

SELF-ADVOCACY WORKSHOP #5

Rights and Responsibilities: Standing Up for Yourself

Green Mountain Self-Advocates adapted this workshop from the Speak Up! Guide developed in October 2002 by Shifting the Power, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7255, (919) 966-5171. A complete list of the self-advocacy resources used in developing the Speak Up! Guide is at the end of this workshop. People with developmental disabilities teach this workshop for people with developmental disabilities.

Set up: This workshop is for 20 people or less. It works best if you sit at tables. Arrange tables to allow for an open space for group activities. Consider having snacks and drinks.

Time: 2 hours

Materials: Sign in sheets, nametags, Video: *Bill of Rights*, Television and VCR, easel paper and markers, Respect CD and CD player.

Teaches participants:

1. Our everyday rights
2. Information about the rules and responsibilities that go with our rights
3. Specific laws that protect our rights
4. Where to get up-to-date information on laws that protect our rights
5. Vermont resources you need to advocate for yourself, or others.

Trainers: Before the training, the trainers need to write an introduction for themselves. They also need to practice this workshop and decide who will be teaching each section. Write the name of the trainer on the blank line before each part in the script. The instructions for what to do are in black and **suggestions for what to say are in red**. We strongly recommend that you use your own words and try not to read from the script. It is better to speak from your heart. Reading from a script can sometimes sound boring.

Getting started: As people arrive all the trainers should say hello and introduce themselves. Make people feel welcome.

_____ Give out nametags. Let folks pick a marker to use to write their name. Offer to write their name for them if they ask for help.

_____ Give each person a workbook.

Introductions:



_____ Introduces herself/himself and talk about the Six Real Choices Workshops.



_____ All over Vermont, self-advocates and their supporters are teaching workshops on how to be a self-advocate. This fifth workshop is about knowing your rights. Do you ever feel stuck trying to explain what the word “rights” means? Vermont’s Green Mountain Self-Advocates felt the same way, so they wrote and produced a video called Our Bill of Rights to help people with developmental disabilities understand their rights and learn how to speak up about them. We will watch that video during this workshop.



_____ We are going to go around the room taking turns saying our names. After you say your name, say, "I speak for myself", like this: Hi, I am _____ and I speak for myself Now it is your turn.



Group Agreements: (Use the list of group agreements provided. Feel free to add additional rules if the group wants to.)



_____ We will begin by going over some ground rules. I will call on a person to read each one.
Who wants to come up and read number “1”?
Pick a volunteer to come up to say, “Number 1 is raise your hand.”



Who wants to come up and read number “2”?

Pick a volunteer to come up to say, “Number 2 is one person speaks at a time.”

Who wants to come up and read number “3”?

Pick a volunteer to come up to say, “Number 3 is no put downs.”

Who wants to come up and read number “4”?

Pick a volunteer to come up to say, “Number 4 is no question is a silly question.”

Who wants to come up and read number “5”?

Pick a volunteer to come up to say, “Number 5 is it is okay to pass.”

Who wants to come up and read number “6”?

Pick a volunteer to come up to say, “Number 6 is Confidentiality.”

(You should ask the group what this means.)

Who wants to come up and read number “7”?

Pick a volunteer to come up to say, “Number 7 is give everyone a chance to speak.”

Does anyone have another ground rule they would like to use?

(Call on people and write down their suggestions)



_____ Question of the day? Go to page “3”. What is the ADA? Write your answer on page 3

(Give people one minute to write their answers but do not share what they wrote until the end.)

ACTIVITY:

Play the “ADA” song from the Respect CD

Warm up Exercise:



_____ Let’s imagine... You completed an application for an apartment you really want. You have a good reference from your old Landlord. You were the first to see the apartment. The Landlord never called you back and so you called him. He said he rented it to someone else. You find out later your

cousin got the apartment but they actually applied for it 2 weeks after you did and his reference was not as good as yours. You think that the landlord didn't want to give you the apartment because you have a disability.

How do you feel?

(Pause and call on people to answer.)

What can you say?

(Pause and call on people to answer.)

What can you do? (Who can you contact?)

(Pause and call on people to answer.)

How can you stand up for yourself?

(Pause and call on people to answer.)

ACTIVITY: Speak UP!

Directions: Review the following steps to take if you think "your rights have been violated" or someone is discriminating against you.



1. Ask questions about why you are being told you can not do something (your rights are being limited). Keep asking questions until you understand what is happening.



2. Write down the answers you are given, or get the answers on tape. Get as much information as you can. Make sure it is correct.



3. Get a friend to help you if you want to. Some towns have services that can help you get a friend who knows about advocacy.
 - Call Protection and Advocacy
 - Call the Disability Law Project



4. Find out what all the choices are. Pick out the ones that are best for you.



5. Decide what you think about what is happening. Decide what steps you need to take to reach your goal.



6. Know who to talk to and who is in charge. Go to the person who makes the decisions.



7. Know and use your rights. The main ones to remember when your rights are being limited are: the right to know all the information; the right to appeal and ask for a change in decision before you agree; the right to know what is happening all the time and why it is happening.

ACTIVITY: The Three R's



_____ During this workshop we will watch a video made by Green Mountain Self-Advocates called the Bill of Rights and also a video about self-advocacy. Right now we are going to talk about rights and responsibilities. The information we are talking about is in your workbooks.



_____ "RIGHTS" are simply the rules that help make people equal. The three R's to keep in mind when figuring out what to do are:

Rules
Rights
Responsibilities



_____ Rules. What do rules mean?

(Pause and call on people to answer.)

Rules help us understand what we need to do to keep our rights. We all must follow rules.

_____ Rights. What do - Rights- mean?

(Pause and call on people to answer.)

Rights apply to everyone! Rights are the rules that help make people equal.

_____ Responsibilities. What does –Responsibility- mean? (Pause and call on people to answer.)

To have our own rights respected, we must respect the rights of others. We must act in a responsible way.

_____ Lots of times self-advocates are afraid to speak up when people discriminate against them because they have a disability. **BUT** sometimes people go overboard the other way and are afraid to try new things or take responsibility for what they do because they have a disability. Others may give up without even trying.

For example – a person may think or say they cannot get a job because they have a disability.

_____ : Rules and Laws

RULES and LAWS help us know what our **RIGHTS** and **RESPONSIBILITIES** are to ourselves and others.

ACTIVITY: Video – “*Our Bill Of Rights*”

Time: 20 minutes



_____ Now we are going to watch the *Our Bill of Rights* video. Green Mountain Self-Advocates wrote the script for this

video. The Awareness Theater Company worked with GMSA to make the video. After we watch the video, we will be discussing some of your everyday rights, and the rules and responsibilities that go with those rights.

ACTIVITY: With Our Rights Come Responsibilities

Time: 30 minutes

Description: Work in small groups. Give each group 2 to 3 rights to work on. Each group selects someone to run the activity, someone to write down your answers and someone to read the answers to the larger group. You can also write the answers in your workbook.

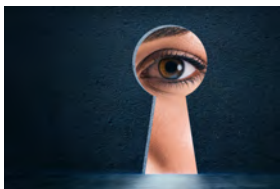
Directions:



1. Read the right and the definition of the right.
2. Make a list of the responsibilities that go with that right.
3. Do this for each of the rights your group has been assigned to do.
4. Report back to the larger group.

GROUP #1

"Number 1: The right to privacy."



"We'd like the right to confidentiality and to control who has access to our personal information like files and case notes. Also please don't touch our stuff!"

"Body privacy needs to be respected. We'd also like the right to private time with a special person."



Dolley says, "Let others know when they can and cannot look at your records. If you do not understand your records look at them and ask questions. Always ask people before you touch them and let others know when they cannot touch you. Let people know when you want to be alone and make it a safe place. Always ask people before you borrow their things."



"Number 2: The right to communication."

"We'd like to be able to communicate in the best way we can: speaking, talking devices, sign language, gestures, pictures, and writing."

Dolley says, "If you want people to listen to you, you have to be a good listener yourself. No matter how people communicate, be patient, they might have something important to say."



"Number 3: The right to schedule our time."

"We'd like to decide what we do with our time. To be able to pick something else to do when plans have changed."

Dolley says, "Let others know what you would like to do. Ask for help if you need it. And remember, last minute plans might not always work out."



"Number 4: The right to join a group."

"For instance, a self-advocacy group. They meet all over the state."

Dolley says, "Choose what group you would like to be a part of. Show up for meetings. Respect the others in the group."

"Number 5: The right to have relationships"



*"Relationships with our parents and family."
"Having friends." "Love relationships." "To be married." "To have children."*



Dolley says, "You don't always have to take your parent's advice but at least respect them. Keep your commitments with your friends. Talk about big decisions with them. Learn about safe sex and birth control."

"Number 6: The right to choose our own support staff."



"We'd like to be directly involved in the hiring process. This avoids total strangers walking into our lives and taking over."

Dolley says, "If you have a problem with your support worker keep an open mind. Support workers are people too and sometimes they make mistakes. If you have a problem with your support worker talk to them about it. If it doesn't work, tell someone else."

"Number 7: The right to make decisions."



*"For instance, where we live and who we live with."
"To pick a doctor we feel comfortable with."
"To decide how we spend our money."*

Dolley says, "Make good decisions. Choose a safe place to live. Make up a budget and live within it. When you try new things, be careful, don't get taken advantage of. Everybody makes mistakes and when you do, take responsibility for it. "



GROUP #3

"Number 8: The right to live in a safe home; and to be treated with respect."

"These are the things we need in our home so that we can feel safe and respected."

"To make my own decisions and have them respected. Help me when I need it and leave me alone when I can do it myself. I need to be free from physical harm, verbal abuse and swearing. Please respect my boundaries. People should use good listening skills when being with me. Look at me when I am talking and pay attention. To come and go from my home as I wish."

Dolley says, "Well said Amy, I think if you treat everyone with the same respect you are asking for you'll be acting very responsibly."



"Number 9: The right to get a job if you want one."

"We'd like to pick the job we want and to get the support we need to do the job. We also want to be able to quit and look for a new job. We might need to go to school or get training on how to do a new job."

Dolley says, "Go to work on time. Do the best work you can. Listen to directions and constructive criticism. Ask for help if you need it. If you are sick and can't go to work call your boss and let them know. Give notice if you want to quit the job."

"Number 10: The right to a safe community."



"We think that the police should be trained by people with disabilities on how to approach a person with a disability."

"We'd like to be treated like everybody else and go about our business without being teased." Dolley says, "If you are being teased, tell someone. And be safe, stay within your circle of safety."

ACTIVITY: VOTING

WHAT IS VOTING?



_____ Voting means making choices. Our government makes laws in Montpelier and Washington DC. Obviously, we cannot all go to Washington to run our own government. We cannot all go to city hall to make decisions for ourselves. For that reason, we vote. We choose people to decide for us. This is a big, important job. We must choose well. We want to be happy with our choices. We make choices that will affect the whole United States. Voting is a serious responsibility.

Directions: Work in three small groups. Ask each group to go to one of six stations. Post easel paper with one of the following questions listed at each station.



_____ each station has an excuse people use for not voting. I want you to come up with ideas on what to say to a person who uses this excuse for not voting. What can you suggest to this person do so they will vote.

1. I do not know how to vote.
2. I cannot vote because I cannot read.
3. I do not know who to vote for.
4. I never voted before.
5. My vote will not make a difference.
6. I cannot get to the polls.

Each group has 3 minutes to write answers to the question on the easel paper. After 3 minutes, rotate to next station. Do it again for the third station.

Ask for a volunteer to read people's answers. Ask if the group has any other ideas.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VOTING, PLEASE CALL GMSA AND ASK US TO COME AND DO A VOTING WORKSHOP.

EXTRA COMMENTS

Who can Vote in Vermont? YOU CAN IF:



You are a citizen of the United States

You Are a resident of Vermont and a resident of the town where you turn in your voter registration form.

You take the Voter's Oath

You are 18 years of age or older (or will be 18 on or before the day of election).



You can vote even if you have a guardian!

WHO CAN HELP ME IF I DECIDE TO VOTE?

Who takes you to the doctor? Maybe that person is the one to ask.

Neighbors, family or friends sometimes help.

Read the newspaper or watch a debate on television.

Call the League of Women Voters for help, which is an organization that helps people vote. League of Women voters' number and address is in the phone book.

Get some phone numbers to call for a ride at the last minute, in case your helper cannot take you to vote.

WHAT IF I CANNOT READ VERY WELL?

Ballots are often hard to read. However, most polling places will let you take someone with you to read for you.

HOW CAN I DECIDE ON MY CHOICES?

Voting requires some studying. Sometimes you will vote on new laws for your community. Other elections are about choosing the right people as leaders. You may need some help making your decisions. There are many places to get help. Do not forget that every citizen must make his/her own choices. Another person cannot make you vote for something or someone you do not like.

Here are some ways you can learn about who and what you want to vote for.

- Talk to teachers, parents, friends and neighbors about their choices.
- Listen to television and radio news.
- Look at the people running for office (called candidates).
- Listen to what they say.
- Keep a notebook about voting and candidates.