Involving Self-Advocates: Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion

Promoting Effective Practices Webinar Series

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Objectives

- Discuss who self-advocates are and what authentic inclusion means
- Discuss strategies for including self-advocates in activities of the collaboration
- Generate ideas for possible roles for self-advocates in the collaboration
Who are Self-Advocates

• The dictionary defines a self-advocate as a person who speaks up for himself or herself and lets others know what he or she thinks.

• This broad definition can include all of us so for the purposes of this presentation I will am defining self-advocate as:
  • People with developmental/intellectual disabilities, and
  • People with psychiatric disabilities.
What is Inclusion?

- Partial inclusion refers to a person with a disability who is included for brief periods of time or in selected settings.

- Full inclusion with support refers to a person with a disability who is physically in a setting, but the expectations are modified and supports (such as an aide) are put in place.

- Reverse inclusion refers to bringing a person without a disability into a setting with people who have disabilities to be role models and offer opportunities for building relationships.
What is Authentic Inclusion?

- Authentic Inclusion involves the selection of a typical activity in which the person with a disability can fully engage with minimal or no support. In Authentic Inclusion, the person is not just physically present but actually and authentically a part of whatever is going on.
Nothing About Us Without Us

- People with disabilities should be at the table when decisions are being made about them.
What Do Self-Advocates Bring to the Table?

- Unique perspective
- Personal experience
- Act as a bridge to other self-advocates
- Viewpoint from the population served
- Help you identify unmet needs and opportunities
- Share effective strategies and techniques for reaching out and serving individuals with disabilities
- Skills and talents
- Etc.
Poll Question #1
R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

- Reach the potential
- Empowerment
- Support
- Presence
- Equal opportunity to participate
- Comfort, confidence and capacity
- Team
Reach the Potential

Build off the strengths and abilities of self-advocates

We all have things that we are good at and when we get to use those skills in a group or collaborative effort we feel like we are contributing something useful.
Empowerment

By being a part of the team you can help increase the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.
Support

Provide any necessary supports to ensure that self-advocates can have meaningful involvement.

Support comes in a variety of forms, it may be a person, an item, or a service. Examples:

- Providing written material in plain language
- Offering extra breaks
- Providing interpreters
- Etc.

Supports are individualized so what works for one person may not work for another. Ask the person!
Presence

Ensuring that self-advocates are present and participating so that you are really honoring the concept of:

Nothing About Us Without Us
Equal Opportunity

Ensuring that self-advocates have an equal opportunity and voice in collaborations.

This may include:

- Having self-advocates on your agency’s board,
- Including them in committees and other opportunities.

This is not about creating separate groups or committees for self-advocates, but rather about including them in existing groups/committees.
By having individuals with disabilities as part of your team, you help build the comfort, confidence and capacity of the staff who are working with them. These real life experiences offer staff experience they can’t get in a training and help staff overcome any preconceived ideas and stereotypes they may be bringing into the work.

It also helps build the comfort, confidence and capacity of the individuals with the disabilities who are a part of your group.
Ensuring that self-advocates are a part of the TEAM and involving them on a variety of levels.
Selecting Participants

Just because someone has a disability does not mean they are the person you select to be on your team.
Criteria

Create a set of criteria for the members of your team and choose the members of your team based on the skill sets and expertise that you need at the table.
Potential Implementation Activities

• Safety and Access reviews
• Training/curriculum development
• Staff training
• Outreach material
• Policy and procedure development
• Program development
• Website safety and access
• Etc.
Poll Question #2
How Self-Advocates Can Help?

- Conducting safety/ access reviews
- Developing and reviewing curriculum and providing training
- Developing, reviewing outreach material and policies & procedures
- Reviewing websites
- Just about anything you need them to do….Just Ask
Sharing and Questions
The End