



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Disclosure, and Self-Advocacy

Disclaimer

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Overview of the Southeast ADA Center

Your Regional Resource Center on the
Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

Southeast ADA Center Overview

- A project of Burton Blatt Institute (bbi.syr.edu)
- Serve 8 states in the Southeast region
 - Alabama
 - Florida
 - Georgia
 - Kentucky
 - Mississippi
 - North Carolina
 - South Carolina
 - Tennessee



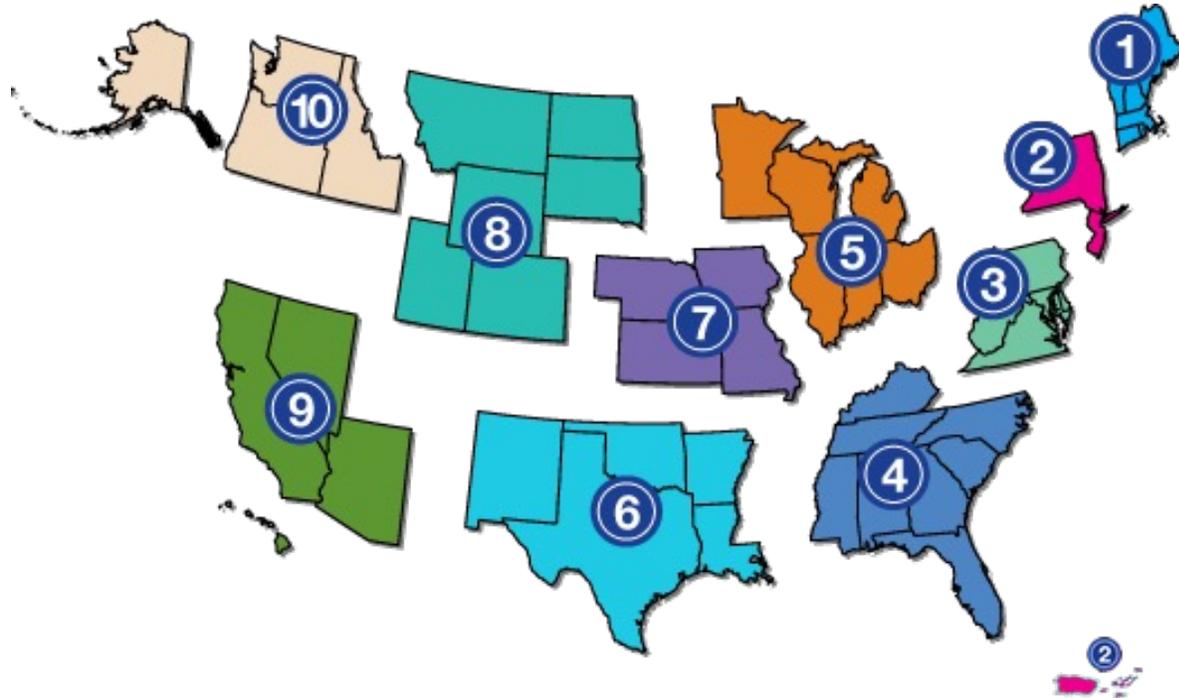


National Network

Information, Guidance and Training on the
Americans with Disabilities Act

1-800-949-4232

www.adata.org



Our Funding



**Administration for
Community Living (ACL)**

**National Institute on Disability,
Independent Living, and
Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)**

A Project of Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University



Burton Blatt Institute
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Syracuse University

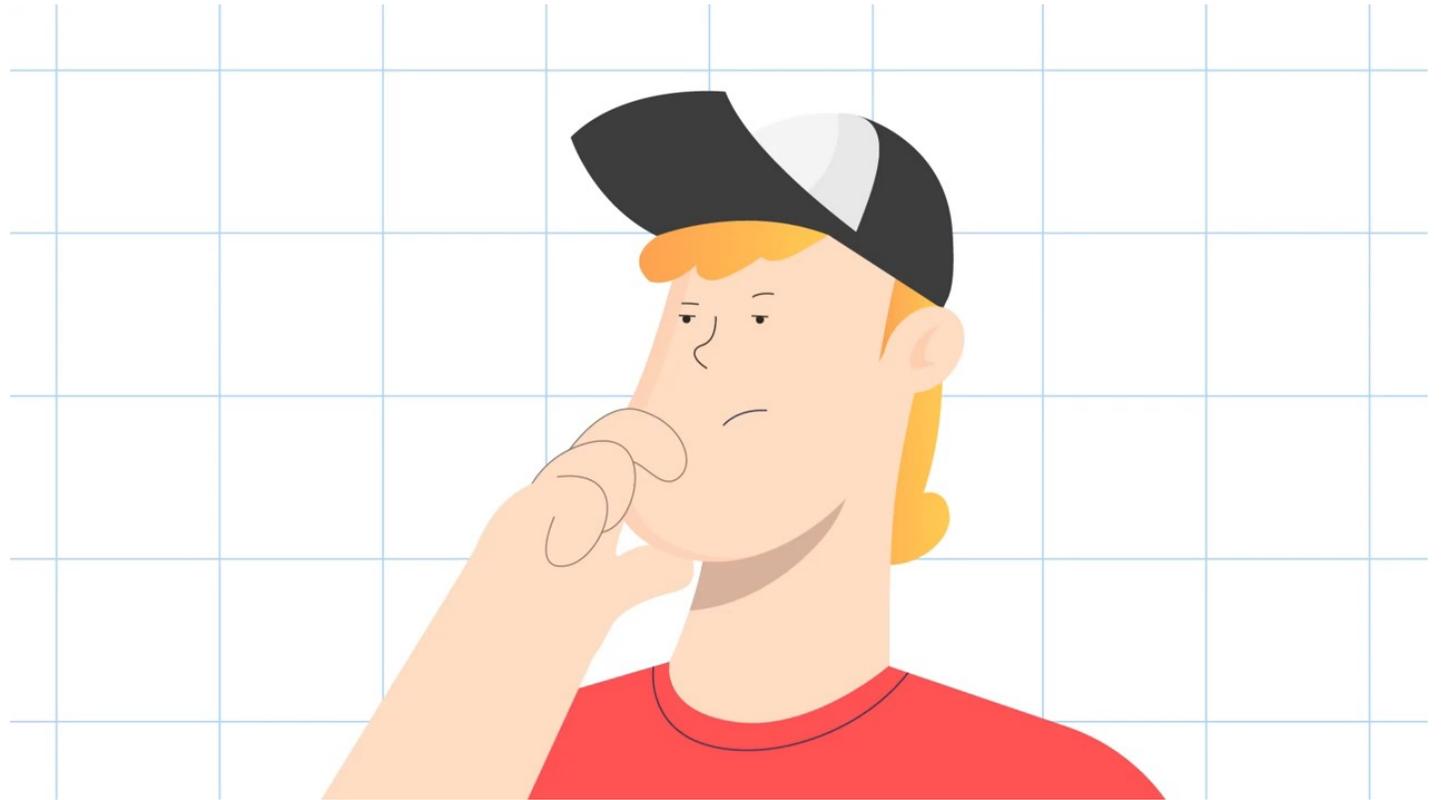
Our Mission

- Facilitate **voluntary compliance** with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Conduct **research** to reduce and eliminate barriers to employment and economic self-sufficiency and to increase the civic and social participation of Americans with disabilities



**Disclosure
Decisions
and Talking
about
My Disability**

**Video:
Disclosing
My
Disability**





Decisions

- All through their lives, students make decisions.
- Sometimes we do not even think about our decisions, like:
 - Sitting in a particular seat
- Most are small ones, like:
 - What am I going to wear today?
- Some are big ones, like:
 - Should I take this job?



Should I Tell a Someone That I Have a Disability?

One of the biggest decisions a student must make is:

- Should I tell someone about my disability?
- It is **the students'** decision whether to tell or not tell an employer or college staff that they have a disability.

Video: Why Should I Disclose?



Some disabilities are obvious.

Should I Disclose a Disability?

- **Sometimes disabilities are easy to spot, sometimes they are not.**
- A student never **has** to tell someone that they have a disability.
- **But** a student cannot get help with a job or with college unless they tell the employer or Disability Services Office.
- This is called “disclosure”.





Disclosure – Yes, or No?

- **If you decide to disclose (or tell someone about) your disability, it is important to remember that you only need to talk about two things:**
 - How does your disability makes it difficult to do something?
 - What help do you need to do your job or go to school?



**TOUGH
DECISIONS
AHEAD**

Disclosure Tips (Telling Someone About Your Disability)

- Write down the good things that might happen if you disclose your disability.
- Write down the risks you might have if you disclose your disability.
- Talk to a trusted friend..
- Write out the things you want to say when you talk about your disability.
- Remember! It is your decision what you to tell your boss or teacher about your disability.

The ADA Gives You the Right to Ask for Help



- First, you must tell your boss that you need help doing something on your job.
- You can ask for help **any time.**
 - Completing an application.
 - Interviewing for job.
 - When it is hard for you to do your job.
- This kind of help is called an “accommodation.”
- Only ask for help when you really need it.
- Do not wait too long to ask for help!

Video: Reasonable Accommodation



Asking for help at work because
of your disability

How Should I Ask My Boss for Help?

- How do I ask for help?
 - Talk to your boss
 - Write a note
 - Send an email
 - A job coach or someone else can ask for you
- Your boss should not get mad or punish you because you ask for help.



Talking About Your Disability With Your Employer

Be Positive!

- You can do the job.
- You need a little bit of help.
- Focus on what you do well and the solutions that will help you do things better.

Be Specific!

- Talk about the areas where you are having trouble.
- Instead of using words that label you, describe the difficulty you are having in terms of tasks, timing, etc.

Be Ready to Talk!

- Getting help starts with talking to your boss.
- Be willing to try new things.
- Be persistent. Don't give up!

Social Media and Disclosure

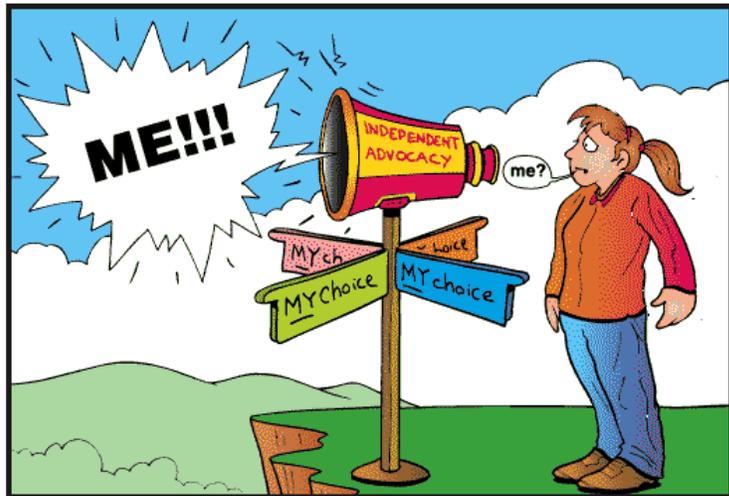
- Be careful what you post on social media. Your friends will see it but so will strangers.
- What you put on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media can be seen by an employer.



A green highway sign with white text is mounted on a metal structure over a highway. The sign is rectangular with rounded corners and a white border. The text on the sign is "The ADA & Self-Advocacy" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background of the sign is a solid green color. The sign is mounted on a metal structure that is part of a highway overpass or interchange. In the background, there is a highway with several cars and a truck. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a busy highway interchange.

The ADA & Self-Advocacy

What is “Self-Advocacy”?



Self-Advocacy

Knowing what you need.

Speaking up for yourself about the things you want.

Understanding your rights.

Getting help from people you trust when you need to make big decisions.

Individuals are **Empowered!**

Why is this important?

- When we make decisions for ourselves, we are **empowered**.
- Empowered means we are **in control** of the decisions we make.



Individuals Have More **Confidence!**

Why is this important?

- When we make our own decisions, we have more *confidence*.
- When we are more confident, we are proud of ourselves.



What Does It Mean to be a **Self-Advocate?**



- Do things that make your life better
- Be the best person you can be.
- Take care of your own money.
- Choose the services you receive.
- Make your own medical and health decisions.
- Make decisions about what you will do when you leave high school.

Why Do I Need to be a **Self-Advocate?**

Things change when a person leaves high school. After high school, **an individual must:**

- Ask for help, if needed.
- Speak up if they need help on the job or in school.
- Request that a person help them ask for accommodations from an employer or school.

Things to Know to be a Better Self-Advocate

List	List the things that you do well.
Describe	Describe your goals and what you want to do in the future.
Understand	Understand your rights and your responsibilities.
Identify	Identify areas where you might need help.

How Can a Person be a Better Self-Advocate?

An individual must (when appropriate):

- Be willing to ask questions when they do not understand something.
- Practice speaking up in family situations and in school.
- Write things down to help remember them.
- In school, it is important to remember there is an appropriate time and place to speak up if a person feels that they have been wronged.

Tips for Speaking Up



Calm	Be calm when you speak up.
Confident	Be confident.
“I”	Use “I” messages.
Respect	Be respectful.
Listen	Be a good listener.
Firm	Be firm but polite.
Ask	Ask for time to calm down if you become upset.
Eye Contact	Make eye contact.

Being a good self advocate is not:



Hurtful	Saying things that are hurtful.
Interruption	Interrupting others who are talking.
Voice	Raising your voice.
Body Language	Using defensive body language.
Anger	. Becoming angry or frustrated when things are said you disagree with

A Quote to Remember

Self advocacy begins by understanding that rights are never granted from above. They are **grasped from below** by those with the **courage and determination** to seize that to which they are entitled.

—Tony Coelho

Resource: Effective Self-Advocacy

- [Ten Steps to Effective Self-Advocacy](#)

Link:

disabilityrightsflorida.org/documents/10steps/DRF_Self-Advocacy_2021_English.pdf

Source: Ten Steps to Effective Self-Advocacy

Description: A ten-step guide to advocacy for people with disabilities.

Resource: Self-Advocacy Videos

- [Activate Here](#)

Link: vimeo.com/113539854

Source: Welcome Change Productions

Description: Activate Here! is a series of seven short videos for self-advocates, created by self-advocates. These downloadable videos can help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities develop their advocacy skills.

Resource: Civic Engagement Toolbox

- [Civic Engagement Toolbox for Self-Advocates](#)

Link: autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/civic/854

Source: Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

Description: These toolkits focus on the basics of civic engagement. Civic engagement means actively participating in our democracy. In a democracy, regular people choose, or elect, who gets to be in government. The people we elect should listen to our concerns and advocate for us in the government.

Resource: Policy Advocacy Toolkits

- **[Autistic Self-Advocacy Network Policy Advocacy Toolkits](#)**
Link: autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/
Source: Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
Description: The policy advocacy toolkits are designed to be used for system change. These toolkits provide advocates, lawmakers, and professionals with a variety of information, guidance, and resources on specific policy issues, including, where appropriate, model legislation, research overviews, and “know your rights” documentation.

Resource: Self-Advocacy Groups

- **List of Self-Advocacy Groups by State (Tennessee)**
Link: selfadvocacyonline.org/find/state.asp?state=tn
Source: The Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC) at The University of Minnesota and The Arc
Description: A list of self-advocacy groups by state.
- **Self Advocates Becoming Empowered** -- (SABE)
Link: sabeusa.org/meet-sabe
Description: A national self-advocacy organization with a board of regional

Resource: Online Self-Advocacy Group

- **Self-Advocacy Online**

Link: selfadvocacyonline.org

Source: The Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC) at The University of Minnesota and The Arc

- **Description:** Website for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to help them advocate for themselves and take charge of their lives. It includes videos of self-advocates sharing their stories and a national listing of self-advocacy groups for people with I/DD. One section of the website explains disability research and other information using formats easily accessible to people with I/DD.

Questions ?



Southeast ADA Center

Phone: 404-541-9001 or 1-800-949-4232

E-mail: adasoutheast@syr.edu

Web: adasoutheast.org

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