Advocacy

“Get into politics as if your life depended on it. It does.”
– Justin Dart, Jr., disability advocate

Introduction

People with disabilities are the best experts on their needs, and they have a right to make their own choices to fulfill those needs. If they are not able to fulfill a want or need, advocacy is the answer.

The Advocacy session explores what advocacy means to the individual, possible reasons to advocate, and different types of advocacy. Participants then plan and practice self-advocacy and advocating as part of a larger group, applying many of the skills they have developed over the course of the workshop.

Content Summary

Defining Advocacy: Learning what advocacy is and exploring examples of advocacy situations

Self-Advocacy: Identifying necessary steps to engage in self-advocacy, setting goals and writing a self-advocacy plan

Group Advocacy: Exploring the group advocacy process, identifying problems and their solutions, and defining different roles in group advocacy
Healthy Community Living is a program to support opportunities for people with disabilities to live well and participate fully in their communities.

It includes two peer-led independent living skills workshops, Community Living Skills and Living Well in the Community, which are each divided into ten specific content sessions.

RTC:Rural used an iterative participatory curriculum development (IPCD) process to involve key stakeholder engagement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of each workshop.

Each workshop has been developed through partnerships with people with disabilities with the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) and Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

The HCL Snapshots series explores how partner participation through the IPCD process was fundamental in shaping the HCL program to improve people’s wellbeing by providing support, health promotion, education, and opportunities for people with disabilities to succeed in reaching personal goals.

Learning Objectives

The Advocacy session can help participants identify ways to get their needs met, find people in their life to engage for support, and identify issues that may require a group of people to address.

This session may raise participants’ confidence so they are able to advocate for personal needs and participate in group advocacy so they can begin to address systems problems with their peers. Participants may also recognize how all of the skills they have been learning throughout the workshop can support them as advocates.

Disability Community Partnership Shaped Content

In developing the Advocacy session, CIL project partners shared a wealth of personal and professional knowledge that connected curriculum content to real-life experiences.

Project partners identified examples of advocacy that resonate with many people, grounded in the powerful truth that each person is an expert on themselves and knows what is best for them. Although advocacy can be difficult, CIL project partners brought expertise and passion to the session content that will continue to engage and encourage workshop participants.

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