need to get good grades.
4. Another reason for high drop out rates is the difficulty students with hearing loss may have getting involved with a _____ (developing a circle of friends) while in college.
5. At work, persons with hearing loss often have difficulty obtaining reasonable _____ (like amplified phones) and access to advanced job _____ to help them get promoted.