



# KY PLANS Independence Day!

## Advocacy in the School and Community

Any guidance or teaching of our children is done so with the intent of helping them be more independent. All individuals have the right to self-determination, that is, everyone should have some control over the world around them. In celebration of Independence Day, this month's tips include things you can do to advocate for your child's independence!



**Communication:** Remember, how well a child gets his/her message across plays a big role in independence.

- Make sure your child has choices. Exercising choice is a powerful step towards independence. Research has shown that making simple choices can positively impact students' lives. Ask about opportunities for choice making in school settings. At home, consider letting your child choose the color toothbrush to buy, the color cup to drink from, or the order of activities on a Saturday.
- Tell people to avoid mindreading. That is, if your child wants something, tell people to consider prompting them to ask for it instead of just handing it over. For child to learn to learn new communication skills, they need lots of practice.
- Promote value in your child's protests. Not everyone is always happy about what they are asked to do, but ask people to attempt to find ways to make your child understand that their self-advocacy is important.
- Make sure to make any picture-based or electronic communication systems available at all times. Though it may be hard to bring these systems everywhere, it is critical to do so. Children need to learn that their system is useful across many environments.



### Daily Routines

- Involve your child in daily routines around the house and tell others to do the same. Start with small tasks such as putting clothes in laundry basket, filling the dog's water bowl, putting groceries away. Then build up to tasks that may involve multiple steps. Start early.

- Make sure visual supports are available to show your child what to do. These visual supports can move with your child from one place to another. In addition, they help your child move away from adult direction. Think about using a daily planner. Isn't it better to follow your own schedule than to have someone calling you and telling you what to do! Several types of visual supports may be used. Here are some examples.
  - Use a written/pictorial schedule to show your child what to do. You may sequence pictures in photo album, put pictures on a Velcro strip, or put picture on magnets on a cookie sheet or refrigerator. See what works for you and your child.
  - Post sticky notes in important places to remind your child of important information.
  - Use video to record the steps of a task and have your child watch it prior to starting.
  - Have a homework box and teach your child to put work in it as he/she comes home.



### **Around the Neighborhood**

- Give your child the opportunity to participate in age-appropriate activities. Talk to your school or church community about accessing extracurricular activities.
- Enlist peers to provide support to your child in social contexts. Peer support can be much less intrusive than having a “grown up” velcroed to your side. If necessary, teach peers the ways to most effectively engage your child. Certainly, we recommend that these opportunities be supervised.
- Consider your child's preferences when looking for jobs or recreational activities. Remember, your interests may not be the same as your child's. If your child doesn't use vocal language, assess their preferences using videos or pictures of community locations. If it is still unclear, take them for a visit and observe how they react.