



Youth Advisory Committee for the National Council on Disability *Self-Determination*

FACT SHEET

Youth with Disabilities **SUCCESSING** through Self-Determination!

By Youth for Youth

What is self-determination (self-de-ter-mi-na-tion)? It is both an attitude and an ability to make decisions and set goals on your own. Self-determination is the most important part of successfully transitioning into adulthood because it allows you to direct your own independent life.

How YOU can be more self-determined:

- Have confidence and believe in yourself
- Identify what your dreams and goals
- Clearly communicate and share your wants and needs
- Know your strengths and limitations
- Have a positive attitude
- Learn from mistakes
- Take responsibility for your choices
- Be aware of your rights
- Have opinions about everything that affects you
- Know how and when to ask for help
- Set realistic and achievable goals
- Make educated decisions
- Never give up!

What are real world examples of self-determination?

Self-determination can help you transition from one part of your life to the next. Take a look at Lisa's and Mike's stories. These are examples of self-determination, which they used to make the transition from high school to the next level in their life.

- **Lisa** knew she wanted to go to college ever since she was in high school. She was told that her learning disability would make college too difficult.

People recommended that she find a job that didn't need a college education. Lisa knew that having a learning disability wasn't always easy. However, she did well in hard high school classes when she used assistive technology along with lots of hard work. She challenged herself to apply for college. She was accepted into two universities with academic scholarships! Now in college, she knows what accommodations she needs and how to get them. This is an example of self-determination. Next spring, Lisa will be graduating with a degree in History.

- **Mike** recently graduated from high school and could not wait to get a job. He uses a wheelchair and needed to find accessible transportation to and from work. He also needed attendant care to get ready in the mornings. Mike found mentors who shared information with him to accomplish his goals. He took the skills he learned and applied for many jobs. Finally, Mike got the job he wanted. He then spoke with his boss and asked for an accessible desk, an accessible restroom, and an automatic door. Mike got what he needed and enjoyed worked. He accomplished his goals because he was self-determined. Mike soon became a manager!

Examples of when you need self-determination:

- The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process
- The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) process
- The transition to post secondary education or employment
- The transition to living independently
- Planning for Social Security and health care benefits

Self-determination, confidence, and motivation are very important for all youth with disabilities. You will succeed with practice and by believing in yourself!

This fact sheet was developed by the Youth Advisory Committee for the National Council on Disability (2006) - email us at youth@ncd.gov