

AUTISM TRAINING AND TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Empowering the Next Generation of Neurodiverse Self-Advocates

Presented by
Haley Moss

The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project

The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA) develops and presents resources that assist individuals with autism in their transition from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment.

ATTA provides training and support to important stakeholders as they work to provide an equitable experience for individuals on the spectrum.

The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support

The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPPS) creates, supports, and delivers professional development for education professionals across Illinois. ICSPPS provides technical assistance, develops publications, and facilitates program improvement strategies for our partners as they relate to college transition, recruitment, retention, and completion—encouraging achievement of special populations learners. ICSPPS was founded in 1977 at Illinois State University and is housed in the Educational Administration and Foundations department in the College of Education.





Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA)

<https://autismcollegeandcareer.com>



Illinois State Board of Education

icsps impacting
educational
equity



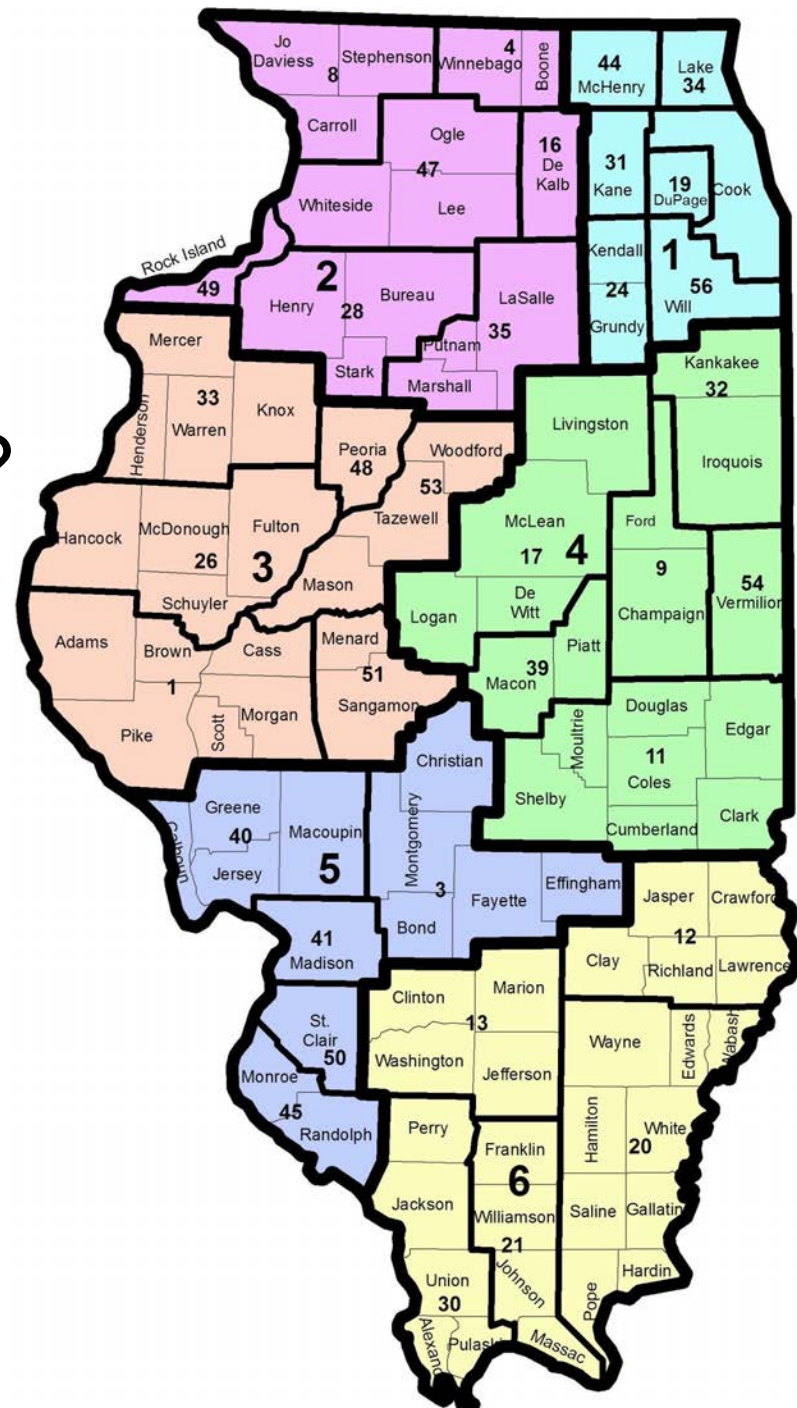
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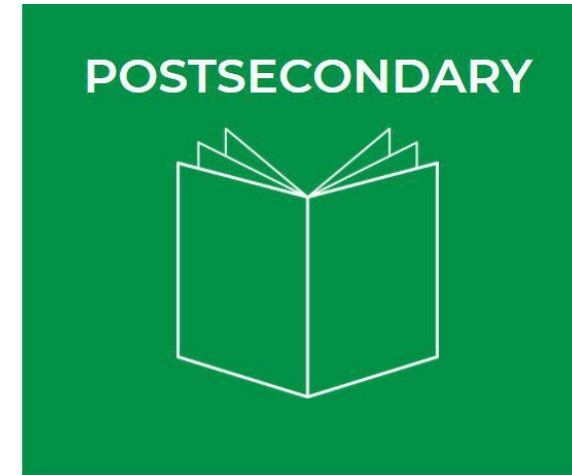
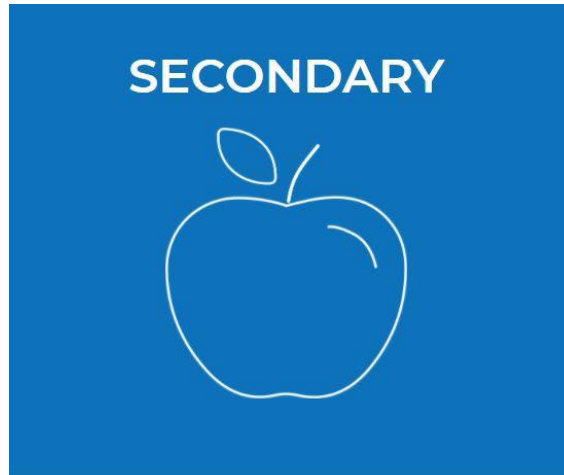
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Which Region are you Located in?

1. Chicago
2. Northeast
3. Northwest
4. East Central
5. Southwest
6. Southeast



Which ATTA Stakeholder do you Represent?



Moderator Information



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Accessibility Notes

This webinar strives to be as inclusive as possible!

No one person can grant or gatekeep access. Access is something we create together.

If you need to take a break, answer phone calls, stand up, twiddle your fingers, stim, or feel overwhelmed – go for it!

If you would like a copy of these slides, images have alt text and should be screen reader accessible too. 😊

What is Self-Advocacy?

- ❑ Self-advocacy is both a set of skills and a movement
- ❑ Self-advocacy skills empower folks to make choices
- ❑ “Self-advocacy – as a personal and political philosophy – is a movement primarily of and by [people with disabilities] who are making their own decisions, speaking for themselves and for others with disabilities, and taking control over their lives.”

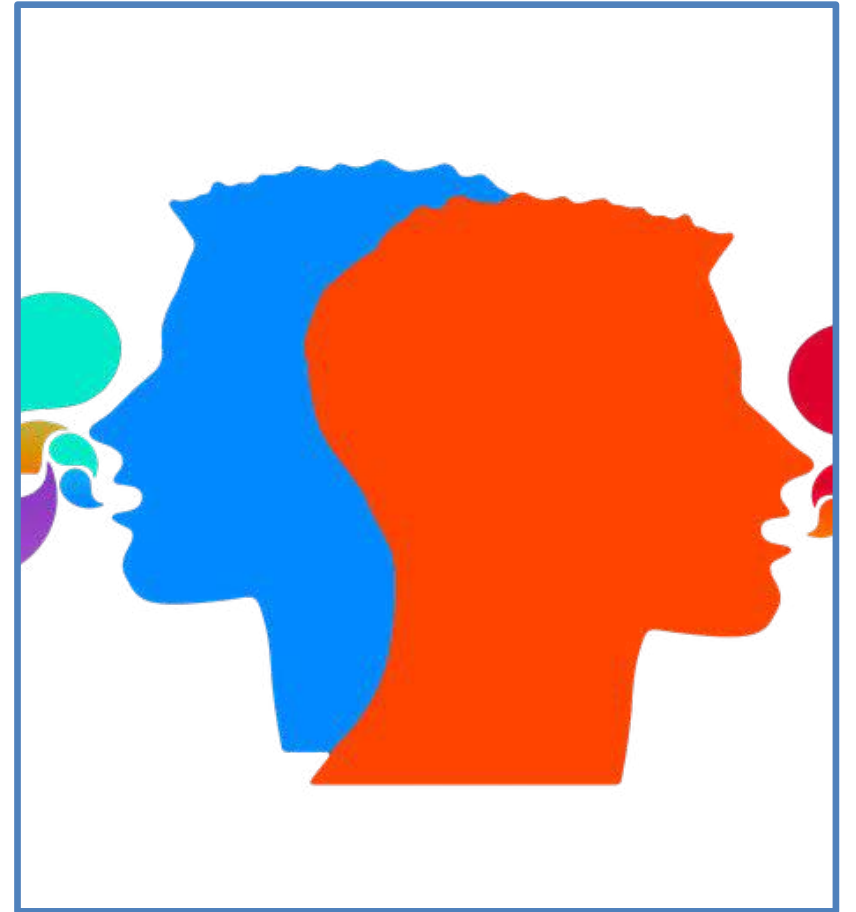


Who Are Advocates?

Being an advocate is not a job title like a lawyer, politician, or lobbyist

What Self-Advocacy Actually Is

- ❑ Advocacy is a form of communication!
- ❑ Can be as simple as saying "yes" or "no" or as complex as speaking for a group of people to lawmakers



Anyone Can Be A Self-Advocate

- People with disabilities and people without disabilities self-advocate every day.
- We make decisions for ourselves constantly from the second we wake up until we go to bed.
- We speak up for ourselves and make decisions at home, in school, at work, in friendships, in relationships, etc.
- We use our voices to get what we need to succeed.

Self-Advocacy on a Larger Scale

- ❑ Self-advocates can be public policy advocates and activists!
- ❑ Kayla McKeon and Conner Cummings



I'm Not Going Into Policy. Why Is This Important For Me?

- ❑ No matter the level of support needs, all autistic people deserve to be heard, have a way to communicate, be able to make decisions, and feel powerful in everyday life.
- ❑ Everybody deserves to have skills to make themselves feel heard, empowered, and maintain a level of independence



Making the Tradition: Encouraging Self-Advocacy

Where Self-Advocacy Begins



Self-advocacy begins at home



Encourages decision-making



No form of self-advocacy is too small

Why Should We Encourage Autistic Self-Advocacy?

- Even if you're autistic and may not...
 - Live independently
 - Speak with your mouth
 - Drive a car
 - Go to college
- Your choices and preferences matter!
- You deserve to be heard.

But My Child May Not Be Independent

- ❑ Independence vs. Interdependence
- ❑ You should still be encouraging self-advocacy at home!
- ❑ Self-advocacy tools and skills instill confidence in autistic people with varying support needs
- ❑ Building confidence and self-esteem is important

I'm Not a Parent of Self-Advocate. What Can I Do?

- ❑ Teachers, professionals, and employers can also encourage self-advocacy in respective settings
- ❑ In therapies, can be as simple as a client saying “I don’t feel comfortable” and respecting boundaries
 - Honoring someone’s preferences, sensory needs, etc.
- ❑ At work, it can be learning someone’s needs: “I need to take a break.”
- ❑ For accommodations, it can be: “I work best when...”
- ❑ In school, can apply to all students
 - “I Wish My Teacher Knew...” hashtag and conversation

Becoming a Strong Neurodivergent Self-Advocate

Back to Basics

Identify how you best communicate

Do you like to talk?

Do you like to write?

Do you use gestures?

Do you use assistive technology?

Identifying what you need and want

What are the most important things?

How can the people in your life help you and support you to make this happen?

How to create access?

“Use Your Words”



Personal Perspective

- “Use your words”
- “Ask and you shall receive”
- Learning self-advocacy skills at a young age
Meetings with teachers
- Using skills in school, independent living, work, relationships, and beyond

Social and Workplace Self-Advocacy

- ❑ Communicating with others allows us to make decisions, rather than have others make them for us
- ❑ Self-advocacy in social situations
 - Self-awareness of limits
 - The need for inclusion
 - Recognizing masking and camouflaging as potential barriers
- ❑ Requesting reasonable accommodations
- ❑ “I work best when...” as a power phrase for neurodiversity

What If This Stuff Makes Me Nervous?

- ❑ That's okay!
- ❑ Take your time
- ❑ Practice what message you want to get across
 - In front of the mirror, writing it out
 - "Talking points"



Using Advocacy Skills to Bring Change

- Self-advocacy as a collective movement
- Laboring towards acceptance, inclusion, equality and equity
- Knowledge of the law and policy
- Educating others on neurodiversity and disability-related issues
 - Major disability rights issues and policies that affect neurodivergent people each day
- Ensuring autistic and neurodivergent people have a seat at the decision-making table

Using Self-Advocacy Skills in Practice

- ❑ The disability community is full of self-advocacy and advocacy opportunities
- ❑ Skills can be used with:
 - Service providers
 - Policymakers
 - Schools
 - Learning from other people with disabilities



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Questions and Discussion