

Self-Determination and Individuals with Disabilities

Fact Sheet



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Self-Determination

Self-determination means an individual has control over ones own life. It is a set of attitudes and abilities that allow an individual to make and achieve goals in their life. Self-determination includes making one's own choices, solving problems, taking control and responsibility of one's own life, advocating for oneself, and experiencing the consequences of choices.

Learning and Practicing Self-Determination

Self-determination is a set of skills that we all use that needs to be taught and practiced. Many individuals with disabilities haven't had the opportunity to practice self-determination, or need additional support to participate in it. Historically, society has believed that individuals with disabilities need to be protected, or that they cannot make decisions for themselves. While the intent may be to help individuals with disabilities, not allowing them to participate in self-determination can harm their ability to live the life they have envisioned for themselves. Additionally, research suggests that practicing self-determination increases quality of life.

As a direct support professional, part of your role is to support individuals to participate in and practice the skills of self-determination. This may include supporting individuals to practice self-awareness, assertiveness, creativity, choice-making, and problem-solving skills. For an individual to most successfully use self-determination, skills must be practiced and used frequently. To learn more about self-determination, follow the QR codes below. You can click [here](#) for information from the Utah Parent Center (UPC), or [here](#) for information from the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD).



UPC



AAIDD

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Examples of Self-Determination

Decision-Making

"I want to quit my job and find something else!"

Advocacy

"No thanks, I'd rather make my own dinner."

Participation

"I joined a game club at the library!"

"My boyfriend and I are getting into a lot of fights, I am thinking about what to do."

Problem-Solving

Independence

"I use my phone to schedule my own FLEX transit."