

UNDERSTANDING SELF-ADVOCACY

PREPARING TODAY FOR BETTER OUTCOMES TOMORROW

Self-advocacy is the responsibility of every person navigating the justice system.

No one else will live with the long-term consequences of a conviction more than the individual who carries it.

The purpose of self-advocacy is simple: to anticipate future challenges and prepare intentionally for success rather than default outcomes.

THE REALITY OF POST-SENTENCE OUTCOMES

Experience and data show that when a prison sentence ends, most people face one of five outcomes:

1. Unemployment
2. Underemployment
3. Homelessness
4. Continued problems with the law
5. Success

The first four outcomes often require little planning. They happen by default when preparation is absent. Success requires intention. Every course on Prison Professors exists to help individuals prepare for that fifth outcome.

WHAT SELF-ADVOCACY MEANS

Self-advocacy means taking responsibility for explaining, documenting, and demonstrating:

- » who you are today,
- » what you have learned,
- » how you have changed,
- » and what you are doing to prepare for the future.

Self-advocacy is not about excuses, entitlement, or promises, but about evidence.

THINKING LIKE THE CEO OF YOUR LIFE

- » As the CEO of your life, you are responsible for identifying problems and building solutions.
- » A CEO anticipates risk rather than reacting to it.
- » A CEO plans ahead rather than hoping for exceptions.

In practical terms, this means acknowledging that a criminal conviction creates obstacles—and then preparing deliberately to overcome them.

ANTICIPATING THE PROBLEM

Self-advocacy begins with realism. A person preparing responsibly understands:

- » employers may be skeptical,
- » supervision conditions may be restrictive,
- » opportunities may be limited,
- » and trust may take time to rebuild.

Ignoring those realities does not make them disappear. Preparing for them improves outcomes.

USING A SWOT ANALYSIS FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

A CEO evaluates performance through analysis. One useful framework is a SWOT analysis:

- » Strengths: skills, education, discipline, work ethic
- » Weaknesses: gaps in knowledge, habits, or experience
- » Opportunities: education, training, mentoring, reentry programs
- » Threats: housing instability, financial pressure, negative influences

The Profiles platform allows participants to document how they identified these factors and worked intentionally to strengthen weaknesses, reduce threats, and build on strengths. That documentation matters.

HOW THE PROFILE SUPPORTS SELF-ADVOCACY

A Prison Professors profile is not a résumé and not a promise, but rather a time-stamped record of effort. Through biographies, journals, book reports, and release plans, a profile shows that a person:



- » anticipated future challenges,
- » invested in self-improvement,
- » developed skills and discipline,
- » and executed a deliberate plan over time.

This record helps overcome cynicism by replacing claims with proof.

SELF-ADVOCACY AT DIFFERENT STAGES

A well-developed profile can support self-advocacy at multiple points, including:

- » requests for higher levels of liberty,
- » consideration for work release or home confinement,
- » petitions for early termination of supervised release,
- » clemency or commutation petitions,
- » employment and housing discussions,
- » community reintegration and mentoring opportunities.

In each case, decision-makers ask similar questions:

- » What has this person done with their time?
- » How do we know this effort is real?

The profile helps answer those questions.

WHY DOCUMENTATION MATTERS

Words spoken once can be forgotten. Work documented over time cannot be ignored. A profile shows:

- » consistency rather than isolated effort,
- » preparation rather than intention,
- » discipline rather than chance.

It allows participants to show, not merely tell, how seriously they have prepared for success.

THE ROLE OF STAFF AND SUPPORTERS

Staff and supporters play an important role by:

- » reinforcing the importance of preparation,
- » encouraging consistent documentation,
- » and helping participants understand how today's effort affects tomorrow's



outcomes.

Self-advocacy remains the individual's responsibility, but guidance and structure strengthen results.

FINAL PERSPECTIVE

Self-advocacy begins with the decisions a person makes today. Every journal entry, book report, plan, and update is a seed planted for the future. Over time, those seeds become evidence of discipline, growth, and merit.

That is the purpose of the Prison Professors courses.



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