



GMSA is a strong group because we are led by self-advocates, for self-advocates. We have made resources and training materials to be presented by people with intellectual disabilities.

We encourage you to ask your students what they want to learn. We will do our best to create a workshop based on their ideas. Below is a list of topics and key issues that may interest them.

Topic #1 – Introduction to Self-Advocacy

- ☐ Learn what self-advocacy is and is not.
- ☐ Notice what is good in our lives and what is not.
- ☐ Brainstorm what should stay the same and what should change.
- ☐ Notice how we do and do not stand up for ourselves.
- ☐ Learn how to tell others we have a disability.
- ☐ Explore what it means to live the way we want.

Topic #2 – Knowing Yourself and Loving Yourself

- ☐ Know what your disability is. Practice talking about our disabilities.
- ☐ Feeling good about ourselves.
- ☐ Know what we are good at and what we want to get better at.
- ☐ Think about our different identities (like race, gender, and disability).

Topic #3 – Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

- ☐ Practice making choices, big and small.
- ☐ Learn easy steps to solve problems (What is the problem? What are my choices? What happens if...?).
- ☐ Understand the results of our choices.

Topic #4 – Goal Setting and Planning

- ☐ Set short-term and long-term goals for school, work, and life.
- ☐ Break down big goals into smaller steps we can do.
- ☐ Track progress and celebrate success.

Topic #5 – Communication

- ☐ Use clear and confident words to share our needs and choices.
- ☐ Turn negative thoughts into positive ones.
- ☐ Share our stories to support our goals
- ☐ Learn the difference between “can do” or proactive and “no can do” or reactive language.
- ☐ Practice introducing ourselves.

Topic #6 – Making Your Case

- ☐ Role-play how to speak up when someone disagrees with us.
- ☐ Learn how to turn a “Big No” into a “Yes” when asking to try something new.

Topic #7 – Our Rights as People with Disabilities

- ☐ Learn our rights under the ADA. Practice telling others about our rights.
- ☐ Notice unfair treatment and learn what to do about it.
- ☐ Learn the history of the disability rights movement.
- ☐ Connect disability rights to other civil rights and justice movements.

Topic #8 – Friends and Dating

- ☐ Be true to yourself; learn the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Practice ways to make and keep friends.

- ☐ Getting along: what to do when we disagree or someone's feelings get hurt.
- ☐ Learn how to set boundaries at work.
- ☐ Talk about moving from friendship to dating.
- ☐ Learn about consent and setting boundaries in friendships and dating.
- ☐ Practice safe ways to handle bullying or abuse.
- ☐ Know where to go for help and support.

Topic #9 – 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

1. Be Proactive: Take charge of your life. Make your own choices.
2. Begin with the End in Mind: Think about your big goals. Use them to guide your choices.
3. Put First Things First: Do the most important things before less important ones.
4. Think Win-Win: Look for solutions where everyone can do well and feel good.
5. Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood: Listen to others before you share your own ideas.
6. Synergize: Work with others. Together you can do more than you can alone.
7. Sharpen the Saw: Take care of yourself. Balance your body, mind, feelings, and spirit to stay healthy.

Topic #10 – Internet and Social Media

- ☐ Explore the good and bad sides of the internet and social media.
- ☐ Learn what is okay to share in public and what should stay private.
- ☐ Practice ways to stay safe online. Learn how to notice and respond to scams.

Topic #11 – Speaking Up in Our Communities

- ☐ Find issues that matter to us.

- ☐ Create and share clear messages about what we care about.
- ☐ Practice skills in role-plays and real-life situations.
- ☐ Learn how to talk respectfully with leaders and decision-makers.

Topic #12 – IEPs and Transition Planning

- ☐ Learn what an IEP is and why it matters.
- ☐ Know who is at the meeting and what they do.
- ☐ Practice asking questions, sharing ideas and saying what we need.
- ☐ Use scripts, role-play, or AAC supports if helpful.
- ☐ Take on roles (introduce people, share progress, talk about goals).
- ☐ Reflect on what went well and what to do better next time.

Topic #15 – Getting Help with Hard Choices

- ☐ Get support when you need help to make tough choices about your life. You do not need a guardian to get help. Always remember- you have the right to make your own choices about your life!

GMSA's Commitment to Today's Youth

GMSA supports peers to learn how to be independent and speak up for themselves. We teach students how to make choices and have a say in their own lives. People care about us and want to protect us, but we don't want to be protected from living our lives. We pay close attention to who is making decisions. Everyone needs support to make choices, but in the end, each person should have the final say in how they live. GMSA provides tools to help people make their own decisions and is committed to sharing these tools with students, teachers, parents, and anyone willing to listen.

Contact: Max Barrows Email: max@gmsavt.org

Website: <https://gmsavt.org/>