



## FAQs

*The Committee of Advocacy & Leadership (C.O.A.L.) is a person-first group for and by people supported by Opportunity Partners who want to learn, teach, and practice self-advocacy. Below are some common questions about COAL.*

### *What is self-advocacy?*

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself, but it has a broader scope as well. Self-advocacy is also a movement of people with disabilities across the country – and around the world – who work together to make sure their voices are heard.

### *Who are self-advocates?*

Within the self-advocacy movement, self-advocates are leaders with disabilities. There are many self-advocates served by Opportunity Partners. Some self-advocates have been involved in politics and others are more focused on advocating in their homes or at work. Self-advocates are sometimes supported by allies who do not have intellectual disabilities.

### *Who are allies?*

An ally in the self-advocacy movement is anyone who does not have a disability and supports self-advocates and the self-advocacy movement. Allies may be staff, family members or friends. Allies may help teach skills or simply provide practical support such as driving, reading, or writing. Within the self-advocacy movement, it is always the goal for self-advocates to be in the lead and the allies to provide support as needed.

## *Who can participate in COAL?*

Anyone who receives services from Opportunity Partners, either vocational or residential, is welcome to be a part of COAL. Staff employed by Opportunity Partners, as well as family members and friends of people served are encouraged to be allies to COAL members.

## *What is COAL working on?*

What COAL works on is determined by the self-advocates who participate. In the two years COAL has been active, the group has had meetings about legislative advocacy, accessible voting for people with disabilities, healthy relationships, anti-bullying efforts, and much more. COAL has also been active in the community at large by volunteering, holding fundraisers, and attending conferences. As the membership of COAL continues to grow, the issues the group works on and the events they participate in will continue to expand as well.



*COAL members honored with the 2015 Nonprofit Mission Award for Advocacy.*