Easy Read Edition

They Work For Us:
A Self-Advocate's Guide to Getting Through to your Elected Officials
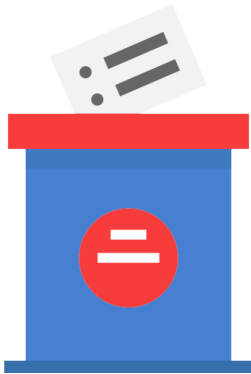
Part 1: Introduction

1. Introduction
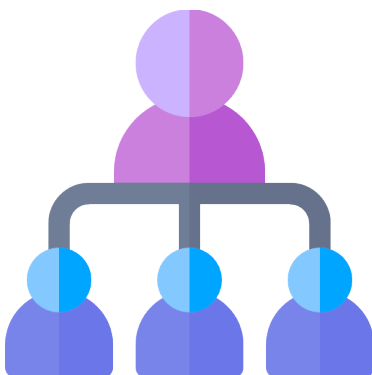
What is this toolkit?

This toolkit is about how to talk to the people who represent us in the government.

Everyday people like you and me **elect** (vote for), the people who represent us in government.

Politicians who are elected are called **elected officials**.

The President, your Senators, and your Mayor are all elected officials.

This toolkit will explain:

1. The different levels of government

2. What our elected officials do

3. The best ways to talk to your elected officials

4. How to vote for who you want to represent you in the government

Why is this toolkit important?

Elected officials listen to the problems that people have.

Then, they make **laws** to fix these problems. Laws are rules the government makes that everyone has to follow.

Laws affect people with disabilities.

When elected officials make a law, they think about what people want and need.

We have to make sure that our elected officials hear about what people with disabilities want and need. Then, the laws they make will work better for us.

This is why it is important to talk to our elected officials.

Voting for people whose ideas you like is another way to change what the government does.

How can I use this toolkit?

You can read this toolkit from beginning to end, or go straight to the parts that you want to know more about.

Glossary

You'll see some words in this guide that are **bolded**. We explain these words in the Glossary at the end of each section.

There is also a Glossary at the end of the toolkit with all of these words.
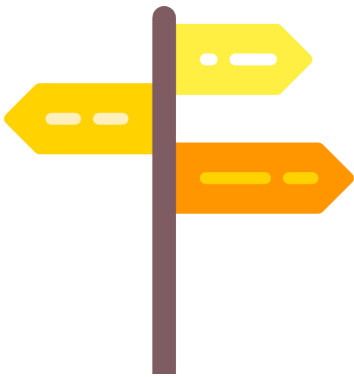
Scripts and examples

When we tell you how to do something, we will use scripts and examples to show you how it works.

Scripts

Scripts are words you can use. In this toolkit, we give you scripts in case you need help thinking of what words you can use. Scripts will be set apart from the rest of the text in a rounded rectangle.

Here is an example of a script for asking directions to the library.

> "Hello, do you know where the library is?"

In our scripts, there are some places where you have to add in your own words. When you need to add in your own words, we have made those places **[bold and in brackets]**. Here is an example:

> You: My name is **[your full name]**, and I live at **[address]**.

Someone using this script might say this: "My name is Sally Jones, and I live at 123 Community Lane." You can change the name and address to be your name and your address.

Sometimes, a script might give you choices, like this:

> You: I'm calling to ask the **[Senator / Representative]** to vote **[yes / no]** on this bill.

In a script like this, you choose which option makes the most sense. So if you want to call your Senator to tell them to vote no, you would say "I'm calling to ask the Senator to vote no on this bill."
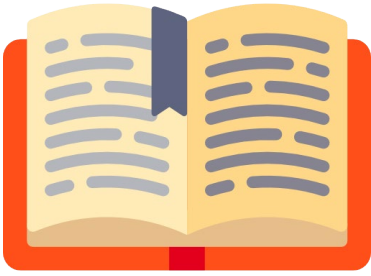
Examples

This toolkit uses examples to show how things works in real life. To make it clearer, examples will look like this:

For example, ASAN published a toolkit called They Work For Us. The toolkit uses an Easy Read format with large text and plain language.

ASAN designed this toolkit so that any person with any disability can use it and learn from it.

Meet Sally Jones

When we are explaining a way to talk to your elected officials, we will give an example of how it might work. We made up a story to use in these examples. We want to tell you more about that story now.

In our examples, we will talk about Sally Jones. Sally lives in Normaltown, California.

There is a big problem in Sally's town and in towns all over the United States. Swarms of angry bees are showing up everywhere. Sally wants her elected official to do something about the bees.
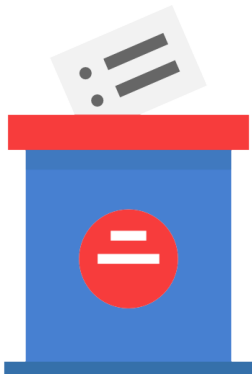
Sally, Normaltown, and the swarms of angry bees are not real. We made them up.

But the things that Sally does in our examples are things you can do in real life!

Glossary

elect

When we "elect" somebody, we vote for that person to become a part of the government.

elected officials

Politicians that we elect to the government are our elected officials. Elected officials listen to the problems that people have. Then, they make laws to fix these problems.

laws

Laws are rules the government makes that everyone has to follow.