



A-TEAM USA Grassroots System ©

A-Team USA was initiated in Wisconsin in 2011 as a strategic effort to unite and coordinate self-advocates, stakeholders, and families of people with diverse abilities toward promotion of a full array of disability service options on a state and national level. This led to the rapid expansion of a grassroots **advocacy** network, **creating awareness**, and **advising** those who care for and create laws that affect citizens with special needs. Wisconsin currently has 12 active A-Team chapters and thousands of members. The movement is steadily growing across the country, with 19 other states actively engaged in the A-Team mission. Minnesota joined in April of 2021 www.ateamminnesota.com. Each state is encouraged to create its own identity and personal connection with its members. Visit www.ateamusa.net to find links to each state website or Facebook page. The A-Team focuses on individual engagement, education, and empowerment to speak and act in a unified, yet authentic, manner on issues that promote a full array of employment, residence, and a meaningful life choices.

A-Teams partner with Day Services Facilities, including DT&H (Day Training & Habilitation), prevocational and structured day services, residential providers, and state and national associations to receive information on the issues that impact the full array of choices for individuals with diverse abilities. They also frequently provide technological support, administrative organization, and training materials, making it possible for self-advocates and other supporters to focus on the mission.

The A-Team system operates on three ongoing tiers: Advocacy, Awareness, and AdviseMENT. One-time and disconnected actions of traditional advocacy platforms do not offer the network of consistency, sustainability, and grassroots networking provided through the A-Team. A comprehensive A-Team Tool Kit © provides specialized materials to new A-Team Chapters, including guidelines for successful implementation of team building and campaigns; templates for agendas and graphics; plans for legislative events; and public relations materials. Simple training on advocacy, sharing one's story, and spreading knowledge around current issues, are all accessible to A-Team advocates.

A-Teams are inclusive. All choices matter, and all choices are important. The intent is to provide stakeholders and families with a platform where their experience can be respected and recognized. The A-Team actively engages stakeholders and family members throughout the grassroots process, from pursuing issues that affect their lives, to developing actions in response to them.

The A-Team is a nonpartisan organization. It is about uniting both sides of the aisle in respectful dialogue to educate lawmakers and ensure that regulations and legislation represent the interests of a diverse range of individual needs and preferences, incorporating the civil right to choose which options for employment, residence, and life enrichment best meet those needs. The A-Team has built a solid reputation on a state and national level for cultivating personal relationships and bipartisan solutions that work toward expanding, rather than limiting, choices. The A-TEAM collaborates with other organizations, associations, and advocacy groups in actions that share this mission. Most importantly, it is driven through the committed efforts of individuals with disabilities and people who care for them with the simple message: **United for Choice!**

MYWORK. MYCHOICE.

MYHOME. MYCHOICE.

MYLIFE. MYCHOICE.