



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBC2dZbQ5mg>

# Self Advocacy Civil Rights Movement

For hundreds of years, people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) had labels like retarded or moron. Some people thought they were dangerous. Parents were told to put these children in institutions.



# The Origin of the Self-Advocacy Movement



In the late 1960s, in Sweden there were special clubs for people with and without disabilities. The goal was for people with disabilities to have "normal" life experiences, even if it meant taking risks or making mistakes. College students supported the members with disabilities but let them make their own decisions.

At the time, many people thought that those with disabilities couldn't make choices and needed protection. But Dr. Nirje believed everyone should have the right to try things and even fail. He said, "To be allowed to be human means to be allowed to fail." This was the beginning of the self-advocacy movement.



# The First Self-Advocacy Conferences

In Sweden, the first self-advocacy conference gave people with disabilities a chance to talk about important topics like job training, fair pay, and fun activities. This idea spread to other countries quickly.

In 1972, England had its first self-advocacy conference, and Canada followed in 1973. At the Canadian conference, people from Oregon with developmental disabilities attended and were inspired by others speaking up about their concerns. After returning home, they decided to organize their own conference in 1974.



## **1973 Canadian Conference in British Columbia**

**During the planning, one man said, "I want to be known as a person first!" This idea inspired the name of a new organization called People First.**

**They expected a few hundred people at the 1974 conference, but nearly 600 self-advocates from all over the U.S. attended. Many spoke publicly for the first time, realizing their voices mattered.**

**This was a big step for the self-advocacy movement.**



**More self-advocacy  
chapters started  
after the Oregon  
conference.**

By 1975, there were 16 People First chapters. In the 1980's the number of self-advocacy chapters continued to grow. The first national self-advocacy conference happened in 1990. It took place in Estes Park, Colorado. Self-Advocates who went to that conference elected a committee to plan a national group.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEspgzTaJf8>



# **The second National Self-Advocacy Conference happened in 1991.**



The conference was in Nashville. Over 700 people with I/DD came from 32 states. They voted for the national group's leaders. These leaders named the group Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered.



# Issues and Problems for the Self-Advocacy Movement



The Self-Advocacy Movement has had a big impact. It works on problems that are the same as other civil rights groups. It also has problems that other groups don't. Most self-advocates don't drive or use public transportation. They need help getting to meetings.

# Issues and Problems for the Self-Advocacy Movement



Most self-advocates depend on government benefits. It is hard for them to get money to go to big events. Self-advocacy groups use advisors to help them get and stay organized. It is hard to find advisors who know how to help people fight for their rights. Sometimes advisors speak over or instead of the members of the group



The self-advocacy movement has worked hard on stopping members from being put into institutions. Ray Loomis was a self-advocate in Nebraska.

He got out of Beatrice State Home in 1974 and organized a self-advocacy group. He started “Project Two,” a group that worked on home and community-based services and self-advocacy.





## Freedom and Independence

Self-advocates want the freedom to live independently. They want to have a say in how they receive services in the communities. They advocate for the closure of state-run institutions. They also fight for the same employment and housing settings as people without disabilities.



# Human and Legal Rights



People with I/DD had medical procedures without their consent. They were sterilized so they couldn't have children. The Virginia Eugenical Sterilization Act was repealed in 1979, but people with I/DD are still sterilized today.



# Human and Legal Rights

People with I/DD also have problems with voting. States passed laws that said they were not smart enough to vote. The self-advocacy movement works on voting projects to let people know about their voting rights.



# Human and Legal Rights

People with I/DD have problems with the police. Some police forced people with I/DD to confess to crimes they didn't do. People with I/DD died because the police hurt them when they had a problem in the community.

# Human and Legal Rights



**The Self-Advocacy Movement fights so we are the ones who train our staff so they respect our rights and support the decisions we make. We also fight for laws that would change health care services.**



# Meaningful Participation



People with I/DD have problems trying to be part of their communities. For example, they couldn't get library cards. They were kicked out of movie theaters. They want to work in regular jobs instead of sheltered workshops. They want to make their own decisions.



# The Self Advocacy Movement used the COURTS to fight discrimination



Self-Advocacy Movement groups have filed lawsuits, too. People First of Tennessee filed three lawsuits to close institutions in 1991 and 1994. People First of California and Washington joined lawsuits against institutions, too.

# The Self Advocacy Movement used the COURTS to fight discrimination



Two self-advocates named Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson filed a lawsuit to get out of a Georgia institution. The Supreme Court ruled in 1999 that they had the right to live in the community. This ruling was called the Olmstead decision. This decision has been used by other advocates to stop segregation.

# Self Advocates got laws **PASSED** to fight segregation!

The Self-Advocacy Movement used political activism to fight segregation. In Nebraska, a boy named Jonathan Allen lived in an institution. He had bruises that no one could explain. Members of Project 2 met with Senator Vard Johnson. He asked them to go with him on an unannounced tour of the institution. After that, the Senator changed his mind about institutions.





# Self Advocates got laws **PASSED** to fight segregation!

As self-advocates have focused on voting and other civil rights. They spoke out about how the justice system treats people with disabilities. In 2015, self-advocates formed the Ethan Saylor Alliance for Self-Advocates as Educators. Ethan Saylor died when he was dealing with the police.



# Marches, Protests, and Demonstrations

The logo for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is displayed on a dark red rectangular background. The text "ADA" is in large, bold, white capital letters at the top. Below it, in smaller white capital letters, is "AMERICANS WITH". At the bottom, the word "ACT" is in large, bold, white capital letters. The entire logo has a slight drop shadow effect.

**ADA**  
AMERICANS WITH  
**DISABILITIES**  
**ACT**

Members of the self-advocacy movement worked hard to help pass the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A group of 475 people with disabilities went to Congress to protest delays in passing the ADA. They got out of their wheelchairs and crawled up the stairs. In 1990, 2,000 people with disabilities came to Washington to watch President Bush sign the ADA. The first Disability Pride Parade was in 1990.

# Marches, Protests, and Demonstrations



In June of 2017, Congress tried to pass a new bill that would cut Medicaid services. Members of ADAPT and other self-advocates went to Senator Mitch McConnell's office to protest the bill. Sixty protesters attended the event and 43 people were arrested.





Before we go into breakout rooms Let's hear from Jossie and Danielle who signed up to comment today.

**Our question for breakout rooms:**

#1 What are important things to know about the history of self-advocacy in your state?

