

About Self Advocacy

- What is Self-Advocacy? Self-Advocacy is the concept of speaking up for your own goals, rights, wants and needs. It means making your own choices and also taking responsibility for the consequences of your actions.
- What is the Self-Advocacy Movement? The Self-Advocacy movement is the civil rights movement for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It has been active in the United States since the 1980s. Self-Advocacy groups work together to make a more inclusive society for people with disabilities. The concept of “nothing about us without us” is at the heart of this movement.

About DDA’s Advocacy Specialist

- **What is an “Advocacy Specialist?”**
 - The DDA has an Advocacy Specialist in each of the four Regional Offices. Each Advocacy Specialist has lived-experiences using the similar services that DDA waiver participants, and other people with disabilities use, such as Social Security, DORS, and paratransit. This gives them an “insider knowledge” of how to navigate services that someone without disabilities may not have.
- **Who do Advocacy Specialists assist?**
 - The Advocacy Specialists support and assist people who are applying for DDA services, people already receiving traditional or self-directed DDA services, and their families.
- **What do the Advocacy Specialists do?**
 - Advocate for people seeking or receiving DDA services
 - Build relationships with other self-advocates, self-advocacy groups, and their teams
 - Provide resources and information about DDA, community, Federal and State programs to help explain what services and supports are available
 - Conduct webinars, provider training, and make presentations to community groups on topics such as employment, transitioning youth, mental health, assistive technology, safety, and independent living/housing
 - Attend team meetings and provide guidance on community resources and is the DDA Regional Office contact person for a specific need or link to, the Forensic Coordinator for court matters, Eligibility Coordinator for application questions, Self-Directed Lead for Self- Directed Services questions
 - Brainstorm strategies to help with troubleshooting challenges when advocating for wants and needs

- **If I reach out to an Advocacy Specialist does money come out of my annual budget?**
 - No. support or assistance from an Advocacy Specialist is FREE and will not affect your annual budget.

 - **If I ask an Advocacy Specialist to help me, will they tell other people what we talk about?**
 - No, not unless you want them to
 - The things that may be discussed will not be shared outside of the Advocacy Specialist unless you mention harm to yourself or others
 - Advocacy Specialists must have permission from the individual or their legal guardian in order to discuss any specific information about your services with someone outside of the DDA

 - **How do the Advocacy Specialists help individuals learn to advocate for themselves?**
 - Advocacy Specialists can provide individuals with the necessary resources and education to self-advocate. The self-advocacy process can be long and not always easily taught, but at the end of the day you are responsible for your own decisions and life goals. Advocacy Specialists can also refer you to groups like People-on-the-GO Maryland and the WRAP Outreach Project that offer self-advocacy training.

 - **What is the Person-Centered Plan (PCP) process and how does it relate to Self-Advocacy?**
 - Your Person-Centered Plan (PCP) is the document that lists the support and services that you have expressed you would like and need It also lists your goals and the things that are important for helping you to live your best life. It is called a Person-Centered Plan because it contains what you decide you need in order to live your best life in the community, not what your parents, siblings, Coordinator of Community Services (CCS), or support workers think that you need. Your CCS will work with you to update your PCP every year at your annual plan meeting. Your Regional Advocacy Specialist is available to help you plan for your planning meeting or join you if you would like them to help you speak up for yourself during the meeting.

 - **What is Community Integration and why is it important to Self-Advocacy?**
 - Community Integration means being able to live in a house or apartment and being able to come and go as you choose. It means being able to participate in all aspects of your community, such as work, volunteer, faith-based, and recreational activities with other people with and without disabilities. The DDA believes that ALL people with disabilities can be given the right supports to live in the community, no matter what their disability is. We believe that no one is too disabled to live in the community. If you are having trouble connecting with part of your community, your Regional Advocacy Specialist can help you to work around your issue.
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How to Contact an Advocacy Specialist

- You can call or email your Regional Advocacy Specialist
- Email is the fastest and best mode of communication to reach Advocacy Specialists

| DDA Region | Counties Served | Advocacy Specialist |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Western Maryland | Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Washington | Jessica Stine Cell: 443-468-2987 Office: 240-313-4225 jessica.stine@maryland.gov |
| Southern Maryland | Montgomery, Prince George's, Charles, Calvert, St. Mary's | New Person starting March 16, 2022 |
| Eastern Shore | Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, Worcester | Cody Drinkwater Cell: 410-409-8205 Office: 410-572-5949 cody.drinkwater@maryland.gov |
| Central Maryland | Harford, Baltimore, Howard, Anne Arundel, Baltimore City | Cheryl Gottlieb Cell: 443-835-5030 Office: 410-234-8210 cheryl.gottlieb@maryland.gov |