

# Advocacy Demystified: What It Looks Like for Families

Being an advocate doesn't mean you have to change the whole world at once, or get suited up for battle each time. Every small step you take to support your family member matters and makes life more accessible. Advocacy isn't as intimidating as it might seem—you already have the skills and knowledge to make a real difference, and every action you take counts.

## Common Misconceptions about Advocacy

**Myth:** Advocacy is best left to experienced or trained experts in the field.

**Reality:** Anybody can be an advocate within their comfort level and with the right resources and support. You are your child's best advocate since you know them best. While some reading or training on how to advocate is helpful, you can use your natural skills as a caregiver to speak up for them. You also don't have to do this alone! There are many organizations like FSI to walk alongside you and help along the way.

**Myth:** Advocacy should only be done by parents, on their own

**Reality:** Building a team to help you advocate is one of the most effective ways to get results. When professionals like therapists, doctors, and support staff speak up or write a letter about your child's needs, it can make a big difference. And don't forget your own personal circle of other parents, friends and family – consider their input or invite them into a meeting.

**Myth:** Advocacy is only for major issues or complex situations.

**Reality:** Advocacy is important in big and small cases. It doesn't just take place in school board meetings or political rallies. It can look very different, and each situation is impactful and meaningful. As parents or caregivers of individuals with disabilities, you are advocating every day.

### Examples of advocacy:


- Requesting a quiet space in a theme park
- Requesting additional supports at school
- Using tools like my booklet to ensure all the information needed is provided to a service provider
- Helping someone understand benefits or services they can access

**Myth:** Advocacy is aggressive and confrontational

**Reality:** Effective advocacy is all about collaboration and being respectful.

Advocating isn't about creating conflict; it's about building a bridge of understanding. With each conversation, you're taking steps to a place where your experiences, insights, and needs are valued.



 **Watch and Learn**  
[What is Advocacy?](#)

### **Self Advocacy**

Real advocacy starts with listening to the person at the center of the matter. Their needs and desires should be at the forefront and whenever possible, decisions should be made with them, not for them. The voice of a self-advocate is not just part of the process—it is the heart of it.