

# Introduction

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Welcome to the SAID Advocacy Tool Kit. **SAID** is an organization whose purpose is to educate and support dental professionals who have dedicated their careers to serving the needs of individuals with disabilities. The population we serve is a vulnerable one; often unable to advocate for themselves. We as Dental professionals are expert in the techniques required to diagnose and treat dental disease. The Dental professionals of **SAID** possess both skills and the motivation necessary to overcome the barriers to care presented by patients with disabilities. **SAID** is dedicated as well to educate others to treat these patients. Many dental professionals wish to treat these patients but do not believe they possess the requisite skills. To address this need, **SAID** has created a set of educational modules. These are available free of charge on our website [www.saident.org](http://www.saident.org).

However expert we are in Dentistry for Patients with Disabilities, our dental professionals sometimes fall short when it comes to advocating for our patients. And there are so many arenas in which advocacy is required. Institutional dentists must advocate for sufficient supplies, equipment, personnel, and time to provide optimum care for their patients. Dental Chiefs of Service must advocate at an institutional level and sometime beyond to assure that their patients receive the best care possible. All Dental personnel by virtue of their training and knowledge are tasked with advocating those in power to consider the needs these most vulnerable clients. We as Dental Professional are responsible for lobbying Dental educators to include such training in dental, hygiene, and assisting curricula. It's the old story, "**Once you know, you can't not know**". That is why advocacy is the third leg of the triangle that is our mission statement. Yet advocacy remains difficult for us. There are many reasons for this. While lack of time is one such reason; lack of training and confidence are the foremost reasons. We at **SAID** would like to provide a vehicle by which those who are experts in dentistry but novice at advocacy can gain guidance & assurance in the latter. In so doing, we hope to make advocacy less daunting and hence less labor and time intensive for our membership. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

*I wish to thank Dr. Joe Dicks, a pioneer in dental care for the disabled, a former SAID President and the inspiration for this tool-kit.*