



For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities



POSITION STATEMENT Self Determination

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities¹ have the same right to self-determination as all people. They must have opportunities and experiences that enable them to exert control in their lives and to advocate on their own behalf.

Issue

Many of our constituents have not had the opportunity or the support to control choices and decisions about important aspects of their lives. Instead, they are often overprotected and involuntarily segregated. Many of these people have not had opportunities to learn the skills and have the experiences that would enable them to take more personal control and make choices. The lack of such learning opportunities and experiences has impeded the right of people with these disabilities to become participating, valued, and respected members of their communities. Furthermore, state monitoring and licensure policies and practices may be contrary to the principles of self-determination.

Position

Our constituents, as Self Advocates, have the same right to self-determination as all people and must have the freedom, authority, and support to exercise control over their lives. To this end, they must:

In their personal lives have:

- opportunities to advocate for themselves with the assurance that their desires, interests, and preferences will be respected and honored.
- opportunities to acquire and use skills and knowledge which better enable them to exercise choice.
- the right to take risks.
- the right to choose their own allies.

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- the lead in decision-making about all aspects of their lives.
- the option to self-direct their own supports and services and allocate available resources.
- the choice and support necessary to hire, train, manage, and fire their own staff.
- opportunities to take leadership roles in setting the policy direction for the self-determination movement.
- the right to representation and meaningful involvement in policy-making at the federal, state, and local levels.

In their community lives have:

- the right to receive the necessary support and assistance to vote.
- opportunities to be supported to become active, valued members and leaders of community boards, advisory councils, and other organizations.

¹“People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities” refers to those defined by AAIDD classification and DSM IV. In everyday language they are frequently referred to as people with cognitive, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities although the professional and legal definitions of those terms both include others and exclude some defined by DSM IV.

Adopted:
Congress of Delegates, The Arc of the United States
2011

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