
Professional Certificate in Advocacy Studies for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Legal Rights and Advocacy for Individuals with ASD

Accommodations: modifications or adjustments to a work or education environment that allow an individual with ASD to participate and perform to the best of their abilities. Accommodations can include flexible work schedules, quiet work spaces, or the use of assistive technology.

Advocacy: the process of actively supporting and representing the interests and rights of individuals with ASD. Advocacy can take many forms, including self-advocacy, where individuals with ASD speak up for themselves, and systems advocacy, where organizations or groups work to change policies and practices that affect the lives of individuals with ASD.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): a federal law passed in 1990 that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those with ASD, in employment, education, transportation, and other areas of public life. The ADA requires employers and other covered entities to provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities.

Assistive technology: devices or software that help individuals with ASD overcome challenges and participate more fully in daily activities. Assistive technology can include communication devices, visual schedules, or adaptive keyboards.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties in social communication and interaction, as well as restricted and repetitive behaviors or interests. ASD affects individuals to varying degrees and can co-occur with other conditions, such as intellectual disability or ADHD.

Disability Rights Movement: a social movement that seeks to secure the civil rights, equality, and inclusion of individuals with disabilities, including those with ASD. The movement has led to the passage of important laws, such as the ADA, and has raised awareness about the capabilities and contributions of individuals with disabilities.

Education rights: the rights of individuals with ASD to receive a free and appropriate education, as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This includes the right to a individualized education program (IEP), which outlines the accommodations and supports needed for the individual to succeed in school.

Employment rights: the rights of individuals with ASD to equal employment opportunities, as outlined in the ADA. This includes the right to reasonable accommodations in the workplace and protection against discrimination.

Guardianship: a legal arrangement in which a person, usually a parent or close relative, is given the legal authority to make decisions on behalf of an individual with ASD who is deemed unable to make decisions

for themselves. Guardianship can be full or limited, and can be established through a court process.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): a written plan that outlines the accommodations and supports needed for a student with ASD to receive a free and appropriate education, as required by IDEA. The IEP is developed through a collaborative process involving the student, parents, teachers, and other education professionals.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): a federal law passed in 1975 that guarantees a free and appropriate education to all children with disabilities, including those with ASD. IDEA requires schools to develop an IEP for each student with a disability, and mandates the provision of special education and related services.

Least restrictive environment (LRE): a principle outlined in IDEA that requires students with disabilities, including those with ASD, to be educated in the least restrictive environment possible, meaning they should be educated with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate.

Reasonable accommodations: modifications or adjustments made to a work or education environment that allow an individual with ASD to participate and perform to the best of their abilities, as required by the ADA. Reasonable accommodations can include flexible work schedules, quiet work spaces, or the use of assistive technology.

Self-advocacy: the process of speaking up for oneself and one's own needs and rights, as opposed to relying on others to do so. Self-advocacy is an important skill for individuals with ASD to develop, as it allows them to advocate for themselves in various settings, including school, work, and in the community.

Supported decision-making: a process in which an individual with ASD receives support from a trusted person or team in making decisions about their own life. Supported decision-making is an alternative to guardianship and allows individuals with ASD to maintain control over their own lives while receiving the support they need to make informed decisions.

Systems advocacy: the process of working to change policies and practices that affect the lives of individuals with ASD, as opposed to advocating for the needs of a specific individual. Systems advocacy can take many forms, including lobbying, public education, and coalition building.

Vocational rehabilitation: a program or service that helps individuals with disabilities, including those with ASD, to secure and maintain employment. Vocational rehabilitation can include job training, job placement, and counseling.

Workplace accommodations: modifications or adjustments made to a work environment that allow an individual with ASD to perform their job duties to the best of their abilities. Workplace accommodations can include flexible work schedules, quiet work spaces, or the use of assistive technology.