

A Memo from: Betty Williams, President of SABE  
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We want to thank Commissioner Sharon Lewis for her commitment to making the self-advocacy movement stronger. It was her idea to have 5 Summits on self-advocacy across the country. Without her leadership and financial support, the Summits would not be happening.

We are sorry that only 30 states can participate. There was not enough money for all states to be included.

Here is what is on our minds about the Self-Advocacy Summits. Please share this memo with your friends who are going to the Summits, especially if they do not have a computer or need support to understand it.

The Summits are about self-advocacy. We have the power to do and change things. We need to be in the lead.

If we don't think about these things, if we don't set the tone we will lose this opportunity.

Allies can suggest what to do but remember we are the advocates.

This is the time for us to speak up for what self-advocacy means and what this movement means to us. Do not hesitate to speak up. Some people attending the Summits have never been to a self-advocacy meeting. Remember, we are the experts on self-advocacy.

The Summits must be accessible. If you do not understand something, speak up. We have to hold allies to a standard and we have to hold ourselves to a standard as well.

We should hammer home to everyone that self-advocacy is a civil rights movement. No other movement would stand for the stuff that we put up with. If

you don't believe in this cause; that this is a civil rights movement then you should re-examine your understanding and commitment to the self-advocacy.

We have been partnering for years and look where it has gotten us. We need true allies. Consider how white allies support the African American civil rights movement and how people who are straight support the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender) movement.

Self-advocates need to be ready to speak up and say what it means to be an ally.

- Tell your team why allies are important.
- Be clear about how an ally is suppose to support and listen to self-advocates.
- Sometimes our leadership, strong self-advocates get shut down and are not allowed to make decisions. Stand by our leaders. What is more important: your self-advocacy brother and sister or being somebody that the professionals look up to?

You need to speak truth to power. Even if a team member gives your group money and they do not agree with your point of view. The different groups attending the Summit are there to make sure they get their needs met; as are we.

One point we started with and that we should not back away from is the Information and Training Centers. We worked with Commissioner Pat Morrissey to put it together. Some people keep saying now is not the time **but now IS the time**. This year the Obama budget gives the Independent Living Centers an extra 150,000,000. We are happy for them. This shows there is money for peer-run programs.

We need to bust the myth that we cannot handle money. We have state organizations that do get funding and do run their own organizations. We hire bookkeepers and accountants just like any other advocacy organization. The state self-advocacy organizations with government contracts need to speak up and say how they hire financial consultants to manage their money.

The reason why some state groups are not working right is because professionals are not letting the advocates be in charge.

Important issues to discuss at the Summit are:

1. What is holding you back from being a successful organization?
2. Are you in charge of your organization?
3. Is your organization being run by the advocates?
4. Who is getting paid?
5. Who chooses the person to work with the organization?
6. Did a funder tell you who you should hire and work with?

Self-advocacy groups only going out and eating pizza may have been okay back-in-the-day, but not now. You can't just be a social club; you need to be a part of the movement! We are losing the battle. We are sick about all the kinds of things that are happening to us; the abuse and segregation. Like when 16 people in an institution in Lovett, Texas are killed and nothing is really being done about it. Look at education. We are losing ground because some people don't have the value that we should be educated.

If allies are to be part of the movement, they need to be held accountable.

Information must be accessible. If we are so great then why do professional groups not include us to be on some of the important boards and meetings that they have. We are tired of being tokens. We are tired of hearing people say they are not inviting us to a meeting because they have a deadline with technical details to discuss and they do not have time to slow down or to listen to stories from self-advocates.

Our critics say we do not have enough infrastructure. The strong state groups need to give examples of what you accomplish with very little resources. Make it clear how much more we could accomplish if we had access to resources and opportunity to develop a stronger structure.

Thank you for listening!

SABE is scheduling conference calls and also an informal meeting with just the self-advocacy organizations the night before each Summit starts. We will email you and let you know where and when it will be.