

MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

October 1, 2025

Crowne Plaza Hotel
3 Appletree Square
Bloomington, MN 55425

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present

Lee Shervheim, Chair
Jenny Arndt, Vice-Chair
Jason Blomquist
Dupree Edwards
Lisa Jemtrud
Heather Kainz
Lesli Kerkhoff
Joel Liestman
Elizabeth Marsh
Katie McDermott
Chris McVey
Alan Morrison
Mike Nichols
Garrett Petrie
Jenn Purrington
Mary Raasch
Jennifer Santema (virtual)
Bonnie Jean Smith
Heather Stillwell
Sumukha Terakanambi

Members Excused

Amy Hewitt
Abdi Matan
Christine Mueller
Connie Rabideaux

Staff

Stephanie Nelson
Paul Nevin
Colleen Wieck

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Lee Shervheim, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:45 am.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Shervheim Invited all present to introduce themselves.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Shervheim called for approval of the agenda.

MOTION: Arndt moved, seconded by Edwards to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES (June 4, 2025)

Shervheim called for approval of the June 4, 2025 Minutes

MOTION: McDermott moved, seconded by Blomquist to approve the June 4, 2025 minutes. Motion carried.

V. ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Wieck reviewed the Federal Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Work Plan that is aligned to the Baldrige Criteria and described each section. Terakanambi asked to add names of the Medicaid coalitions in the section about interagency committees.

MOTION: Morrison moved for approval of the Annual Work Plan, seconded by McDermott. Motion carried.

VI. ANNUAL SPENDING PLAN

Wieck reviewed the proposed spending plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 and provided budget detail for the federal allocation and the state allocation. A question was asked about the federal government shutdown.

MOTION: McDermott moved, seconded by Smith to approve the FFY 2026 spending plan. Motion carried.

VII. FIVE-YEAR PLANNING PROCESS

Wieck asked all members to please review the current Five-Year Plan Goals before participating in small group discussions scheduled for the next few weeks. At the December meeting, the Council will be writing goals that will go out for public comment for 45 days. There will be another meeting to review and edit the goals in April.

VIII. PRESENTATIONS BY GRANTEEES AND CONTRACTORS

The following presentations were made to the full Council: Partners in Policymaking; Advocating Change Together—Self-Advocates Minnesota; Mary Harreld Consulting—User-Centric Projects including Disability History for K-12; MSS—Employment; Autism Sibs Universe—Cultural Outreach; PeaceMaker Minnesota-Ambassadors for Respect;

and Mastcom—Unfinished Journey documentary. All members received a copy of the PowerPoints used by the presenters.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Shervheim opened the floor for public comment.

- Liestman announced that Upstream Arts will be closing its doors after 20 years of service to the entire community. A special thanks to Matt and Julie Guidry for their outstanding work.
- Liestman announced that the Guthrie Theater will hold a relaxed performance of A Christmas Carol on Sunday, November 20, 2025 at 4:00 pm for anyone with specific sensitivities. <https://www.guthrietheater.org/relaxed>
- Jemtrud announced that Lifeworks is opening several Disability Inclusion Centers including New Hope and other sites in the upcoming months. <https://www.lifeworks.org/?s=inclusion+center>
- McDermott announced that The Arc Minnesota will host an event on October 22, 2025 at their office on Fairview Avenue for small businesses owned by people with disabilities. They are also hosting an event with Career Force to emphasize how self-advocates can get jobs. The statewide self-advocacy conference is November 17-18, 2025.
- McVey announced that today is the beginning of the 80th anniversary of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month. DEED worked with the Governor's Office on a Proclamation honoring this month, and DEED will be sponsoring several activities to celebrate the month.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Shervheim asked for a motion to adjourn. **MOTION:** Nichols moved, seconded by Liestman that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. The meeting ended at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Wieck, Executive Director

Guests

Advocating Change Together

Adam Ruff

Jennifer Walton

Michael Watson

Samrica Zogar

MH Consulting

Mary Harreld

MSS

Pam Allen

Randy Bloom

Kenisha C.

Jacqueline Colt

Kristina Mengis

Antoinette Mitchell

Pam Sunder

Marissa Wegner

Autism Sibs Universe

Indu Eati

Mark Eati

Priyanka Eati

Amrish Patel

Tanuja Patel

Bala Tadavarti

PeaceMaker MN

Erik Ahlstrom

Mandy Grunklee

Dan McNeil

Choice Inc. Ambassadors

Sylvie Deters

Jon Hartmann

Ann Heger

Colleen McAnn

Aaron

Jack

Jessi

Jodie

Katie

Laura

Mallory

Sri B.

Mastcom

Tim Lewis



Ambassadors *for* Respect



PeaceMaker
Minnesota



***All of the artwork backgrounds for this presentation are original pieces of art made by Ambassadors for Respect students at the Career and Life Transition Program in Roseville, MN.**

**Joining me today are Ambassadors
from CHOICE, Inc. in Eden Prairie!**

**Please join me in welcoming Laura
to help present.**



PeaceMaker
Minnesota

PeaceMaker Minnesota
is in its eighth year of
coordinating the
Ambassadors for
Respect Program.

To help create a more peaceful world, our mission is to help schools to be safer places, free from bullying and harassment, and to help youth learn positive relational skills like empathy, respect, cooperation and how to resolve conflicts peacefully.



What is Ambassadors for Respect?



A4R is a program that begins with teams of Ambassadors.

Teams can be from Transition Programs, Community Based Organizations, or Post-Secondary Education Programs.

Ambassadors are taught bullying prevention skills.

Ambassador teams then go into 4th grade classrooms and train the students. They teach them about including others, Person First Language, and advocacy.

These bullying prevention skills are taught through activities.

"I'm going to make
sure to invite kids
to sit with me at
lunch!"

- 4th Grader trained
by an A4R team

"I will stand up for people
and not stay quiet anymore."
- 4th Grader trained by an A4R team





Our Program Partners Include:

- **BEST Transition Program (Burnsville)**
- **Branch Out Transition Program (West St. Paul)***
- **The BUILD Program (Bethel University)**
- **Cannon Valley Special Education Coop (Faribault)**
- **CHOICE, Inc (Eden Prairie and Maple Grove)**
- **Career and Life Transition Program (Roseville)**
- **COMPASS Transition Program (Elk River)**
- **Focus House (Willmar)**
- **Home and Community Options (Winona)***
- **Merrick, Inc (Vadnais Heights)**
- **MSS (Oakdale)**
- **PHASE Industries (Mora and Marshall*)**
- **ProAct (Eagan)***
- **STAARS Transition Program (Hastings)**
- **UDAC (Duluth)**
- **WACOSA (St Cloud)**

Training Data Results

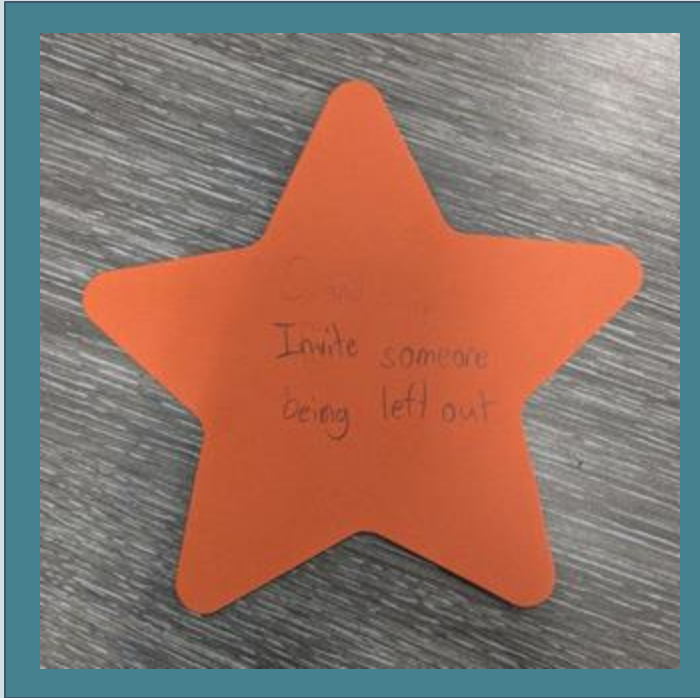
43 schools, 126 classrooms, and 3,022 students were trained last year.

Outcomes: Fourth Graders

98% of students could list three ways to include others.

94% of students said they learned how to use Person First Language.

95% of students could list three ways to advocate for oneself and others.



The Ambassador (IPSII) Survey has shown outstanding results. According to our 2024-25 surveys:

100% of participants responded that they are satisfied with the A4R Program.

98% of Ambassadors reported that, due to participation in the Ambassadors for Respect Program, they are increasing their advocacy.



"I liked being able to help students advocate for themselves and it taught me how to speak up for myself."

- Ambassador from CHOICE, Inc

112 people served as
Ambassadors in 2024-5.

Ambassador Coaches

We have 23 Partner Program staff members who serve as Ambassador Coaches.

“My ambassadors have cultivated perseverance, which allows them to overcome challenges and maintain their commitment to their roles. They’ve also honed their public speaking skills, enabling them to communicate effectively and confidently in various situations. Additionally, they stand up for those around them, advocating for fairness and support within our community. This combination of traits not only empowers them but also inspires others to adopt a similar stance in their lives. Their growth reflects a strong sense of responsibility and leadership.”

—Ambassador Coach



**Thank you for
supporting our program!**

**Please contact Mandy for more information about
the A4R Program. mgrunklee@peacemakermn.org**

Cultural Outreach in
***Asian Indian* Disability Community**
GCCD Grant Project by Autism Sibs Universe (ASU)
FIRST YEAR ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

- To share first-year accomplishment and celebrate progress - this year is the first advocacy training for the Asian Indian population in MN
- Report on challenges faced by grantees, lessons learned and how they propose adjusting approach next week

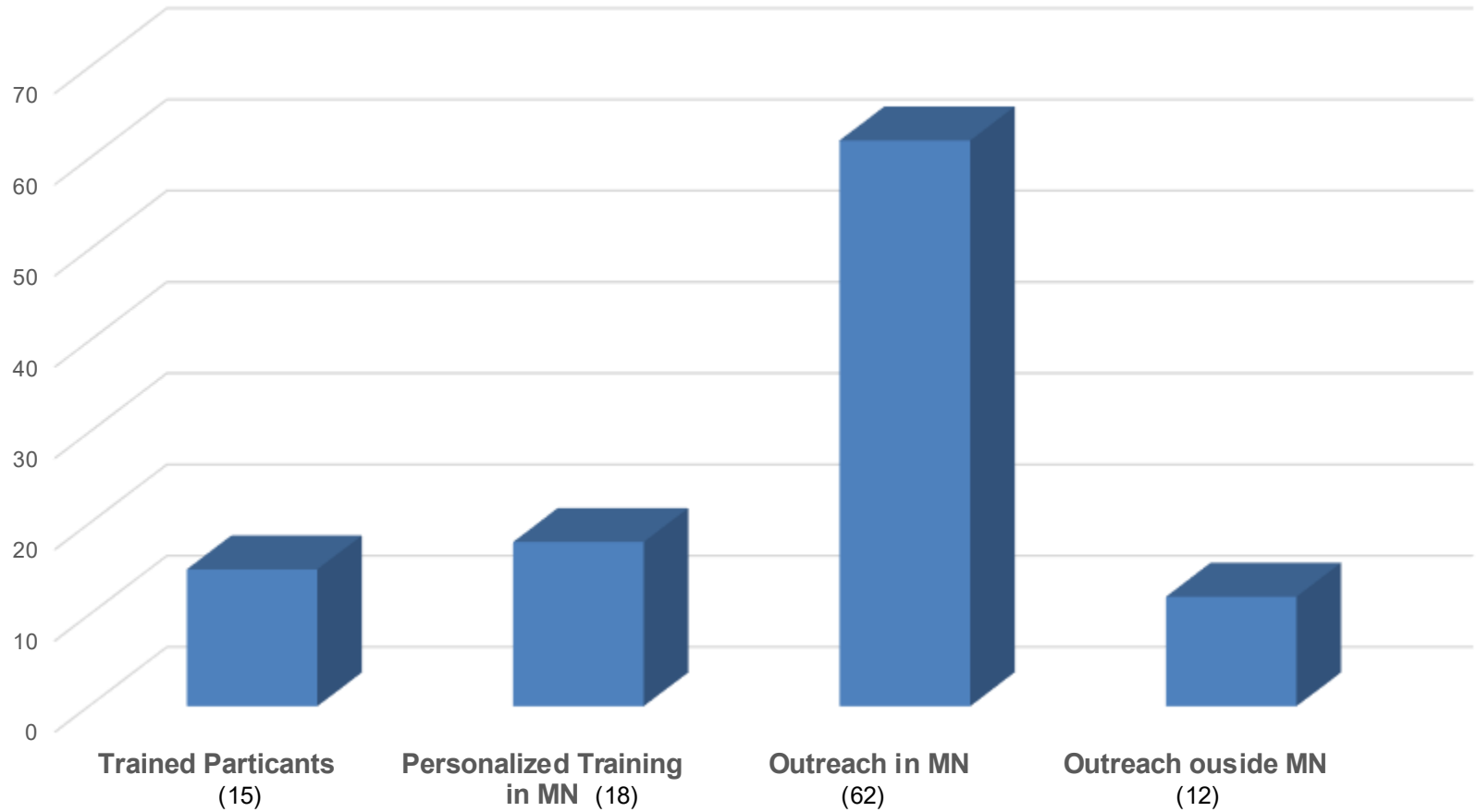
Major Accomplishments – Overview

- Over 60 individuals/families contacted, 15 trained
- The training program was created and managed by disabled Asian Indians
- ASU did extensive marketing and community outreach in this first year
- Studied multiple cultural barriers and taboos to build trust, personalize connections and to improve the program – many isolated Asian Indian families found community, connection and hope for the future
- Big awareness increase of county supports and partners in policy making in the Indian disability community

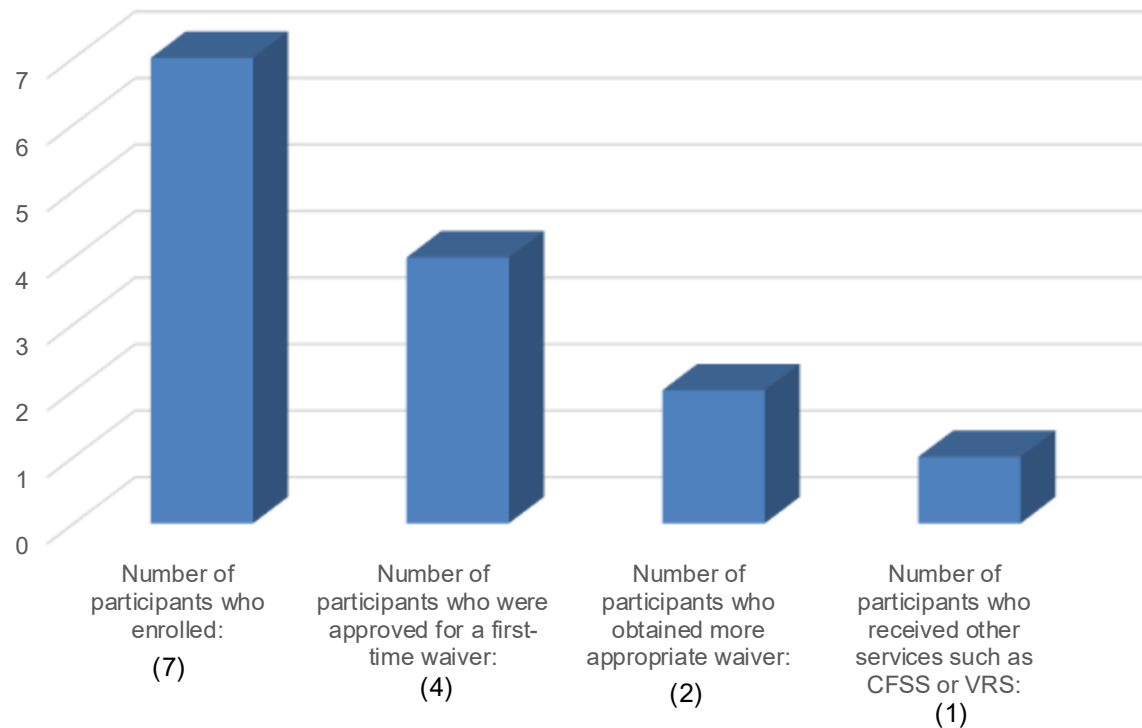
Strengthened disability partnerships in Indian community - ASU received honorary awards



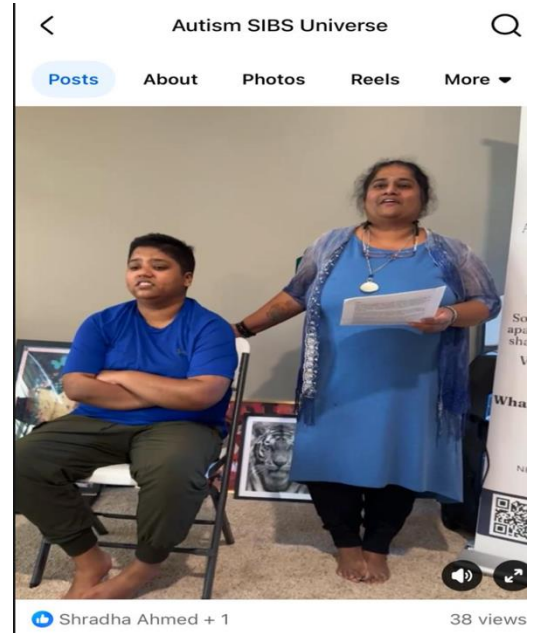
Training and Outreach Counts



CDCS enrollment and approval counts



People with disabilities sharing real stories (play video clip of a real story...)



Legislative training by ex President of Indian Association of MN

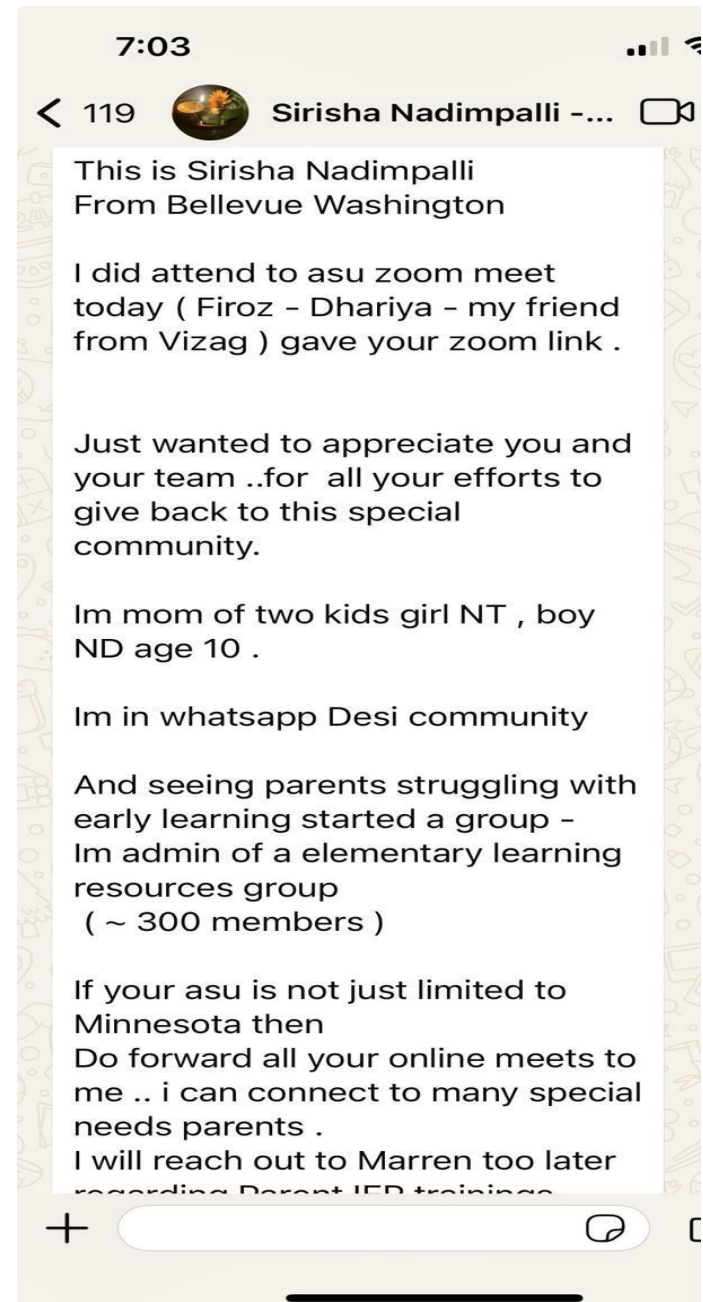


Intro to Partners in Policy Making by Colleen Weick

Co-organized Cultural specific activities with SEWA-AIFW



Online Outreach reached other states in USA



Awareness & Outreach – Key Insights

- Before the training, 50–60% of Indian disabled families we contacted, were unaware of county waivers, IEP or other
- Over 90% did not hear about Partners in Policy making
- Outside of the organizers, no one ever lobbied with legislations for supports. About 50% may not be able to negotiate even if trained
- The gaps in training needs for some Indians were so high, ASU provided personal guidance and attended county and school meetings to support them

Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Low initial awareness of disability supports in MN
- High need for hand-holding and advocacy support
- Taboos and cultural challenges brought up multiple challenges
- Program was adapted multiple times to make it culturally specific and build trust one person or one family at a time

Year-Two Goals

- Continue to invest in personalized and culturally specific trainings (per RFP) and activities
- Focus more on reaching rural Minnesota
- Legislative Engagement - Strengthen policy advocacy and community representation
- Further strengthen partner org supports for Indian population

Closing & Call to Action

- Share a couple participant testimonials
- Call for Action
 - *“Partner with us to understand how Asian Indian population is different”*
 - *“Share our challenges and needs with legislators*

A very BIG Thank You
to the Governor’s Council, Partners, and Asian
Indian community members!

MHConsultingGroup

MN Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

October 1, 2025

Topics

CQI Initiatives

Disability History Education – Panel Discussions

CQI Initiatives

Council's FY2024 Business Results

Council's Five-Year Plan and Program Goals

PPR Reporting Process – Federal Reporting Requirement

- Grantees' Performance Dashboard
- Verification of grantee ACL measurements
- Assisted in the in preparation of this federally required report

User Centered Projects

- Lessons Learned
- Disability History Education

Customer Satisfaction

- Continue to move to online platform - Survey Monkey
 - Publications/Website/Online Classes
 - Lessons Learned/Disability History
- 3rd Party results verification

Disability History Education – Panel Discussions

- Background:
 - GCDD was interested in discovering what various stakeholders in the disability community (*individuals with disabilities and parents of individuals with disabilities*) think is **important about disability history** and what they think **should be taught to Minnesota K-12 students**.
 - Group Discussions held September 2025:
 - Four, 45-minute discussion groups
 - Total of 11 participants
- Key themes and priorities emerged around **curriculum content, instructional tools, and systemic barriers**.

User-Centered Feedback:

1. REFRAMING DISABILITY AS A CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

- **Should be presented similarly to other civil rights movements** such as Black History or Women's Rights.
- Educators should **highlight landmark legislation (ADA, IDEA, *Olmstead* decision, DD Act)** as responses to systemic discrimination and rights violations—not as acts of charity or control.
- The history **of institutionalization, segregation, forced sterilization, and poverty must be acknowledged as part of a broader fight for equality and dignity.**

What we heard...

"It's important to address the past use of institutionalization and now inclusion – from exclusion to inclusion!"

"Show examples of the 'Fight for Inclusion' for those with disabilities – how we got to where we are today."

"Teach about Olmstead – because of how terrible our kids, people, were treated. Show the history of where we were and where we've come to, but still have more work to be done!"

"Teach The History of ADA – the background of how we got to this point."

User-Centered Feedback:

2. INCLUSION AND REPRESENTATION MATTER

- Individuals with disabilities should be actively involved in the education process—not as subjects of study but as **educators, leaders, and peers**.
- **Real-life stories of disability advocates and successful individuals** (e.g., Judith Heumann, Charlotte Woodward, Max Crawford) can help dismantle stereotypes and show the contributions of people with disabilities.
- Students must **see disability as a natural part of human diversity and community life**.

What we heard...

“We need, the teaching should be interaction with people who are different-abled not disabled.”

“Teachers are using acronyms and that carries over to all students – IDEA, SPED Kids. Give students an understanding of the acronyms. The teaching should be ‘different is ok’!”

“Show, need to understand, people with disabilities have value and can be just as successful in the community. Their gifts are different, but are just as valued, or should be just as valued as others in the community.”

User-Centered Feedback:

3. FOCUS ON LIVED EXPERIENCE AND EMPATHY BUILDING

- Experiential learning—such as **role playing, accessibility audits, and inclusive classroom activities**—was cited as a powerful method to build empathy and understanding.
- **Early exposure in elementary years is critical to normalize disabilities and reduce stigma.**
- Rather than "shock" tactics, **materials should promote respectful curiosity, awareness, and positive framing.**

What we heard...

*“Similar to Ambassadors for Respect – we need to **have people with disabilities included in the educational process**, show through example, include those with disabilities.”*

*“The DD Act, ADA, Standardized Education Act [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] – all those people fought for the right for their children. **We don’t want pity, don’t show it as pity, we want empathy.** I didn’t know any of this until I had children. We don’t think about it. Most don’t think about it but we need to educate them – in the early years in school, they need to become more empathetic towards disability community.”*

*“Don’t want the ‘shock factor’ or turn people away. A good way in is to **be more positive. Design for disability first then everyone wins.** A ramp, everyone uses a ramp, everyone uses an elevator. Show that design should be all inclusive.”*

User-Centered Feedback:

4. DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

- **Clear definitions and classifications** (intellectual, physical, behavioral) should be part of the curriculum.
- Disability should be viewed through a universal lens: **everyone is likely to experience disability at some point** in their lives.
- Emphasizing the **human needs** behind disability helps foster respect and inclusion.

What we heard...

“Teach the basics of Disabilities – intellectual, behavioral, physical. Disability needs are human needs.”

“Defining Disability is essential. And all humans, at some point in their lives, will have a disability. If you have the privilege of living long enough, you will have a disability.”

“People First Language – this can be interwoven into learning but not necessarily separate. It can be incorporated into learning plans. People are People, and need to be taught. Include the ‘respect factor’ and it should be taught.”

User-Centered Feedback:

5. EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND SYSTEMIC AWARENESS

- Participants voiced concerns over continued **segregation, low expectations, and systemic poverty** facing people with disabilities.
- Education should **address ableism, social stigma, and structural barriers** (e.g., housing, employment, transportation).
- Teachers and administrators must receive training and resources to **shift perceptions and improve inclusion in school environments**.

What we heard...

“People with disabilities are expected to live in poverty – forced to live in poverty for the rest of their lives. Even if they have a job, the money is taken away from them. The system is unfair. It is systemic like racial systemic issue, same for people with disabilities. All people deserve to live like all others. Currently, if they hit cap limit (\$\$), then they have to pay it back, give back – they can’t keep \$\$ earned.”

“I think students should know that ramps, accessible schools, playgrounds and even my son’s AAC device didn’t just appear. They’re here because people with disabilities and their families demanded change—and that’s an important part of our history.”

User-Centered Feedback:

6. CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS BY GRADE LEVEL

- **Elementary School:** Basic understanding of disability, inclusion, and people-first language.
- **Middle School:** Civil rights framing, historical context, empathy-building activities.
- **High School:** Deeper dive into legislation, systemic issues, advocacy history, and leadership by people with disabilities.

What we heard...

“In the early years of school, the early grades/years – kids are kids! But, as you move into upper grades, then the separation is more apparent.”

“Teach the basics in elementary school and introduce legislation in middle and high school.”

“Disability isn’t something to hide or pity. It’s an identity, a community, and a source of pride. Teaching kids that early changes the way they see their classmates and themselves.”

User-Centered Feedback:

INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- **Videos and multimedia tools:** Engaging and age-appropriate content featuring individuals with disabilities.
- **Interactive experiences:** School tours, simulations, and accessibility assessments.
- **Tri-fold displays, visual materials, and real stories:** Similar to cultural history exhibits.
- **Curriculum-aligned resources:** Materials that meet Minnesota Social Studies Standards.
- **Inclusion of disability heroes and success stories:** Highlighting strength, agency, and achievement.

Appendix

CQI 2025 Summary:

2025 Accomplishments :

- Grantees' Performance Dashboard
 - Developed Performance Dashboard tool that will allow for the Council to improve its commitment to continuous quality improvement. Better data tracking the work of the council's grantees will help it identify areas for improvement, while celebrating successes.
 - Updated Grantee Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Templates to capture change in Federal Requirements (Demographic Information)
- Preparation of annual Program Performance Reports (PPR)
 - Provided written narratives based on activity reports submitted
- User-Centered Projects
 - MHCG work on the Lessons Learned project confirms the Council serves as a catalytic force behind innovative, equity-driven initiatives that center the voices and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.
 - The Disability History Education project provided an understanding of what stake-holders in the disability community think is important for inclusive and meaningful curriculum development for Minnesota K-12 students.

Progress in Meeting Performance Goals:

- Met all Performance Goals for FFY 2025

Challenges

- Tracking and monitoring continuous changes in Federal Reporting Requirements.
- Identifying and tracking areas for continuous quality improvement can be challenging given the disparate measures grantees need to employ.



Employment Services

Pam Sunder-Director of Employment Services
Randy Bloom- Business and Community Partnership Development
Kristina Mengis – Art Employment Specialist
Pam Allen- Employment Specialist



OUR MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO SUPPORT
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
AS VITAL AND
CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF
OUR COMMUNITY.

ABOUT OUR SERVICES

We provide [community and employment services](#) to individuals with a wide range of disabilities. High-quality acclaimed and accredited programs are the foundation of our past, present, and future. We provide innovative, individualized services geared toward the specific aspirations and needs of each person we support. We work with individuals to find and create pathways between them and the life they choose.

We offer these flexible programs and services, brought to life daily by our creative, professional staff:

- ❖ Employment Services
- ❖ Creative Arts opportunities at each location, in the larger community, and at Fresh Eye Gallery.
- ❖ Day Services life enrichment skills
- ❖ Community integrated education and volunteer opportunities
- ❖ Support for personal development and increasing self-sufficiency
- ❖ Self-Advocacy skill building

MSS Employment Services

MSS Employment Specialists utilize a discovery process with each person seeking employment.

The discovery process:

- ☐ **Incorporates Person-Centered Planning Principles that identify what is Important To and For the person**
- ☐ **Begins with an Individualized Employment Plan**
- ☐ **Job Search activities focus on the person's strengths, interests, skills and abilities**

Grant Overview

Overall Goal

Increase opportunities and the supports needed by individuals with developmental disabilities to be employed in an integrated setting at or above minimum wage.

Progress Highlights/Successes



Goal: Assist (20) adults and transition age young adults with developmental disabilities in securing competitive employment.

Results: 25 Persons secured employment

Average hours worked per month: 23 hours

Average hourly wage earned: \$15.30

*** Data is for 11 months**



The Path to Self-Employment

Why is self-employment important as an avenue for people with disabilities?

Non-traditional employment options allow for flexibility, independence, and the opportunity to turn a hobby or interest into income

Our goal: Create an accessible, simplified small business process.

Throughout the grant year, small businesses owned by MSS artists grew from two to five.



Employment Awareness Training

Goal: At least 10-15 individuals with DD and their families will participate in training sessions to increase awareness and understanding about services available for transition and employment.

MSS partnered with PACER Center to provide workshops and training events for parents, youth and professionals on critical transition topics:

*NW Hennepin CTIC Transition Resource Fair. Presentation: First Jobs: Exploring the Possibilities of Work. Professionals, parents and students attended. Presentation included group discussion regarding benefits and resources. (11 attendees)

*2025 MNCTE for All Conference-Brooklyn Center. Presentation: Looking Ahead to Employment Supports Beyond Transition. Presentation included discussion on Employment First, Disability Disclosure and Reasonable Accommodations, Resources, etc. (20 attendees).

*Transition Program in SW Metro in Shakopee, MN. Also present as a resource for parents and educators in attendance were representatives from Scott and Carver Co. The workshop presented a broad overview of transition topics including person-centered planning, employment housing and service options. The goal was to assist parents in learning how they can help their young adults create a vision for the future (6 attendees)

MSS partnered with Upstream Arts to provide a training workshop called ‘The Art of Work’ focusing on cultivating soft skills necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment through art, theater and dance.

*Art of Employment presentation (3 sessions) at MSS Minneapolis- 5 staff and 16 persons served attended the training.

Employer Connection & Outreach

Goal: MSS Business and Partnership Specialist will educate businesses (20 employers) on disability awareness to exemplify the advantages of hiring persons with disabilities.

MSS presented to over 40 Hiring Managers at the Dakota County Inclusive Workforce Summit. Topics covered included: Recognize an untapped, talented workforce, Learn the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities, Gain tips on hiring and recruiting talented workers, Increase communication skills, understanding the ADA, Reasonable Accommodations, Recruitment, Interviewing and Hiring Tips, and Resources for employers.

Comments:

- Thanks for all you do. Very helpful
- ADA Laws very helpful
- Great topic and clarification on the disability awareness
- Great Presentation!
- I appreciated the video showing results of someone receiving a job.
- This was very helpful to understand these services.
- Great information. Thanks

Co-Collegiate Mentorship Program

Pairs student mentors and students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in the same area of study. Student mentors act as informal liaisons between individuals and school staff to increase independence and encourage self-reliance in academic and social situations.

Summary of Co-Collegiate activity

MSS continues to partner with Bethel University's BUILD program – supporting 22 mentors working with 32 mentees throughout the academic year. Bethel University BUILD has been a very strong partner over the grant period, connecting MSS with other state of Minnesota post-secondary programs for students with IDD.

Program Expansion: MSS has worked over the past year to engage with MN post-secondary programs including colleges that are (CTP) Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary program and non-CTP certified institutions.

South Central College Mankato recently partnered with MSS Co-Collegiate program fall 2025.

Challenges and Considerations

FRESH EYE ARTS + GALLERY

Fresh Eye Arts Studio Programs in
Eagan, St. Paul, and Brooklyn Park

Serving nearly 50 artists

Artists are given personal or community
studio space with on-going support
from art staff, including employment

43 artists in 22 public exhibitions, the
State Fair Fine Art Show, the Soo Visual
Art Center, and the Minnesota Museum
of American Art



Fresh Eye artist Lynda Mullan in front of her paintings in the exhibition titled
Currents: Adaptions, Brilliance, & Joy at the Minnesota Museum of American Art

New Initiatives and Accomplishments

- ❖ **On-going docent volunteering by artists at Minnesota Museum of American Art to promote community membership and gain work skills and experience**
- ❖ **Two artists invited to be on the Highpoint Center for Printmaking Accessibility Advisory Committee**
- ❖ **Two artists presenting on their small art businesses for over 100 people at the MOHR Conference for service providers across MN looking to advance employment and engagement options for people with disabilities**





eTrac 3.0 is an innovative online training curriculum designed to teach work readiness and job seeking skills to people struggling to overcome barriers to employment. eTrac 3.0 is especially designed for students and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

eTrac's comprehensive curriculum contains six separate courses – the first five focus on a specific phase of the job search process while the sixth focuses on how to successfully keep a job. eTrac is animated, narrated, and is fully accessible for adaptive technology. Content is inclusive and presented using engaging animation, real-world videos, simulations, and interactive exercises. Pre-test and post-test for each course measure learning retention.

Current Grant Goal: Provide eTrac training sessions for students to enhance their understanding of employment.

Result: Employment training was conducted over a 6-month period from November-June

13 adults from MSS Minneapolis participated, meeting for an hour every other week

MSS is working to expand access to eTrac 3.0 for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The most current need is to fill MN DEED's pre-ETS funding gap to continue providing eTrac 3.0 for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



App-Based Work-Readiness Resources for
your Smart Phone or Tablet



MSS Success Story

Marissa Wegner

Marissa's Mosaics & Works







Another MSS Success Story

Kenisha



Conclusion

**Thank you to the Governor's Council for
your support in helping MSS
carry out our mission.**

OVERVIEW OF
PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING CLASS 42 (2024-2025)
SEPTEMBER '24 – MAY '25



**Partners in
Policymaking®**

Class 42 | Year XXXVIII

PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING GRANT PROGRAM

- Created in 1987
- Approximately 1,200 Minnesota Graduates
- \$210,000 funding
- 35 participants accepted
 - Adults with disabilities
 - Parents or legal guardians of children with developmental disabilities
- 8 sessions (September – May)
- 128 class hours
- Local and national speakers, elected officials
- History, Education, Living, Employment, Community Organizing, County, State and Federal Government



A LOOK INTO CLASS 42



- Start: 37 participants
- End: 26 participants
- 12 people with disabilities
- 14 parents, 30 children
- Capitol Visit

	Individuals with a developmental disability (IA 1.1)	Family member of an individual with a developmental disability (IA 1.2)
The number (%) who report increasing their advocacy	100.0%	100.0%
The number (%) of people who are better able to say what they want / say what is important to them	88.8%	100.0%
The number (%) of people who participating in advocacy activities.	88.8%	90.0%
The number (%) of people serving on a cross-disability coalition	55.5%	40.0%
The number (%) who are satisfied with the project activity	100.0%	100.0%

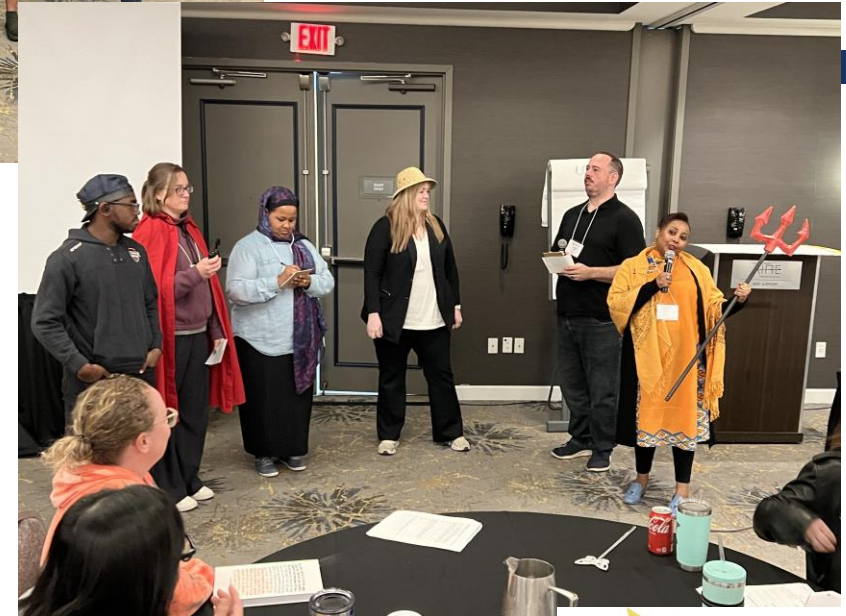
⑦ PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Adaptive equipment - bikes, ramps
- Coordination of services - PE, DAPE, PT
- Adapted games + playspaces
- Choice of activities
- Group Games
- Alternative Physical Activities for Everyone
- Ability to opt out
- adaptive/peer programming
- fewer rules
- Swimming classes Pool as a direct inclusion (at the school)
- Private Swimmers AND CHANGING
- Timed Timer
- Hand Signs to show where to go
- Science behind the movement (what/where I'm working on)
- Reassurance

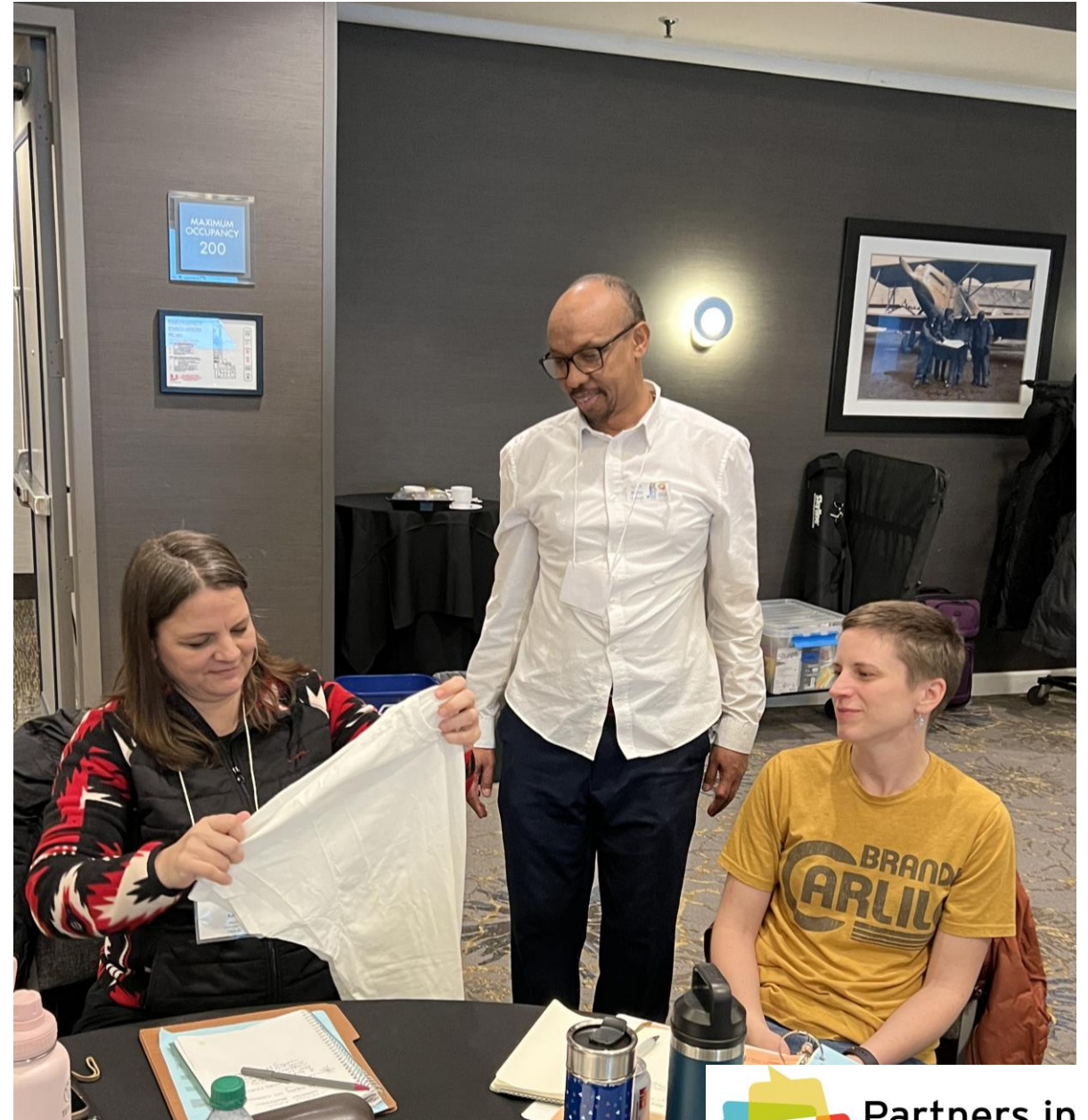
⑧ SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- providing opportunities for new groups
- Social media Group
- Sporting events
- Best Buddies
- Big brother/big sisters
- Neighbors
- Diagnosis support groups
- Camps
- Partner policies
- Affinity groups
- Special Olympics
- Student choice in seating / student input
- After school clubs
- Educating students about diversity/neurotypes
- Community Groups
- Buddy Groups (Support group)
- Open Invis
- (Creating Spaces) For all accessibility needs
- Zoom
- Always inviting & not assuming ability
- remembering that everyone has different social needs
- PE - Behavior Intervention Plan

- * Book clubs
- * Girl scouts / boy scouts
- * Unified club
- * opening doors
- HIGHLAND FRIENDSHIP CLUB
- HOPE KIDS
- DEDICATED (or suppressed) OUTINGS
- EMOTIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS
- Being an advocate of disability & talk about feelings (what you want)
- Bridge Hearts
- Speedy Friendz
- Neurodivergent community stuffs







Patricia Maetzold (Class 41)

HTTPS://MISSIONSBOX.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/07/MINNESOTA-FAMILY-WITH-SPECIAL-NEEDS-CHILDREN-FINDS-REST-AND-ENRICHMENT.MP4?_ =1%E2%80%8B

Video

Dani Indovino Cawley (Class 40)

https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/ada-bathrooms-come-to-bloomington-parks-thanks-to-a-moms-persistence/?utm_campaign=true_anthem&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook







ACT FORWARD

2025-2029 Strategic Plan




Background *

Advocating Change Together (ACT) has a long history of bringing together Minnesotans with disabilities to advocate for their rights. In the Fall of 2024, ACT began a planning process to refresh its vision for the future and develop a 5-year strategic plan.



ACT Forward!

ACT Forward is a group of ACT staff and stakeholders who are committed to the organization's future. The group met several times during the Fall and Winter of 2024/2025 to develop this plan. 



Vision

The future we are working towards

ACT envisions a world where people with and without disabilities are valued for their contributions and have equitable access to leadership and power.



Mission

Our purpose as an organization

ACT supports the leadership of people with disabilities to fight ableism and build inclusive communities.



Values

The important beliefs that guide us

ACT believes in the principles of Disability Justice and commits to actively learning how to incorporate them into the organization's daily work



ACT's Strategic Priorities



Promote and Build Support for ACT

Grow support for ACT by telling the story of what ACT does and why it's important.



Strengthen the Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

Connect and collaborate across Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM) regions so Minnesota has a strong and vibrant self-advocacy network.



Solidify ACT's Funding and Structure

Plan for ACT's funding and structure so the organization can do good work well into the future.



Grow the Movement

Think bigger about what ACT does to grow the self-advocacy movement and advance disability leadership.

Timeline

2025

2026

2027

2028

2029

Promote and Build Support

Strengthen Statewide Network

Solidify Funding and Structure

Grow the Movement



ACT's 50th Anniversary!

2025 Workplan

In 2025, ACT focus on **promoting and building support** for its work and **strengthening the statewide self-advocacy network**. This includes:

- Refreshing ACT's logo and website
- Advocating for ongoing state funding for self-advocacy
- Starting a quarterly newsletter to keep people informed of ACT's work
- Engaging self-advocacy leaders across the state to strengthen Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM)
- Planning *Disability Pride* events in July across Minnesota

Each year, ACT staff and supporters will review progress on the 5-year strategic plan and develop the next year's annual work plan.





SAM • Self-Advocates Minnesota
Advocating Change Together

ACT & SAM: Building Power Together

2024–2025 Year in Review



Introduction

Presenters:

- Jen Walton, Executive Director
- Adam Ruff, Program Administrator
- Meredith Kujala, Program Coordinator
- Michael Watson, ACT Board member & Olmstead Academy 2024 Graduate (SAM Metro)
- Samrica Zogar, Olmstead Academy 2025 Participant (SAM Metro)

Sharing accomplishments supported by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

About ACT & SAM

- ACT Mission: Support the leadership of people with disabilities to fight ableism and build inclusive communities.
- SAM: A statewide network of 6 regional self-advocacy groups (NW, NE, Central, Metro, SE, SW).
- Leadership Circle: Representatives from each region guide SAM's direction.

Strategic Planning Highlights

- ACT Forward 2025–2029 Strategic Plan
- New mission, vision, and values
- Refreshed website and logo

SAM Assessment Overview

- Purpose: Assess strengths and areas for growth in SAM.
- 83 participants engaged across 6 regions.
- Values: Accessibility, leadership, respect.

What We Heard: Big Picture Themes

- SAM helps people feel connected & confident
- Barriers to participation: transportation, tech, scheduling
- SAM needs more outreach to grow
- Communication & coordination improvements needed

What's Working Well

- Local leadership & regional flexibility
- Culture of respect, friendship, and peer leadership
- Disability Pride Festival, Self-Advocacy Conference, retreats
- Strong connections across the state

How SAM Can Grow

- Clearer roles & responsibilities
- More outreach (schools, group homes, diverse communities)
- Stronger Leadership Circle
- More in-person and accessible events
- Expanded funding & resources

ACT Forward Priorities in Action

- Strengthen the statewide self-advocacy network
- Promote and build support for ACT
- Grow the self-advocacy movement
- Solidify ACT's funding and structure

Stories of Impact

-

Looking Ahead

- ACT 50th Anniversary in 2029
- Expanding SAM outreach & leadership development
- Continuing Disability Pride Festival and statewide gatherings
- Commitment to Disability Justice principles!



Thank You

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SAM • Self-Advocates Minnesota

Advocating Change Together

2025 Assessment

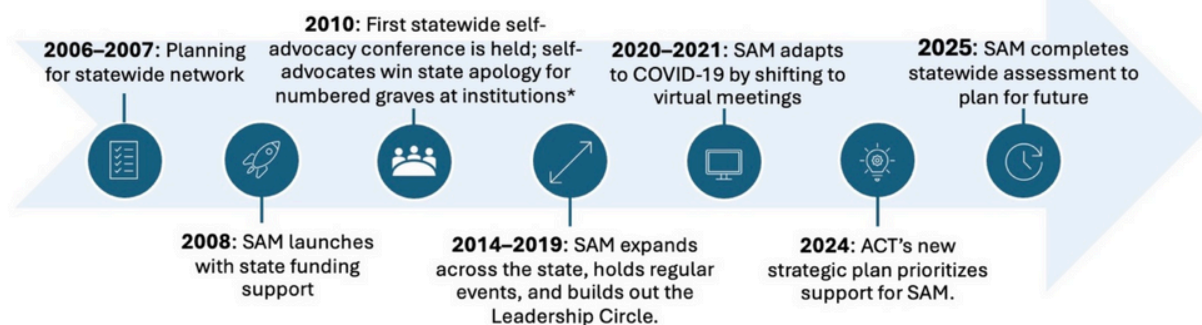
Background

Founded in 2008, Self-Advocates of Minnesota (SAM) is a statewide network made up of six regional self-advocacy groups: Northwest, Northeast, Central, Metro, Southeast, and Southwest. Each region elects representatives to serve on SAM's Leadership Circle, which helps guide SAM's direction and makes decisions about statewide events and priorities.

Regions and Statewide Structure



History of SAM



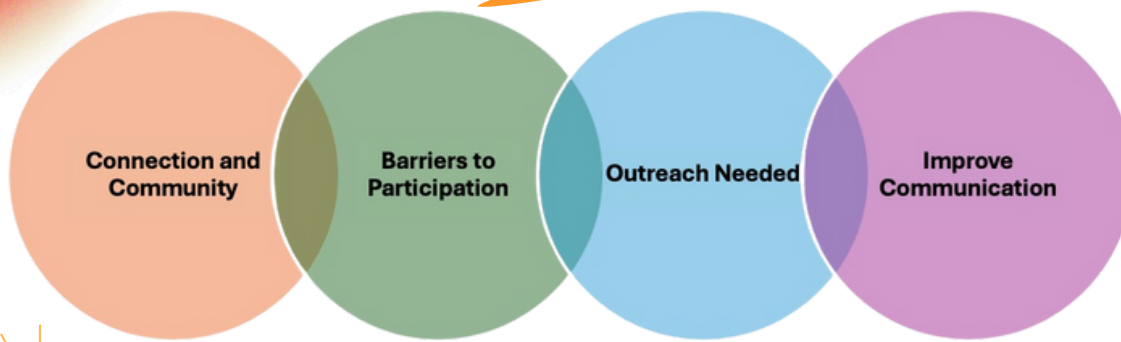
**NOTE: This was part of Remembering with Dignity, a statewide effort by self-advocates to mark the graves of thousands of people with disabilities who died while living in Minnesota's state institutions.*

Goal of Assessment

The goal of the assessment was to understand what SAM is doing well, what could be improved, and what ideas people have for SAM's future. Information and input was gathered in the following ways:



Assessment Results



4 “Big Picture” Themes

Recommendations**

****Note: Assessment report includes full list of recommendations**

People

These recommendations focus on supporting the people doing the work of self-advocacy. Examples include:

- Hire a statewide organizer or coordinator for SAM
- Provide training for regional reps and organizers on roles and responsibilities .

Process

These recommendations focus on how things work within SAM, such as decision-making, meetings, and communication. Examples include:

- Hold regular meetings with reps and organizers from across the state to check-in and share updates.
- Prioritize the Leadership Circle to guide SAM

Policy

These recommendations focus on SAM’s structures and governance issues, including contracts, funding, and roles. Examples include:

- Launch a statewide outreach and recruitment campaign to grow SAM
- Make fundraising part of the regions' workplans to expand funding available

Practice

These recommendations focus on day-to-day habits, shared values, and ways of working that shape the SAM experience. Examples include:

- Plan more fun, low pressure events for new members
- Create a simple tool to support accessible planning



Share assessment results



Decide which recommendations to move forward



Develop specific plans



Put plans into action

Next Steps

