

Accommodations versus Modifications

When meeting with school staff, you may hear the terms accommodations and modifications. While the two words sound similar, they mean two completely different things.

Accommodations change **how** a student learns or how they access the information or material that needs to be learned. Accommodations are a change or an adjustment in:

- The way information is presented (visually, audio, prepared handouts);
- How the student responds to what is learned (verbal, written, typed);
- The environment in which the student is learning (room, lighting, noise level);
- Time of the instruction (time of day, length of instruction).

Accommodations level the playing field, so students have equal access to learning. Accommodations may carry over to post-secondary learning and employment situations.

Modifications on the other hand, change **what** a student is taught or expected to learn. They are practices or materials that change, lower or reduce state-required learning expectations. The consequences of using modifications may include:

- Not receiving the instruction needed to meet standards being taught;
- Not having the information needed that may be assessed;
- Not having the necessary course work or skills to meet post-secondary goals.

Modifications do not level the playing field, they change the playing field. Modifications are generally not accepted in post-secondary education or in a work environment.

Self-Advocacy Resources:

SD Parent Connection—www.sdparent.org

iTransition South Dakota - <http://www.itransitionsd.org/>

I'm Determined—<http://www.imdetermined.org/>

Find Your Strengths! -

<http://www.literacynet.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html>

What and why is Self-Advocacy Important?

<https://www.wrightslaw.com/law.htm>

Self-Advocacy Guide for Teens with Disabilities -

<https://uadvocate4u.weebly.com/activities.html>

Why Advocate?

"Unless someone like you cares
a whole awful lot, Nothing is
going to get better. It's not."
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax



The Importance of People First Language

"Your words, attitudes and actions impact my life more than my disability."

People First Language (PFL) represents a more respectful, accurate way of communicating about a person with a disability. Words DO matter! When we adopt new ways of thinking and talking about people with disabilities, we exert a positive influence on their lives and on society as a whole. People with disabilities are NOT their disabilities or diagnoses, they are PEOPLE first. People First Language describes what a person *has*, not who a person *is*!

Examples of People First language

Wrong	Right
An Autistic Person	Person who has Autism
Someone confined to a chair	A person who uses a wheelchair
A Crippled Person	A person who has a physical disability
A Learning disabled person	Someone with a Learning Disability

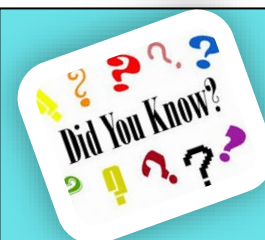
Source: Information from "Disability is Natural" website; www.disabilityisnatural.com.

Tips on Self-Advocacy In the High School Transition Process

"A young person with a disability should be given opportunities to make choices and experience the consequences of those choices..."

"Learning to behave responsibly comes with support, practice, and mistakes..."

"Few things help children more than placing responsibility upon them and letting them know that you trust them..."



Parents and Guardians Play a Critical Role in Teaching Self-Advocacy Skills

Here's how you can help with this:

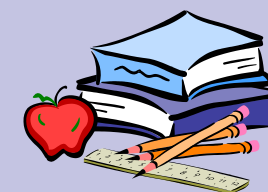
- Learn about your student's disability; help them understand the challenges it may present.
- Help your student understand how the disability may impact school, home and community life.
- Become familiar with accommodations and modifications.
- Encourage participation in the development of the IEP or 504 Plan and attend meetings.
- Model self-advocacy and support your student in practicing and using self-advocacy skills.
- Encourage independence and support your student in the process.
- Provide opportunities for success.

Developed by
Transition Services Liaison Project,
a Black Hills Special Services
Cooperative program.



While in high school, your student should...

- Be aware of personal preferences, interests, strengths and limitations
- Learn about their disability
- Share strengths, learning styles, challenges and needed accommodations with teachers
- Learn and practice communication and problem solving skills
- Actively participate in IEP meetings
- Set goals and work toward them
- Apply for Youth Leadership Forum (activity sponsored by TSLP) to learn more about self-advocacy



What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-Advocacy is the practice of speaking up for yourself. It is learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you and making decisions about your own life. Self-advocacy is finding out who will support you in your journey and knowing your rights and responsibilities. It is the practice of problem solving, listening and learning, reaching out to others when you need help, creating friendships, and learning about self-determination.

Schools/IEP teams can assess students' self-advocacy skills, and develop goals and/or objectives to increase these skills. CHOICE and CONTROL are critical components to being a self-determined person. Oftentimes, adults just "assume" students will learn these skills on their own. In reality, students with disabilities often need direct instruction to learn how to make good decisions, communicate effectively, and solve problems. Learning the skills to be a good self-advocate should be a central piece of transition planning for all young adults!



Encourage Youth to Actively Participate in IEP Meetings!



Federal law states that all youth with disabilities must be invited to their IEP meeting by the time they turn 16 yrs. old. They should also be involved in all aspects of the process, including evaluation, setting goals, etc. If students are not able to attend the meeting, their preferences and interests must be taken into account.

Levels of Participation in IEP Meetings include:

- 1.) Youth attends as full member of IEP team. IEP case manager directs questions to youth to encourage participation.
- 2.) IEP case manager works with youth to co-present information.
- 3.) Youth leads IEP meeting with support from other participants.

To access a helpful tool to assist students in preparing for the IEP meeting, go to: iTransitionsd.org



For more information on student participation in the IEP, contact TSLP staff or go to the TSLP website at: www.tslp.org.

What does an Assertive Self-Advocate look like?

Help role model the characteristics of a self-advocate at home and encourage your young adult to develop these skills. Talk to the teacher about teaching self-advocacy skills at school.

A Self-Advocate:

- Understands their own strengths and weaknesses
- Takes initiative
- Introduces self to others
- Is prepared and has information ready
- Asks specifically for what is needed
- Is well-mannered and asks for help in a reasonable way
- Uses appropriate body language
- Listens without interrupting
- Sets goals for self
- Is open-minded and tolerant of others



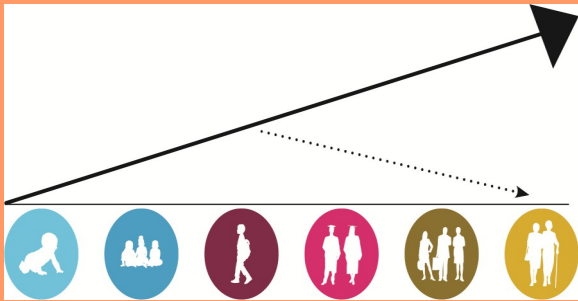
Charting the LifeCourse

A Guide for Individuals, Families and Professionals

Throughout a student's life, they are faced with questions and search for answers to help them during the transition from high school to a full and meaningful life as an adult. This is true for everyone, especially when a person has a disability or a special healthcare need.

The Charting the Life Course framework includes various principles developed *by and for families and self-advocates* to help them think about what they need to know, identify how to find or develop supports, and discover what it takes to live the life they want to live. It emphasizes self-determination and the need to develop a vision for the future and what it will take to achieve the vision, as well as experiences to avoid that may lead to what they don't want for the future. Referred to as life trajectory, students and families can use it as a tool to chart a path to the life they dream of. Questions may include:

- Where and with whom do I want to live?
- Do I want to pursue post-secondary education & what courses do I want to take?
- What is my dream job or career?
- How will I meet friends?
- What supports or services will I need to live and work in the community?



Charting the LifeCourse: Transition to Adulthood is designed to help you think about some of the questions to ask, options to consider, and things to talk about with your transitioning youth. Choices your child make during this time can help to positively shape the future and the life they will live as an adult. The guide presents questions to ask or consider in different life domains, which are different aspects and experiences of life that all people consider as they age and grow from childhood into adulthood and, eventually, the senior years of life.

Charting the Life Course Tools



- Trajectory Worksheet for Individuals and Families
- Tool for Developing a Vision For Individuals and Families
- Integrated Supports Star Worksheet
- Exploring Life Possibilities

For training opportunities or additional information on Charting the LifeCourse, contact the Department of Human Services at 1-800-265-9684 or <https://dhs.sd.gov/>

This publication was created using the Charting the LifeCourse Framework, developed by UMKC Institute for Human Development, UCEDD, and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License