

Partners in Policymaking reached out during 1990s

by [Access Press Staff](#) // September 9th, 2016

The following is excerpted from *The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities series, Forty-Five Years of History 1971-2016*.

Partners in Policymaking, since its inception in 1987, has been a consistently important focus for the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. During the first decade of the program, Partners demonstrated its success. Training session evaluations, six-month follow-up surveys and longitudinal studies showed that the basic design principles, the core values and competencies based on best practices that are the foundation of the Partners program were working. Minnesota had found an effective means to encourage continuing public policy advocacy by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

The Partners approach to training was eyed by others across the United States. In 1990, the council worked with Ed Roberts at the World Institute on Disability to secure additional federal funding to teach other states how to replicate the program. A "Project of National Significance" grant provided the financial support to hold the first National Academy in California. Twelve states were invited to attend. One year later, five of those states were operating a program.

In 1992 the Minnesota council worked with the Developmental Disabilities Council in Texas to cosponsor the second National Academy. It was attended by representatives from 24 states, 12 of the original states and 12 new states. The 1993 National Academy presented the program to representatives of 36 states. The network of Partners graduates, more than 4,000 by 1995, advocated for persons with developmental disabilities across the nation.

In 1992, the first National Summer Leadership Institute was held in Minnesota for Partners graduates. The institute offered training on current issues, additional leadership skills, and networking opportunities. National Institutes were also held in 1993, 1994, 1997 and 1998.

In the 1990s the focus also turned to that of developing local leadership among culturally diverse parents of children with developmental disabilities. It extremely important to creating inclusive, multicultural communities. A council survey found that "few parents in those communities knew that their children with disabilities had specific rights to education and other services and supports." The Cultural Outreach Program was created to provide immediate information on services available and how to access them and education and training to build beginning leadership and advocacy skills, and help parents communicate with educators and support providers.

In 1992, to encourage participation of parents of children with developmental disabilities in racial and ethnic minority communities in the Partners program, the council began to fund an outreach and leadership training program in the African American community. In subsequent years, council funds were allocated to outreach programs in the Native American community from 1995 through 2003; in the Hispanic community from 2000 to 2013; and in the Asian community from 2004 to 2006.

The cultural outreach programs continue and are intended as the first step to the Partners program for adults with disabilities and parents with children with developmental disabilities who are also members of minority communities. The programs offer outreach services and personal support in addition to leadership training and introduce the concepts of the Partners program.

Access Press is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota's disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of disability topics, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Contact us at access@accesspress.org or 651-644-2133 if you have questions. The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, www.mnddc.org or www.mncdd.org and www.partnersinpolicymaking.com.