COORDINATOR'S HANDBOOK

THE MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Best Practices + *State-of-the-art Training*

Competent Activists + *Great Outcomes*

In 1987, the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities created Partners in Policymaking®. Since then, Partners programs have been implemented throughout the United States and internationally. More than 27,000 Partners graduates in the United States and internationally are part of a growing worldwide network of community leaders serving on policymaking committees, commissions, and boards at local, state, and national levels. Partners is an innovative, competency-based leadership training program for adults with disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities. The purpose of the program is two-fold: to teach best practices and to teach the competencies needed to influence public policy.

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This is the eighth version of the Coordinator's Handbook since 1990. It includes valuable information on blended learning—how to integrate the Partners in Policymaking Online Courses into the classroom training program—a practice that can save time, money, and energy, and simultaneously produce greater outcomes.

This Handbook can help new Coordinators get started and ensure that experienced Coordinators maintain and improve the quality of their programs. You have much to accomplish, and this Handbook can help!

FOUNDATION

The Birth of Partners in Policymaking®

The origins of the Partners in Policymaking leadership training program emerged in 1986 and were rooted in the many and complex problems faced by people with developmental disabilities and their families who, at that time:

- Had no centralized, organized, systemic education and training to provide them with state-of-the-art experiences and information.
- Needed systemic training to develop competencies involved in effectively influencing public officials to make grassroots advocacy really work.
- Had few training programs to prepare them for positions of leadership in local, state, or national organizations.
- Needed a shared vision of motivated, well-informed, active, energetic volunteers, parents and self-advocates.
- Had no mechanism for state and national leaders in the disability field to meet and discuss issues with people with disabilities who are traditionally unserved and underserved.
- Had no systemic educational program available that was designed to improve competencies and increase their empowerment.
- Were at risk of losing an aging leadership and weren't grooming young leaders.
- Didn't have opportunities to connect with others. Few parents could meet adults with disabilities who could help them dream for their children. Few adults with disabilities knew parents of children with disabilities who could give them a perspective on the experiences of their parents.

In response, Partners in Policymaking was developed to train participants in *best practices* over a wide range of issues and to teach the skills necessary to *change systems*. Partners participants become competent to change their own lives, and to then work on changes that affect others with disabilities at local, state, and national levels. They learn there are no "quick fixes." Thus, Partners graduates are trained to be *agents of long-term change,* in order to *achieve long-term success,* and to create a *shared vision,* enlarging the power base of disability rights advocates.

The goal of Partners in Policymaking is to educate participants on how to develop positive relationships with those who make policy—to become *partners in policymaking*. In today's political climate of radical change, Partners graduates must work harder than ever to prevent the loss of basic rights for people with disabilities. Partners graduates can change the future by influencing public policy today. For more information, see Partners in Policymaking® Changing Lives. Changing Policies at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/***.

The goal of Partners in Policymaking is to educate participants on how to develop positive relationships with those who make policy—to become **partners in policymaking**.

Partnerships with Policymakers

Policymakers are the people in government, including politicians and civil servants, who are elected or appointed to make decisions about rules and regulations, who control funding sources, and who legislate. There are thousands of policymakers at the federal level, and thousands more at the state, county, and local levels of government. Policymakers and policymaking bodies include school principals, school boards, city councils, mayors, county and state officials, state senators and representatives, state agency boards, and federal legislators and agencies.

Graduates of quality Partners programs are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to become partners with policymakers at any level: local, state, and federal. As the number of Partners graduates increases, a network of highly-motivated, powerful individuals is positively influencing the thousands of policymakers who shape disability issues at all levels of government. Some Partners graduates have *become* elected and appointed public officials—they've *become* the policymakers.

State-of-the-Art and Best Practices

What are state-of-the-art and best practices in terms of disability issues, the most up-to-date and best ways of doing things, from a national perspective? These are always evolving. What is best practice today may not be in six months or a year from now.

Partners in Policymaking is *not* about teaching participants how to access services. Most Partners participants, through their life experiences, already know what services are or aren't available, and how to access these.

State-of-the-art information gives Partners participants the big picture, allows them to dream big, and provides strategies to turn dreams into reality. The collective impact of Partners participants dreaming the big dream and working to achieve it will affect people far beyond the graduates and their families—the face of disability issues will change! Partners is about today's best practices presented by national speakers who provide state-of-the-art information. Look at how quickly best practices changed between the mid-1980s and the 21st century.

The collective impact of Partners participants will affect people far beyond the graduates and their families—**the face of disability issues will change!**

A look at how quickly best practices changed between the mid-1980s and the 21st century:

Life Area	1985	1990	2016
Education	Integration for some children, for part of the day—physical education or arts.	Inclusion for children with disabilities.	Full inclusion for all children with disabilities; post-secondary inclusive education in "regular" college/university classes.
Employment	Demonstration projects in a few states for entry level positions.	Supported work with agency job coaches.	People with disabilities are hired directly by employers, receive competitive wages, and have career paths.
Living	Small group homes.	Some supported living.	A home of your own with the natural and/or paid supports of your choice.
Assistive Technology	Wheelchairs and homemade communication devices.	Computers, wheelchairs, adaptive daily living equipment.	Anything that enables a person with a disability to have a better, more self-reliant life, from high-tech to low-tech, voice-activated technology, web access, digitized imagery, smartphones, social and other electronic media.

Systems Change

Partners in Policymaking is about systems change in the disability arena: an organized effort to improve the way things are currently done by educating and influencing. Systems change is fundamentally about working toward and achieving a new vision. Historically, the entrenched systems and policies in our society (from local to federal) have not served people with disabilities and their families well.

Appointed and elected officials have traditionally made policy decisions about people with disabilities and their families. Partners in Policymaking is based on the belief that policy decisions should be made by people with disabilities and families in partnership with each other and with elected and appointed officials. The Partners training provides people with disabilities and families the skills needed to influence policymakers at all levels, so that systems become more responsive, customer-friendly, and consumer-driven.

While personal change is sometimes a by-product of the Partners program, parents of children with disabilities and adults with disabilities can receive training in advocacy and personal change from a variety of other sources. The focus of Partners in Policymaking is on best practices and systems change so that graduates are prepared to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Policy decisions should be made by people with disabilities and families in partnership with each other and with elected and appointed officials.

A Commitment to Replicating the Model

Replicate: to take a successful, complete model and follow the same processes and ideas.

As the Partners Coordinator, you and/or your organization are responsible for replicating a program that has been proven effective. The model has worked across the United States and internationally, and it can be adapted, as necessary, to ensure it's relevant to your specific location. The key to the model's success, however, is clear: **in order for Partners graduates to be successful, the model must be fully implemented.**

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (Council) wants Partners in Policymaking to continue to be a success, and it has a direct interest in that success. According to the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General, the Partners in Policymaking name and model is the intellectual property of the Council and the State of Minnesota. To protect these proprietary privileges, the Council wants to ensure that any leadership training program that refers to itself as Partners in Policymaking (or as a Partners replication) follows the same principles outlined in this Handbook.

Here are some key points about replicating the Partners program:

- The success of the model program has been documented for almost three decades. The quality principles and curriculum have been formulated from a variety of disciplines. The results have been tested and successful outcomes measured and documented. Changes to the Partners model program should not be made unless it can be demonstrated that those changes improve the program.
- From year to year and from state to state, it's important that Partners graduates achieve the same levels of competency—to be on the same "playing field"—to ensure they can assist each other when advocating at all levels of government. *Some Partners graduates are disappointed when they discover they weren't trained in certain competencies that other Partners graduates acquired.*
- Using this Handbook, replicating the model program, and incorporating the Partners Online Courses will enable Coordinators and funders to maintain the highest quality standards, and this, in turn, will generate talented, dedicated, and competent graduates and extraordinary outcomes.
- By following the replication model, Coordinators, and possibly the funders, are freed from the overwhelming task of trying to "reinvent the wheel." The replication model is proven. Following the "recipe" allows the Coordinator to customize the program for the state, while leaving the proven curriculum intact.

Copyright and trademark information, and the Program License Agreement can be found at *mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/pdf/Copyright_Trademark_Licensing.pdf*.

Quality Principles: Process, Approach, and Outcomes

Partners in Policymaking is based on a core set of principles around process, approach, and outcomes:

- **Experiential Learning:** Partners participants learn by doing. For example, they prepare and deliver testimony, and practice speaking to public officials. A variety of learning methods ensure that participants acquire the competencies.
- **Diversity:** Members of a Partners class are diverse in experiences, disability types, geographic location, gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds, income levels, and education levels. Participants learn from the experiences of their peers as well as from the curriculum and presenters.
- **Best Practices:** Participants learn about what's possible, not about what already is! They break out of the status quo and ask, "What if ..."
- **National Speakers:** Participants receive best practices training from speakers who provide a national state-of-the-art perspective.
- **Leadership:** Participants acquire knowledge *to create change*, not just for knowledge's sake. They use what they learn to influence social change and provide leadership in their communities. Again, *Partners is not about teaching participants how to "get more services."*
- **Length of Time:** Funders make a commitment to Partners programs for the recommended eight sessions to ensure participants receive 128 hours of training during the program year.
- **Sufficient Funding:** The funding agency commits to provide a level of funding that will ensure a quality program, based on the standards and recommendations in this Handbook. Funders commit to a quality replication that covers all the program's expenses.
- **Evaluation:** The compilation of Initial, Six-Month, and Long-Term Surveys document the program's effectiveness and may be a critical factor in the funder's decision to sponsor future Partners programs. These results are tracked and monitored for long-term trends. In addition, participants and speakers evaluate their experiences. (Program evaluation is detailed in the Quality Improvement section on p. 55.)
- **Not an Organization:** Partners is a leadership training program, *not* an organization. The work of graduates is in their communities, and within state and national organizations. The program links them with networks and helps them acquire the competencies needed to succeed.
- **Outcomes:** The program's ultimate outcomes are increased independence, productivity, integration, inclusion, and self-determination for all Partners participants and/or family members. These outcomes are defined in federal law.

Partners is a **leadership training program**, not an organization. Participants acquire knowledge **to create change**, not about how to "get more services."

Core Values About People with Disabilities

A quality Partners in Policymaking program is built on critical values relating to the inherent worth of people with disabilities. These values must be the underlying thread woven throughout every aspect of the training program; Partners is all about how to achieve a vision that reflects these Core Values.

Core Values about People with Disabilities

1	People with disabilities are not "the handicapped" or "the disabled." Using "People First Language" is a must.
2	People with disabilities need ***real friendships***, not just relationships with paid staff.
3	People with disabilities are entitled to the full meaning of the right to free speech. The ability to ***communicate***, in whatever form, must be available to every person with a disability.
4	People with disabilities must be able to enjoy full ***mobility and accessibility*** that allows active participation in community life.
5	People with disabilities must be assured ***continuity*** in their lives through families and neighborhood connections.
6	People with disabilities must be treated with ***respect and dignity***.
7	People with disabilities must have the ***freedom to choose*** how they want to live their lives and receive the support they need.
8	People with disabilities must be able to ***exercise choice and control*** in all areas of their lives.
9	People with disabilities must be able to live in ***homes*** of their choice and choose the supports they need.
10	People with disabilities must be able to enjoy the benefits of true ***productivity*** through employment and/or ***contributions*** as members of their communities

These Core Values are still not present in the lives of too many children and adults with developmental disabilities.

These values represent the foundation of Partners in Policymaking. We know, however, that these values are still not present in the lives of too many children and adults with developmental disabilities. We also know that as a result of the best practices training of Partners, these values *have* become the norm for thousands of Partners graduates around the world. In turn, graduates are using their influence to help others learn "what's possible."

While the Core Values haven't changed since 1987, best practices *have* changed and will continue to do so. This is as it should be, as we learn more, as we push the envelope, as technology changes, and as laws and policies evolve. And the speakers chosen for Partners training session need to represent leading-edge thinking.

PARTICIPANTS

Participant Criteria

A quality Partners program is committed to recruiting a diverse group of participants positioned to engage in systems change. The goal is not to simply develop the skills of each individual, but to also create a group of people who can support one another and bring a range of talents to bear in their state. Aim for an annual class size of 35 participants with the expectation that you'll end up with 30-35 graduates. Some participants may drop out before the first session or at some point during the Partners training year. Of course, the size of your budget, as well the different line items for costs (travel, hotel, etc.) will influence the size of your class. (Budget information is detailed later; see p. 59.)

The criteria below should guide your participant selection. Ensure these criteria are included in your application form, and don't judge applicants on questions you haven't included in your application form (a sample form is available at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/classroomcoordinators.html)***:

- **Geographic Representation and Economic Diversity:** Participants should represent all areas of your state/region and its economy.
- **Ethnic/Minority Representation:** The make-up of your class should reflect the make-up of the general population of your state/region.
- **Male/Female Mix:** Ensure representation of both males and females.
- **Cross-Disability Representation:** Ensure that the participants selected represent a wide range of disabilities.
- **"New Blood"—Not Already Involved in Leadership and/or Advocacy Organizations:** Many parents of children with disabilities and/or individuals with disabilities are already active advocates. Invest your funding in those who are *inexperienced!*
- **Motivated for Systems Change vs. Personal Gain:** Try to select applicants who want to go beyond their own personal issues. What participants learn from each other can lead to significant positive changes in the lives of the person/family but also contribute to generating positive change at all levels of the system (local, state/regional, national). Thus, you want participants who see the value in generating change for *all*, not just for themselves.
- **Self-Advocates:** Select those adults with disabilities who are ready and willing to take on the system and who want to work and live in the community.
- **Parents of Young Children are Ideal Participants:** Parents of young children are more receptive to new approaches and best practices, are in the position to make the greatest changes over the lifespan of their children, and are not locked into the status quo.

Parents of young children are more receptive to new approaches and best practices.

Parents + Adults with Disabilities = Success

Partners is unique among leadership training programs: it brings together adults with disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities. Everyone learns from each other, bonds together, recognizes the similarities of their issues, and then works on each other's issues. The most promising benefit to every participant is the critical recognition that the *disability movement is broader than one group, one type of disability, or one issue.*

Adults with disabilities learn from the parents—their personal perspectives and life experiences—and receive these benefits:

- Knowledge and understanding of what their own family members felt and experienced.
- Support and encouragement as they work through the emotions and activities inherent to their own emancipation process.
- The recognition *(often for the very first time)* of the value of their own life experiences to educate and enlighten others.
- The opportunity to help parents learn what it feels like to live with a disability (something parents can never learn from medical or educational professionals), what's really important and what's not, and how to help their children be as self-reliant and productive as possible, as early as possible.

Parents learn from adults with disabilities—their personal perspectives and life experiences—and receive these benefits:

- A broader perspective regarding their child's future: looking at the long-term—the big picture—not just the next IEP meeting.
- The realization that they (parents) must change before they can expect others to change—they must begin to have high expectations for their children.
- An understanding of the concept of "emancipation" so that parents can encourage advocacy in their children as early as possible; allowing parents to have the courage to "let go" and to allow children the dignity of risk, and personally see the accomplishments and achievements of adults with disabilities in terms of education, employment, and community living.
- The recognition of how their child's earliest experiences in traditional services, school, community, and friendships—both positive (inclusion) and negative (segregation)—will affect the adult years.

The goal is not to simply develop the skills of each individual, but to also **create a group of people who can support one another and bring a range of talents to bear in their state.**

Ratio of Parents and Self-Advocates

Some Partners programs decide to have a class of 50 percent parents and 50 percent adults with disabilities, in an attempt at "fairness." Other programs gauge the needs of the adults with disabilities, and therefore, the potential number of personal care assistants (PCAs) who may accompany them, and create a class with a lower percentage of adults with disabilities. The ratio can be a critical factor in the overall success of your Partners program. Others report a ratio of 2/3 parents and 1/3 adults with disabilities works best in their states.

It's critical to create and maintain a cohesive group of participants. It's vital for parents and self-advocates to bond with each other, instead of parents bonding only to other parents and/or self-advocates bonding only to other self-advocates. If the ratio of adults with disabilities is too high (and too many PCAs are present), the potential for the development of deep, personal connections between adults with disabilities and parents is diminished—the PCAs may get in the way—and long-lasting bonds between participants are not made. In the best-case scenario, the Partners Coordinator will publicly—and repeatedly—encourage natural peer assistance: classmates helping one another.

The Role of Personal Care Assistants (PCAs)

Some adults with disabilities in the Partners class may use PCAs for assistance in various ways: needing help with dressing, bathing, toileting, etc., but not during the training sessions or at mealtimes. Another person may use a PCA as an "interpreter:" the person with a disability can talk, but his speech is difficult to understand.

Learning to use natural supports—others in the room—during their time at a Partners session is the first step on the path to greater interdependence in one's community and the lessening of dependence on the system. Similarly, when parents in the class provide natural support to a classmate with a disability, the parents begin to see opportunities for their own children with disabilities to use natural supports in their school classrooms, recreational activities, etc., both now and when they become adults. This experience can be beneficial and eye-opening for all.

Some Partners programs have achieved great success by scheduling a meeting with self-advocates and their PCAs on the morning of the very first training day, prior to the "opening" of the first session, to review expectations:

- PCAs are not members of the class; they're in attendance as support only, but they'll receive valuable benefits if they're in attendance during the training sessions.
- If the participant needs the PCA only for personal care (bathing, dressing, etc.), the participant decides whether or not the PCA should be in the meeting room during presentations.
- If the participant decides he/she prefers for the PCA to be in the meeting room during the training sessions, but the PCA is not needed at the participant's side, the PCA will sit at a table in the rear of the meeting room and will move to participant's side only when requested by the participant.

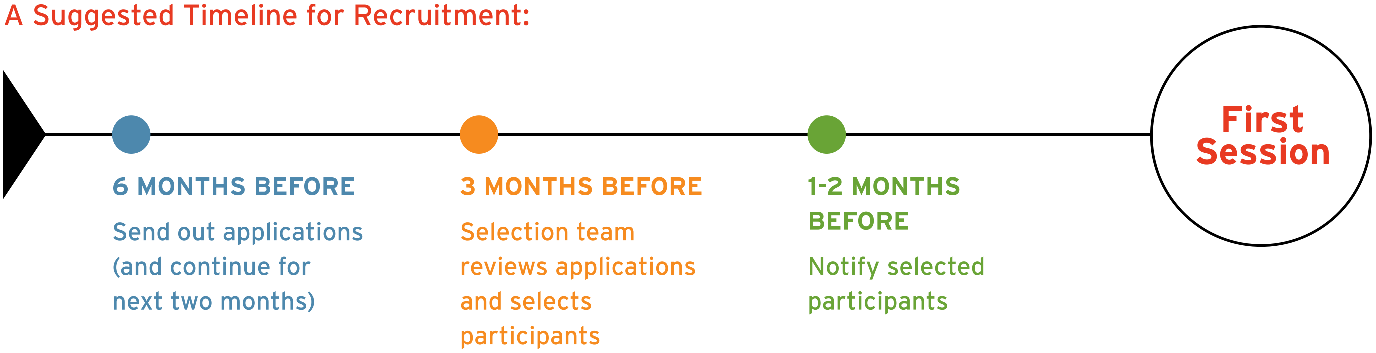
It's **vital** for parents and self-advocates to bond with each other.

- At meal and/or break times, the participant will determine if he/she needs help from the PCA.
- During the training sessions, PCAs do not participate in training activities or ask questions of the speakers.
- PCAs should not speak for the individuals they support unless the PCA "translating" the person's speech is the norm.

Recruitment and Selection

Timing

A Suggested Timeline for Recruitment:



No matter where you are in your Partners year right now, start thinking about recruiting the next class. If your recruitment efforts are yielding a large number of qualified applicants, you can take a break until it's time to start the process again.

Recruitment efforts should yield a large pool of applicants so the selection team can choose applicants that best meet the criteria described earlier. When participants know they've been chosen from a large pool of applicants, most feel honored and privileged to have been selected for this life-changing opportunity and, in turn, are more enthusiastic, dedicated, and committed. In states that do a better job of recruiting, hundreds of applications may be received and some applicants who were not selected the first time reapply in succeeding years; applicants who are ultimately selected after multiple applications feel extremely fortunate to have been selected and are often the most dedicated.

No matter where you are in your Partners year right now, **start thinking about recruiting the next class.**

Many Coordinators have learned through experience that the key to a successful Partners program lies in the recruitment process, which ultimately determines the make-up of the class.

- **The #1 recruitment source is Partners graduates;** distribute recruitment announcements and/or applications to all of your graduates for them to share with others. They can literally hand these out to others and can also post information on their social media pages.
- **Distribute recruitment announcements and applications using the mailing lists (snail mail and email), listservs, website, and social media pages of your funder(s).**

- **Blanket your state with announcements and application forms through the usual disability-related channels:** school district special education departments, early intervention programs, special education preschools, Head Start, social workers, protection and advocacy offices, university centers of excellence, state DD agencies, and other disability agencies and non-profits (service providers, Arc, UCPA, autism groups, Down syndrome associations, etc.).
- **For the greatest outreach, and to connect with potential applicants who might not be connected to disability organizations:**
  - **Think outside the box.** Distribute announcements and/or applications to schools of all kinds, churches, medical facilities, pediatricians, therapy clinics, childcare centers, YMCA, youth activities (Scouts and more), parks and recreation, libraries, museums, social justice organizations, etc.
  - **Use newspaper bulletin boards, retail bulletin boards, websites, and radio.** Consider sending a press release to local TV, radio, or print media that leads to an interview with the coordinator, funding agency representative, and/or Partners graduate.
- **Recognize that you may not reach some people with disabilities or families, but your efforts will most likely reach a grandparent, uncle, aunt, neighbor, or friend**, and this person can, in turn, share the news with the individuals/families you're targeting.
- **Many organizations (disability or non-disability) won't release their mailing lists to you, but there are still ways to use their databases.** Ask them to include a blurb, announcement, and/or a story about Partners recruitment in their next newsletter. In addition, or as an alternative, make copies of your recruitment announcement and/or application and ask the organization(s) to include your documents in their next newsletter (snail mail and/or email); offer to pay for snail-mail costs, as appropriate. This provides you with access to the organization's database and allows the organization to maintain its privacy policies. Similarly, ask these organizations to include a blurb and a link about your Partners recruitment on their websites and/or social media pages.

You may not reach some people with disabilities or families, but **your efforts will most likely reach a grandparent, uncle, aunt, neighbor, or friend.**

Selecting Participants

Once the application forms start rolling in, have your selection team of reviewers ready to go. Your team should include, at a minimum, you—the Coordinator—and other Partners staff. In addition, you can include Partners graduates, members/staff from the funding agency, and/or others. You want reviewers whose opinions and values you respect, and who also believe in the Partners Core Values, are familiar with the selection criteria, and understand what Partners is all about. The selection process may seem difficult and time-consuming, but the efforts will produce unbelievable results for the future.

- **After the deadline for receiving applications, the Coordinator reviews all applications.** If any applications do not meet the criteria (e.g., an applicant is neither a parent nor a person with a disability), those applications are removed and those applicants are sent a letter of non-acceptance, explaining why the person wasn't eligible for the Partners program.

- **The Coordinator prepares a grid, with instructions for the selection team** that includes the selection criteria detailed previously. Use a scale of 1-5 for each item and/or some other method to rate each application for the different criteria.
- **Make copies of the remaining applications (a full set for each reviewer) and send the packet, along with the selection grid and instructions, to each member of the selection team.** Alternatively, scan the documents and send electronically. Each member reviews and rates all applications.
- **Bring the selection team together and review the rating and ranking scores.** Sort the applications into three groups: very strong candidates, possible candidates, and unlikely candidates.
- **The Coordinator compiles all scores, ratings, and rankings from the reviewers and derives a composite score that is added to a main chart/grid.**
- **At this point, a thorough review is made regarding each of the different criteria, and the final decisions ensure a balanced group** (female/male, minority, rural/urban/suburban areas, age of child, disability type, etc.).
- **Create a waiting list in the event someone drops out before the class begins.** Always notify all applicants the results of the selection process.

PARTICIPANTS

The selection process may seem difficult and time-consuming, but **the efforts will produce unbelievable results for the future.**

Participant Notification: Profile, Agreement, and Initial Survey

Once you've selected the participants, send each a congratulatory, enthusiastic letter notifying them of their selection. With this letter, include a Partners Profile form, a Participation Agreement, and an Initial Survey for the participant to complete and return. Samples of these forms, along with other Coordinator resources, are available at: ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/classroomcoordinators.html***. Set an appropriate deadline for the Partners Profile and Participation Agreement to be returned (prior to the first session). The Initial Survey can be returned before the first session or participants can bring it to the first session.

The Partners Profile includes personal information needed by the Coordinator related to hotel accommodations, meals, accessibility issues, and more. The Participation Agreement details the responsibilities and expectations for both the participant and the program, and is signed by the participant and the Coordinator. It's recommended that a Partners program also establish policies and guidelines (similar to workplace procedures) relative to appropriate conduct, drug/alcohol use, and/or sexual harassment. This information could be modeled after existing state employee workplace regulations, and provided in a separate document to be agreed to and signed by participants or the information could be incorporated into the Participant Agreement (see p. 65 for specifics about Rules of the Road). The Initial Survey is the critical first step in the long-term evaluation of your program (see p. 55 for details about Quality Improvement).

Responsibilities of Participants

The Partners Coordinator and funding agency bear many responsibilities for the success of the Partners program. But it's not a one-way street; participants have responsibilities, too. In order to meet those responsibilities, participants need to first know what they are.

- **A Commitment to Attend:** The Partners application form needs to include the dates, times, and location of the training sessions, along with a query: "Will you make a commitment to attend…" That's the first responsibility of a participant: to attend all the sessions. But they can't make that commitment if they don't know the "when" and "where."
- **Participation Agreement:** As noted previously, the applicants that are selected for the class need to complete and return a Participation Agreement that outlines what the Partners program will do (provide training, cover expenses, etc.) and what the participant will do (attend all sessions, comply with policies and procedures, etc.).
- **Quality Improvement Surveys:** Complete and return the Initial Survey, Six-Month Survey, and Long-Term Survey (see p. 56).
- **Time-Match Forms:** If your program needs time match (for grant purposes) from participants, they need to complete a time match form at the end of every session, detailing how much time they have contributed to the program.
- **Session Evaluation Forms:** Every participant needs to complete the Session Evaluation form(s) for every training session and/or speaker; these provide valuable information to the Coordinator on the program's effectiveness.
- **Graduate Project**: Each participant needs to complete a post-graduate project, of his/her choosing, within the parameters set by the Coordinator, within six months of graduation. Projects should be a natural extension of both the Core Values, Principles and Competencies, coupled with what participants have learned, related to changes in the system, public policies, attitudes and perceptions, inclusive practices, employment, etc. In some states, participants join together in twos or threes for their project; other participants work solo. The Coordinator should ask participants to start thinking about their project by the 5th or 6th training session, and the decision should be finalized by graduation. Consider these examples: become a mentee of a policymaker; organize/plan a conference on inclusive education or some other issue; organize/raise funds for an inclusive community playground; start a Facebook/social media page on an issue of interest. These are just a few ideas; the sky is the limit!

Coordinator Responsibilities to Participants

- **Be the role model of the Partners Core Values and Principles** by: using, and requiring others to use, People First Language; ensuring all people are treated with respect and dignity; encouraging real friendships among participants; and expecting/encouraging the full participation and productivity of participants.
- **Maintain open and honest communication** among Partners staff, funding organization staff, participants, and speakers.
- **Diligently resolve participants' individual issues** and, as necessary, refer participants to persons/organizations who have expertise in the area of need.
- **Provide reimbursements to participants within a reasonable time.**
- **Provide all participants with a "class directory"** that includes every participant's name, address, phone, and email (update, as necessary) to allow participants to be in contact with one another. When appropriate, provide information on low/no-cost Internet providers (IPs) for those who do not have Internet access. Set up a Facebook page for the group, or add each class to a state Facebook page.
- **Prepare detailed agendas** that include: meeting dates and times, meeting location, topics and speakers, competencies for the session, and homework options. Send or email the agenda for each session to every participant at least two weeks in advance of the session.
- **Provide packets of information for all participants for every session,** to include: detailed agenda, handouts from speakers, Session Evaluation form, Time Match form, Reimbursement Form, and other pertinent information. (Samples of all forms are available at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/classroomcoordinators.html***.) Post online and allow participants to download.
- **Ensure those who need documents in a different format (large print, Braille, audio, etc.) receive their documents at the same time as their classmates.**

Good Ideas during the Class Sessions

- **Always remind participants to silence/turn off their cell phones during the training session.**
- **Encourage all participants to write "thank you" notes/emails to speakers.** This is both an exercise in effective and timely communication and a means for participants to express appreciation to, and stay in touch with, speakers and/or guests.
- **Encourage participants to take an active role in helping out at Partners trainings:** being morning greeters, passing out/collecting papers; assisting speakers or introducing speakers (using the brief bio from the speaker).
- Some Coordinators no longer make paper copies of handouts and/or other documents that are supplementary material (documents that will not be used during a session). Instead, they upload all documents (as PDFs) to a flashdrive. **Do provide paper copies for participants who don't have computer access and/or who need documents in a different format (Braille, etc.).**
- **To facilitate participants bonding with one another, encourage participants to visit with one another at the meeting site outside of the training schedule.** For example, if your training is held at a hotel, participants could visit in the hotel lobby, restaurant, or other public space. Some Coordinators, with the permission of the meeting facility, allow the training room or dining area to be left open for participants to visit together. Make sure to detail any "ground rules." (The Coordinator and/or staff should "disappear" and allow the participants to forge relationships with one another.)
- Most speakers provide copy masters of handouts for participants, and some or all of these may be the speaker's intellectual property. **Confirm with speakers whether or not participants may make copies of the handouts to share with others and then inform participants.**
- **Establish a protocol for use of participants' use of smartphone cameras, tablets, and/or laptop computers during the training session.** Verify with the speaker, and then communicate to participants, on whether or not the speaker gives permission for participants to take photos/videos of the speaker's presentation slides/videos and, if so, how they can be used (for participant's personal use only and/or to share with others via social media, etc.).

SPEAKERS

Speaker Selection

The quality of every Partners in Policymaking program depends on speakers who can present "what's possible" and who:

1. **Are experts in the topic area,** including having an understanding of the connection between levels of government, systems change, and policy results.
2. **Have a broad perspective on state-of-the-art/best practices in disability issues that are consistent with an empowering vision.**
3. **Understand what Partners in Policymaking is all about** and are committed to the Core Values.
4. **Know how to communicate about their topic of expertise** through adult learning methods including blended learning.
5. **Are motivated and enthusiastic themselves,** and can inspire and energize participants.

National speakers enable Partners participants to learn "what's possible" because the policies, practices, or activities are successful in other places.

Thus, for the main topics in a given session, Coordinators must recruit *national-level* speakers who meet the criteria above. By and large, in-state or local speakers cannot present "what's possible" because they don't have as wide a perspective, knowledge base, or experience as national-level speakers. However, in-state and local speakers can augment and complement sessions. Consider the following:

1. **Cross-fertilization of ideas can occur only when exchange happens across our communities, our states, and our nation.** National speakers enable Partners participants to learn "what's possible" because the policies, practices, or activities are successful in other places.
2. **National speakers can say things that in-state speakers cannot;** in-state speakers may feel the pressure of their occupations or positions.
3. **While national speakers teach best practices and "what's possible," in-state speakers also must go beyond the status quo.** Participants already know disability policy in their area—they live with it every day.
4. **Participants need opportunities to develop connections and mentorships with well-respected national speakers in order to be elevated to national boards, commissions, and activities.**
5. **Partners graduates need to be on a level playing field with graduates in other states/regions to effectively network.** National speakers bring the same level of information and skills across states/regions.
6. **Speaker selection, whether national or in-state, should reflect diversity** and include: people with disabilities, family members, men/women, and people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

7. **Many national speakers present at Partners programs across the country. Being involved in these different programs and getting to know dedicated Partners participants enriches the speaker's work.** This, in turn, benefits Partners programs down the road. Speakers learn from participants, just as participants learn from speakers!
8. **Expect the unexpected:** a scheduled speaker may experience an emergency or have a flight cancellation. Be prepared with a back-up plan—another speaker who can fill in at the last minute. Contact the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities at admin.dd@state.mn.us, to request a current National Speakers list.

Coordinator Responsibilities to Speakers

1. **Ensure each speaker has a clear understanding of what is expected from his/her presentation** and what competencies the participants are expected to achieve from the presentation.
2. **In advance, inform each speaker** about: (a) the unique and individual dynamics of the members of the class so the speaker presents information geared to the level of understanding of the class and (b) what accommodations are being provided to participants who may need them. Always communicate individual needs in advance of the session, not the day of the session.
3. **Well in advance of the presentation, send the speaker a detailed session agenda and a Speaker Profile form, and tell the speaker when the Profile needs to be returned.** The Profile will provide information about the speaker's travel needs, presentation/AV needs, etc. Be sure to resend a revised agenda in the event changes are made after the original agenda has been sent.
4. **Inform each speaker of the date handouts (including speaker bio with contact information) are needed prior to the session** to allow time for the Coordinator to prepare the session packets or post online.
5. **Ensure the speaker's contract includes the amount of the speaker's fee and also details who is responsible for what expenses and any limits,** e.g., transportation, meals, incidentals.
6. **Arrange for the speaker's hotel accommodations and air/ground transportation** (unless the speaker chooses to make his/her own arrangements); provide written communication of these details, including hotel/facility name, address, telephone number, and directions. Exchange mobile and/or emergency phone numbers with speaker.
7. **Before or on the day of the presentation, provide the speaker with Reimbursement, Time Match, and Speaker Evaluation forms, along with any other forms required by your agency/state.** (Sample forms are available at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/classroomcoordinators.html***)
8. **Ensure payment to the speaker is made within a reasonable timeframe after the presentation.**

TIME, PLACE, AND LOGISTICS

Training Session Agenda

Sessions are generally scheduled on Friday/Saturday (Day 1) or Saturday/Sunday (Day 2). The Day 1 agenda is from 12 noon to 9 p.m.; Day 2 is from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Include 15-minute comfort breaks during the afternoon of Day 1, and during the morning and afternoon of Day 2. Provide dinner (45-60 minutes) on the first day, and breakfast (30-60 minutes) and lunch (45-60 minutes) on Day 2. These timeframes are necessary to assure the minimum 128 hours of training or 16 hours per weekend. Meals should be served in a room other than the training room to avoid disruptions from meal set-up and clean-up.

The physical and social environment must be **supportive of and respectful of all participants.**

Accommodations

The budget for Partners will dictate the type of accommodations for the Partners program (more about the budget on p. 59). Some programs are held in their entirety at a hotel (training sessions and overnight stays of participants and speakers), with meal service provided by the hotel. In other programs, the training sessions are held at a facility (e.g., community room of public library or other location), the participants and speakers stay at a nearby hotel, and meals are catered in. There can be variations on either of these scenarios depending on site selection.

Depending on budget, anticipate that overnight accommodations will be double-occupancy for participants. Ensure the hotel has accessible sleeping rooms that meet the needs of participants and/or speakers with disabilities and that fully meet ADA standards for a wide range of disabilities.

On-Site Coordinator Responsibilities

Every Partners program must be a model of inclusion; the physical and social environment must be supportive of and respectful of all participants. In addition, every effort should be made to encourage and facilitate close relationships between the participants as previously described. To ensure the program is inclusive and accessible, the Coordinator needs to take responsibility for the following:

- **Personally visit potential hotel/facility sites prior to finalizing a location** to verify accessibility in guest rooms and bathrooms, elevators, meeting rooms, public restrooms, restaurants, bars, entrances, and parking areas. Many Coordinators have found it helpful for a person with a disability, especially someone who uses a wheelchair or other mobility device, to accompany them on these site visits. Are there sleeping rooms with roll-in showers? How easy is it to open the door(s) of the public restrooms?
- **Ensure the hotel/facility staff is trained in disability etiquette** and other relevant matters to ensure everyone involved in the Partners program is treated with dignity and respect.

- **Research accessible transportation and/or other options for participants/ speakers with disabilities, including airport/hotel shuttle service.**
- **The set-up of meeting rooms and dining areas should enable complete access for people who use wheelchairs, walkers, etc.,** including access to tables in the front of the room and meal service tables. Participants who use mobility devices should not be limited to sitting only at tables that are closest to the door, and they should not be forced to congregate at only one or two tables.
- **Any and all equipment (podium, projection screen, A/V table, etc.) is positioned to allow unobstructed viewing and/or access by all participants.** (The Coordinator should keep this in mind when scouting potential meeting facilities. A hotel meeting room that is described as "large enough for 50 people" may not be sufficiently large enough for 35 people when access and accommodation needs are considered.)
- **Ensure electrical and/or microphone cords are appropriately positioned and then secured/covered by mats and/or taped down so they do not pose a danger.**
- **The Coordinator should be personally familiar with the facility** (meeting rooms, thermostat, lights, microphones, food service, etc.) and know how to easily contact facility staff for assistance.
- **The status of equipment (LCD/digital projector, laptop for speakers, microphones, secure uninterrupted access to Internet for laptop) is verified; easy access to technical support is available**. Ensure facility staff has contingency plans in place in case of any problems and/or mechanical failures.
- Some wheelchairs "sit" the user higher than an ordinary chair, resulting in the person's knees hitting the side edge of the table. This makes it impossible for the person using the wheelchair to get close to the table. **Ensure there's a way to quickly, easily, and safely create an accommodation that's acceptable to the person who uses the wheelchair.** For example, a large, flat tray (most hotels/dining areas have these) can be placed so it's partially on the person's lap and partially on the table, making a "lap-table." As an alternative, place wooden blocks under the table legs to raise the table to the correct height. While this will raise the height of the table for everyone else at the table, most people can easily adapt.
- **Ensure all tables in the meeting rooms and the dining areas have supplies of flexible straws.**
- **Arrange buffet and snack tables to allow everyone, including those with visual and physical disabilities, the opportunity to serve themselves as independently as possible;** ensure there is no "elevation" of serving dishes on food service tables.
- **Ensure the needs of participants who may have dietary restrictions (vegetarian, gluten-free, medical, ethnic, and/or religious concerns) are met.**
- **If the Coordinator/program wants the training sessions to be videotaped/or audiotaped, inform speakers in advance and obtain permission to record.** Ensure

personnel are in place with the necessary equipment to successfully and unobtrusively record the sessions. Participants who need clarification and/or repetition can listen to/view these recordings to help them learn the competencies. Allow the use of personal devices for audio recording of the sessions, and inform the speakers ahead of time that this will occur.

- **Provide interpreters and translators (sign language, Spanish/other languages) to enable full participation of all.** Prior to the session, notify speakers about the presence of translators and request that speakers send notes/materials ahead of time to assist the interpreter(s) in providing the best possible service.
- **During a training session, everyone uses a microphone so that everyone can hear what is being said.** This also enables participants to become comfortable using a mic, an important skill for their advocacy efforts when giving legislative testimony and doing presentations. The speaker might prefer a clip-on mic, while a hand-held mic might be better/easier for participants to use and pass around.
- **Sufficient time is allowed at breaks to accommodate everyone's needs.**
- **Provide reading materials/handouts in large print, Braille, translated to another language, modified/simplified, etc., to participants who need these;** ensure they're provided in advance or at the same time others receive their materials. Inform speakers about these accommodations ahead of time in the event speakers may need to, in turn, make adjustments to their presentations.
- **When dimming the lights for an audio-visual presentation, ensure that the needs of participants with visual disabilities are taken into account;** announce when the lights will be dimmed.
- **Ensure people with speech difficulties and/or communication devices are given the time to fully express themselves.**
- **The needs of participants with disabilities should be discussed openly and honestly, in an adult fashion, with the person directly.** If and when appropriate (and with the individual's permission), the needs of a person with a disability can be shared with the whole group. For example, if "Tom" has difficulty taking notes, the Coordinator can encourage Tom to ask the group, "Could anyone take notes in a legible fashion and share a copy with me?"
- **PCAs are there to support people with disabilities and not get in the way of participants assisting and getting to know one another.** As described previously, participants should be able to depend on the natural support of each other, as friends always do.
- **Ensure every aspect of a training session (presentations, breaks, meals, etc.) operates on schedule, per the agenda.**
- **The Coordinator remains in the meeting room and actively observes every Partners session,** to assess the speakers' presentations, gauge participants' involvement, and self-evaluate the success of that session. The Coordinator records

Participants should be able to **depend on the natural support of each other,** as friends always do.

notes to self and, as appropriate, debriefings are held with Partners staff, participants, and/or speakers.

- **The Coordinator routinely reminds participants not to engage in sidebar conversations** (talking to each another during a speaker's presentation). Sidebar conversations are disruptive to the speaker, near-by participants may not be able to hear the speaker, and, of course, the "talkers" are not listening to the speaker when they're the ones talking. It's important for the Coordinator to politely, but firmly, attend to this immediately; don't ignore it and cause the speaker to stop his/her presentation to call-out the offenders!
- **Supplies must be ready for use during the session:** battery chargers, flip charts/ easel to record small group work, odorless markers, 3-hole punch, masking tape, extra name tags, pens or sharpened pencils, writing tablets, hand-outs of previous sessions, a supply of blank audiotapes tapes when recording sessions, Internet access, a back-up laptop, and any other materials necessary to ensure a smooth, worry-free session.
- **When appropriate, a speaker's presentation is loaded on the program's laptop in advance of the session.** All equipment is tested, including DVDs for sound and closed captioning.
- **Prepare packets for each participant, for every session,** to include a detailed session agenda; speakers' hand-outs and biographies (with names, addresses, email, etc.); other reading materials; homework assignments; and session evaluation, time match, and reimbursement forms. Also, upload all forms online.
- **Cell phones and smartphones should be turned off during the session.** Participants who need to take calls at any time during the session should first leave the room.

Many participants who describe their Partners experience as **"life-changing"** credit not only what they learn from speakers, but what they learn from their fellow Partners.

Creating an Inclusive, Welcoming Environment for All

Most of us are "creatures of habit," and participants will normally sit at the same table, in the same chair, each time. Thus, the Coordinator should routinely remind participants to sit at different tables, with different people at every session and during mealtimes. The Coordinator can even encourage participants, for example, to sit at a different table after dinner on Day 1, then sit in a different place the morning of Day 2, and then move again after lunch on Day 2.

Many participants who describe their Partners experience as "life-changing" credit not only what they learn from speakers, but what they learn from their fellow Partners, and more specifically, what parents learn from the life-experiences of their classmates who are adults with disabilities. This can only happen when participants make the effort to connect with each other: in the training room, at mealtimes, and even in their overnight accommodations.

In the training room or the dining area, there shouldn't be a table that's composed only of people with disabilities. The Coordinator needs to be aware of the inclination for people to unintentionally create cliques. If participants are resistant to voluntarily "mixing it up," the Coordinator can *assign seating* by using table tents: each person's name is on a table tent, and before the session starts, the Coordinator places these on the tables to ensure participants are "mixed in" and not sitting in cliques.

Small-group activities should always have different combinations of participants (e.g., people with disabilities mixed in with parents), and there may be times when the Coordinator, alone, or in conjunction with a speaker needs to "rearrange" where people are sitting for small-group or other activities to ensure a good mix of people for the activities.

When participants are out there being activists, they'll routinely run into situations where they have to feel confident in new situations with new people. Their time in **Partners is a safe environment to try new things.**

Good Ideas

- **Experience demonstrates that round tables (seating at half-rounds so everyone is facing front for a clear view of speaker and videos) work best,** and participants can also most easily see and interact with each other. Round tables also work best for small-group activities. If the facility doesn't have round tables, create a "square round" by setting up rectangular tables to mimic a round-table set-up. In any set-up, ensure that no chairs are placed so a participant is sitting with his/her back toward the speaker, and allow room at each table for participants who use a wheelchair.
- **As participants get to know one another they may want to share their "news" with classmates.** It's not possible to give everyone time to share during the training session without taking time away from speakers who are being paid to train participants! Thus, a good solution is to encourage participants to share during breakfast on Day 2. Make sure that participants use a microphone, and "set the ground rules." No one takes longer than 3-4 minutes to share his/her news.
- In addition to taking steps to ensure participants get to know one another by sitting with different people throughout the training sessions, and if participants are in double- or triple-occupancy sleeping accommodations, consider changing the sleeping room assignments for every session. It can be especially beneficial, for example, when a parent is roomed with a person with a disability. Some participants may be nervous about doing this, if they've become comfortable with their roommate from the previous session. Change is hard for most of us! But point out the value of learning to become comfortable with new people; when participants are out there being activists, they'll routinely run into situations where they have to feel confident in new situations with new people, etc. **Their time in Partners is a safe environment—they're among friends—to try new things.**
- Regarding the use of a microphone by participants during Q &A with a speaker, some Coordinators have learned that some participants who "have the mic" may actually give a long-winded monologue instead of asking a brief question of the speaker. This can be disruptive to the training and take up valuable speaker time. **So it may be beneficial for the Coordinator/staff to hold the mic for participants during Q & A and, if necessary, gently and quietly help the person "get to the point."**

CURRICULUM: SESSIONS AND TOPICS

All aspects of any Partners in Policymaking program need to reflect and reinforce:

- **The Core Values about People with Disabilities (on page 9)**
- **The outcomes of the DD Act (Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act) of independence, productivity, self-determination, integration, and inclusion (IPSII)**
- **The competencies of Partners in Policymaking (detailed below)**

Competencies: Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Every Partners in Policymaking training session is a laser-focused effort to develop competencies. A quality Partner program acquires funding, recruits participants and, most importantly, *delivers results*. The results you promise—to your participants and to your funder(s)—are that, after the session topics have been presented, participants will be able to:

- Describe the history of services for, and perceptions of, people with developmental disabilities.
- Describe the history and the role of the Parent Movement.
- Describe the history and the role of the Independent Living Movement.
- Describe the history and the role of the Self-Advocacy/People First Movement.
- Describe the benefits and values supporting inclusion and quality education, including early intervention and inclusive post-secondary education, for individuals with and without disabilities.
- Outline specific strategies to achieve quality, inclusive education and lifelong learning.
- Demonstrate how to be effective in team meetings.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the service coordination system and what services may be available.

- Understand the principles of choice and control, and their application to self-directed and/or person-centered planning for people with developmental disabilities.
- Understand that a flexible, responsive system of supports for the families of children with disabilities is the cornerstone for a true system of community supports for people with developmental disabilities and families.
- Understand the need for all individuals to experience regular and ordinary changes in lifestyle across the lifespan.
- Know/understand the importance of home ownership/control as one of the defining characteristics of adult life in our culture and the types of lifelong supports necessary for creating a positive home environment for people with developmental disabilities.
- Describe the importance of supported, competitive, and customized employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Describe examples of state-of-the-art technologies that can benefit people with disabilities.
- Create a shared vision for the year 2030 (and beyond) for people with disabilities.
- Learn how to meet a public official and discuss issues.
- Understand how a bill becomes a law at the state level.
- Draft and deliver testimony for legislative hearings or public meetings.
- Identify critical federal issues and the process by which participants can personally address their concerns.
- Understand how a bill becomes a law at the federal level.
- Demonstrate successful techniques for advocating for services to meet the needs of unserved and underserved individuals.
- Identify strategies for beginning and sustaining grassroots organizing around specific issues.
- Understand the role of, and how to use, the media (including social media) to effectively promote issues.
- Demonstrate proper procedures for conducting a meeting.
- Understand the protocols of parliamentary procedure and serving on boards.

The Partners website, **mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/curriculum.html**, includes additional information that can be helpful to Coordinators, participants, and speakers.

Integrating Online Learning: *PartnersOnlineCourses.com*

Are you ready to save time, money, and energy, and generate better outcomes?

Partners Coordinators are increasingly interested in finding new, creative, cost-effective ways to integrate innovative instruction and current information into their Partners programs. The Partners in Policymaking Online Courses can supplement face-to-face trainings, and research shows that incorporating these courses into classroom agendas, homework assignments, and/or skill-building activities can create richer and more effective learning experiences for everyone. Each online course is provided at *no charge to any learner,* and is designed as a separate, stand-alone module, so you can pick and choose the content areas, tools, and assignments that support the areas you want to highlight or reinforce:

- *Partners in Time* (History) (also available in Spanish)
- *Partners in Education* (also available in Spanish)
- *Partners in Making Your Case* (advocacy, community organizing, legislation, and more) (also available in Spanish and American Sign Language)
- *Partners in Employment* (also available in Spanish and as an EZ Read version)
- *Partners in Living* (supported living, home of your own, etc.)

Links to all courses are available at the Partners home page ***(mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/***)

The Partners in Policymaking Online Courses can **create richer and more effective learning experiences** for everyone.

Integrating Online Learning: When you recommend the Partners Online Courses to participants, it is important that you yourself are familiar with its format and contents. After reviewing the courses, you'll see countless ways to integrate them into your training sessions. They can be used as pre-session work, group exercises, or homework—whatever your learners need. To get you started, here are a few ways to use the Partners in Policymaking Online Courses to enrich your face-to-face sessions.

1. **Homework Before and/or After a Training Session.** Select and assign specific sections from the appropriate Online Course(s) as homework before an in-person training to enhance participants' basic understanding of the topic and ensure participants get the most from in-person training presentations. For use after an in-person training, select and assign specific sections from the appropriate Online Course(s) as homework to reinforce the concepts just presented to boost participants' comprehension.
2. **A Make-Up for Missed Sessions.** Inevitably, a participant may miss all or a part of an in-person training session. Instead of allowing the person to fall behind or needing to schedule one-on-one time to review key concepts, assign the appropriate Online Course as make-up. The participant should be required to bring the completed assignment(s) for your review.
3. **Use as Icebreakers, Warm-Ups, or Closing Activities.** Each Online Course includes fun exercises, personal stories from Partners graduates, cartoons, and video and audio clips that illustrate important concepts and highlight important people. Incorporate these into your sessions to:

- Introduce a Partners session and session theme
- Re-engage the group after a break
- Conclude a Partners session and reinforce the session's theme
- Energize the group if the pace is dragging
- Help participants get to know each other better
- Encourage participant engagement and collaboration

4. **Leverage Completed Exercises.** The Partners Online Courses include a wide range of assignments and exercises designed to help learners develop a deeper understanding of a specific topic, test their knowledge, or create practical tools, such as resumés, letters, etc. In addition to furthering participants' mastery of the content and keeping the content fresh between sessions, these exercises can be used as discussion starters and debriefing opportunities; to help participants draw correlations to their own communities; as warm-ups and material reviews; or as the basis of large- and/or small-group discussions.
5. **Maximize Comprehension.** In any Partners class, there may be participants who need additional time to grasp important concepts. The Partners Online Courses are completely self-paced and can be accessed anywhere, at any time. This flexibility allows participants to work on areas where they need additional help, but on their own schedule and pace. If participants appear to be struggling with a concept, suggest that they check out a specific course or topic. This will help to ensure that everyone benefits equally from the Partners session.
6. **Encourage Additional Learning Outside the Classroom Setting.** Use the Online Courses as a way of staying in touch with Partners before, after, and between Partners sessions. Send an email with a link to a course topic, story, exercise, or assignment to refresh what's been learned, introduce an upcoming topic, increase participants' awareness of a current issue and build competency around a particular skill, topic, or issue. Encourage people to share with others using social media.
7. **Competency Tune-Up and Mastery.** Mastering the skills and competencies necessary to change systems means participants are able to apply them successfully in new and unfamiliar situations outside of the classroom. The Online Courses help support increased mastery by serving as an easily accessible resource and reference for Partners graduates.
8. **Assessing Knowledge Gaps.** In addition to the rigorous evaluations already employed by a quality Partners program to maintain high quality standards, participants can complete and submit assignments and exams to assess knowledge gaps and level of understanding. Then you can use elements of the Online Courses to address the gaps. For example, you could incorporate an additional learning activity from an Online Course, refer to a specific resource of the Tips and Tools of the course, or allow extra discussion time for a particular topic or concept.

The Partners Online Courses are **completely self-paced and can be accessed anywhere**, at any time, allowing participants to work at their own pace on areas where they may need additional help.

9. **Build Comfort Using Technology.** Technology is a great "equalizer" and a wonderful tool for staying current on issues and in touch with policymakers. The accessible, simple-to-use Partners Online Courses are excellent vehicles to help people who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable using technology to boost their confidence. Encourage participants who are "technology shy" to play the interactive games, take the quizzes, watch the video clips, listen to audio clips, and/or download and complete some of the assignments.

10. **Support Partners Graduates.** Every Partners program should encourage graduates to continue networking and to stay abreast of the issues. The Partners Online Courses are always current and relevant. Long after graduation, you can direct graduates to the Online Courses for important updates, to check out best practices, or for a quick refresher on key principles and techniques. Completing the Online Courses provides advanced leadership training that helps support Partners graduate activities and continued mastery of key competencies.

Role-play allows participants to **practice their new skills in a realistic setting** without the "high stakes" of an actual situation.

Incorporating Online Courses into your training sessions will enable participants to:

- **Learn and retain more,**
- **Explore topics of particular interest in more depth, on their own time, and at their own pace, and**
- **Demonstrate crucial competencies more effectively.**

Skill-Building Activities and Homework

In addition to incorporating the Online Courses in a Partners program to enhance learning and improve outcomes, Coordinators can also ensure their participants are exposed to a variety of learning modes. For some topics, a speaker's PowerPoint presentation may be the most effective vehicle to deliver the message. In other cases, participatory activities are better alternatives.

- **Role-Play** can be effective when learning about such topics as individual planning meetings, legislative testimony, meeting a public official, service coordination meetings, parliamentary procedure, and contacting the media. Role-play allows participants to practice their new skills in a realistic setting without the "high stakes" of an actual situation. It's better to make mistakes in a Partners "practice" session and learn from them, than to do so during a legislative hearing or in that precious five-minute (or less) meeting with a public official. Interestingly, participants often report that role-playing a situation at Partners is more difficult than the real thing: the people who are playing the "roles" tend to know the subject matter better than many real policymakers.

- **Demonstration** can be effective when learning about assistive technology. There's no better way to understand the benefit of a particular device than to see it in action; participants can try out new and different equipment, without pressure to buy (as when in a store), or to accept the opinion of a sales representative who may be recommending the product.
- **Small-Group Activities** can be effective when learning about such topics as how to influence others to use People First Language; brainstorming effective team meetings; preparing for a person-centered planning session; preparing for a meeting with educators or legislators; brainstorming ways to utilize assistive technology; advocating for people with disabilities; vision-building exercises; and organizing a grassroots campaign.
- **Suggestions for Homework Assignments for Participants** are detailed for each topic later in this section. Coordinators (and participants) are encouraged to come up with other ideas. Coordinators can also solicit homework ideas from speakers. As you plan your sessions, consider whether or not you want a specific homework assignment done *before* or after a particular topic. For example, a homework assignment done before a session can lay the groundwork and/or better prepare the participants for an upcoming session. In other cases, a homework assignment *after* a particular topic provides additional information about a topic and/or requires participants to use the skills they just learned. As appropriate, the Online Courses provide excellent homework options. For some homework assignments, allow participants to work together.

  The Coordinator can let participants choose one or more of the suggested homework assignments, or he/she can assign one homework assignment for every participant to complete. Determine the best/most appropriate method for participants to demonstrate that they've done the homework: they can return a one-page document that details what they've done and/or prepare an oral report (and a written report), but then select only two or three participants at a given session to actually give an oral report. The next time, select a different set of participants.

Order and Arrangements of Session Topics

A quality model of Partners requires eight sessions to cover the topics so that participants will acquire all the competencies. Some training sessions feature only one topic; it takes two days to cover the topic in-depth. Other training sessions, however, feature several topics, and the combination(s) should be logical and the topics should complement each other.

The order presented below is strongly recommended, but the order may need to be changed slightly in order to accommodate the schedule of your state's legislative session:

Session 1: History (this topic requires the entire weekend)

Session 2: Inclusive Education and Lifelong Learning (this topic requires the entire weekend)

Session 3: Service Coordination/Case Management and Self-Directed/Person-Centered Planning; Meeting a Public Official (local level if applicable)

Session 4: Supported, Competitive, and Customized Employment and Supported Living/Home of Your Own

Session 5: Community Organizing, Advocacy, and Vision

Session 6: State Legislation and Meeting a Public Official (state level)(this topic requires the entire weekend)

Session 7: Federal Legislation and Meeting a Public Official (federal level) (one or more of the topics of Sessions 3, 4, or 5 can be incorporated into this session)

Session 8: Parliamentary Procedure and Serving on Boards, plus Graduation

Other topics:

Media Skills can be incorporated into Sessions 5, 7, or 8.

Assistive Technology and a presentation on Behavior can be included (with different speakers for each topic). These topics are not included in the list above because they can be incorporated into Sessions 2, 3, 4, 5, or 8.

The Partners curriculum is designed to be comprehensive and sequential: *comprehensive* so participants acquire the competencies and *sequential* so the topics flow and build upon each other. For example:

- Presentations on Community Organizing, Advocacy, and Vision should be scheduled *after* participants have learned best practices about Inclusive Education, Employment, and Supported Living/Home of Your Own, and have completed small-group participatory exercises to apply new knowledge and practice new skills related to these topics. Community Organizing is grassroots organizing—recognizing the strengths, abilities, and capacities of everyone; building power around a common vision; strategizing around an issue of common interest/concern to resolve a problem, improve a situation, or work on initiating or changing a public policy. It's important that participants first learn "what's possible" before they're asked to create a vision. They are then in a position to organize in order to increase awareness and understanding about the issue, and build capacity/momentum to bring about a desired/positive change.
- A presentation on Meeting a Public Official should be scheduled before the sessions on State Legislation and Federal Legislation. It's possible, however, to incorporate Meeting a Public Official within, for example, the State Legislation session. But you wouldn't want a presentation on Meeting a Public Official *after* your State and/or Federal Legislation sessions because this would be a waste of time: participants would have already been exposed to the topic within the sessions on Legislation.

During Session 6, consider taking a group photo that can be given to graduates at Session 8. If the photo from Session 6 doesn't come out well, you can try again during Session 7!

SESSION TOPICS

History

The history of people with disabilities in our culture and society affects what happens today, and in the future. We must know where we've been before we can know where we're going and how to get where we want to be. In this session, speakers need to help participants see how many ineffective or inappropriate practices of the past continue today, but with a different name.

COMPETENCIES: After this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the history of services for, and perceptions of, people with developmental disabilities.
- Describe the history and the role of the Parent Movement.
- Describe the history and the role of the Independent Living Movement.
- Describe the history and the role of the Self-Advocacy/People First Movement.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

This opening weekend is critical in setting the tone for the remainder of the program. Participants need a thorough and comprehensive understanding of history to provide a context for their aspirations and actions for the future. They also need to learn about the importance of using People First Language (one of the core principles of Partners in Policymaking). Scheduling a People First Language presentation as the closing presentation Day 2 can provide a wonderful transition from the "old" of history to the "new" of "what's possible" in creating positive change. It can also be helpful for participants to hear brief testimonials from Partners graduates on how the program has impacted their lives.

We must **know where we've been** before we can know where we're going.

- Ice-breaker for introductions of participants.
- Lecture with visuals (could include video interviews or YouTube videos or DVDs or apps [must be captioned]) from national speaker(s) on History of Services and Perceptions, and Histories of the Parent, the Independent Living, and Self-Advocacy/People First Movements (the latter two are best presented by qualified speakers with disabilities). Can also include appropriate history videos on Ed Roberts/Independent Living and/or Self-Advocacy/People First.
- People First Language presentation with examples and discussion.
- Personal testimonials from Partners graduates.
- "What is Partners in Policymaking" presentation; review of ground rules, contracts, etc.

Integrating Online History Courses

Partners in Time ***(partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-time/)*** helps participants (as well as educators, service providers, and others) understand the history of society's treatment of people with disabilities from ancient times through the present.

After completing the *Partners in Time* Online Course, learners will:

- Have increased knowledge of the history of services for people with disabilities.
- Be able to describe the history, roles, and long-term effects of the Parent, Independent Living, and Self-Advocacy Movements.
- Understand how people with disabilities lived, learned, and worked from ancient times to the present.
- Recognize ways in which history repeats itself and how abuses continue today under different names and in different situations.
- Recognize the parallels between past challenges and progress being made through current initiatives.
- Understand the key legislative changes that have supported dramatic shifts in the rights of people with disabilities.
- Explore current realities and groundbreaking efforts that have contributed to the creation of a more just, inclusive society.
- Create a vision for the future for people with disabilities in the areas of housing, learning, living, working, and leadership.

In addition to the *Partners in Time* Online Course, the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities has created a comprehensive online history course: *Parallels in Time*.

Homework Options for Participants

- Visit an institution or large congregate care facility and/or an independent living center. If your area does not have an institution, interview an adult with disabilities who has lived in an institution.
- Learn more about Ed Roberts, the "Father of the Independent Living Movement" at ***mn.gov/mnddc/ed-roberts/index.html***.
- Watch "A History of Human Services, Universal Lessons, and Future Implications" presented by Wolf Wolfensberger, Ph.D. and Susan Thomas, Training Coordinator, at ***mn.gov/mnddc/wolfensberger/index.html***.
- Read "Partners in Policymaking: Changing Lives—Changing Policies," a 2016 publication by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/pdf/PiP-Changing-Lives-Changing-Policies1.pdf***.
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Inclusive Education and Lifelong Learning

Partners participants learn how children with disabilities can be successfully included in general education classrooms in their neighborhood school and how adults with disabilities can enroll in post-secondary education. Current laws mandate a free appropriate public education for school-aged students, but the majority of children with significant disabilities are still "placed" in segregated settings. Partners participants learn how to be equal participants in team meetings and how their actions can generate systems change in the education arena.

COMPETENCIES: After this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the benefits and values supporting inclusion and quality education, including early intervention and inclusive post-secondary education, for individuals with and without disabilities.
- Outline specific strategies to achieve quality, inclusive education and lifelong learning.
- Demonstrate how to be effective in team meetings.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- Lecture on best practices and how to achieve inclusive education must be done by a national speaker with appropriate visuals (videos/DVDs must be captioned).
- Include information on inclusive early intervention and early childhood education for younger children, as well as post-secondary education opportunities for adults.
- Presentation about, and practice in, advocacy and assertiveness skills at an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting.
- Avoid featuring a speaker who opposes inclusion or who has negative stories to tell. Partners is not about "equal time." It's about best practices and "what's possible."
- Roundtable discussions with key individuals from your state's Department of Education (a positive exchange, not adversarial).

Education Roundtable Activities

This portion of the education session can generate "news," lay the groundwork for networking, and "educate the educators" on the perspectives and experiences of adults with disabilities who once received special ed services and of parents whose children are currently receiving special ed services.

- Roundtable presenters should be representatives from early childhood, transition, due process and compliance, post-secondary education, assistive technology, positive behavioral intervention supports, and other Department of Education Representatives.

At one Education Roundtable, **a parent asked a state education official about the state's plans for moving toward more inclusive practices and policies;** the official answered, **"Inclusion? Not in your lifetime, not in my lifetime."** This retort enabled the participants to understand the work that needed to be done in their state!

- Participants will work in small groups and have in-depth conversations with each Roundtable presenter as the presenters move from group to group on a time-limited basis.
- Prior to the arrival of the Roundtable presenters, prep participants on etiquette, protocol, and what issues should be addressed to the specific presenters. Remind participants that this isn't the time for sniping, criticism, telling war stories, etc. This activity needs to focus on the big picture, not personal issues, and it needs to result in creating *positive, reciprocal, and professional* relationships between participants and state officials.
- Divide class into small groups: one small group for each presenter. Each small group can come up with one or two specific questions on each presenter's topic. Everyone in each small group should participate so by the end of all rounds with all presenters, each participant has had the chance to ask a question.
- When Roundtable presenters arrive, the Coordinator introduces them, and each presenter briefly (2-3 minutes each) explains what he/she does. Then presenters move to the tables in the meeting room; one presenter per table. At each table, participants briefly introduce themselves (name, where they live) and the designated participant asks the first question. The second question is asked if there's time. At a designated time, the Coordinator calls out a "one-minute warning," to give people a time to wrap up, then "calls time," and presenters rotate to the next table. By the end of the exercise, each presenter has visited with each small group.
- The Roundtable presenters are thanked for their participation and they leave the meeting. The Coordinator then facilitates a debriefing; each small group gives a brief report to the whole room.

The majority of parents and/or people with disabilities in your state will **never have the opportunity to meet state-level officials** and form relationships with them.

Some states have systems-change projects that are working on inclusive education issues. Make sure this session creates opportunities for participants to meet as many state-level education officials as possible. State education officials can be valuable resources for participants; the outcome of this activity is for participants to develop positive connections with these officials. The majority of parents and/or people with disabilities in your state will never have the opportunity to meet state-level officials and form relationships with them; the Partners Education Roundtable is a unique opportunity for participants, as well as for the state officials (many of whom come to highly value the experience and look forward to returning for the next year's Roundtable).

Integrating the Online Course: *Partners in Education*

Partners in Education (***partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-education/***) provides many valuable skill-building activities and exercises that reinforce important concepts, help participants draw conclusions from the information presented, and apply what they've learned. It is also available in Spanish ***(mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/education-sp/index.html)***.

After completing the *Partners in Education* Online Course, learners will be able to:

- Describe the case for an inclusive, quality education for all students.
- Outline specific strategies to achieve an inclusive, quality education for children with developmental disabilities.
- Understand the educational system, in general, and how it can differ for children who receive special education services.
- Be an effective, proactive participant and advocate in the IEP process.
- Understand the IEP process and strategies to ensure a child's unique educational needs are met, including modifications, accommodations, assistive technology, and/or other supports.
- Ensure a child with a disability is able to reap the lifelong benefits of an education that builds on his/her abilities, talents, and gifts.
- Understand how other parents have successfully negotiated the special education system, and how to apply those lessons to their own situations.
- Understand how students with disabilities use technology, what education in the 21st century looks like, and the importance of developing digital and media literacy skills to best prepare for jobs and careers in the 21st century.

Homework Options for Participants

- Practice civil conversations.
- Assess or rewrite IEPs of the children with disabilities of participants.
- Assess the level of inclusion in local schools.
- Attend a meeting of a local or state Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to discuss inclusion policies in a school district.
- Identify significant persons in a local school district (principals, special education director, superintendent, school board members, etc.); interview them to discuss inclusive education.
- Attend school board meetings; get to know board members and other key officials.
- Videotape or audiotape yourself to review/improve performance in an IEP meeting.
- Research post-secondary education opportunities and options.
- Learn more about special education law by visiting ***idea.ed.gov***.
- Research websites and/or social media sites on universal design for learning.
- Check on the usage of technology in a local school: is it available to all students?
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Service Coordination: Case Management and Self-Directed/ Person-Centered Planning

Partners participants need to be able to compare *best practices* in service coordination/case management to the policies and practices offered in their area. For locations where county/ regional government is not applicable, Partners should develop relationships with local officials, such as school boards or city/municipal officials who take on similar roles. With budget cuts becoming the norm in many places, and with state and/or federal responsibilities being shifted to local governments and/or non-profit organizations, it's important for participants to understand how these changes impact the lives of people with disabilities and consider what improvements can be made in service coordination. In some places, "service coordination" and "case management" are interchangeable terms, but in other places—and based on the emergence of managed care and systems reform—these terms may have different definitions, different funding streams, etc., and these differences may be significant to people with disabilities/families.

People with disabilities should live self-directed lives—be in charge of their own lives and make their own decisions—just like people without disabilities. Within the realm of "writing a plan" for a person who is "receiving services," many states have moved from "Individualized Service Plans" (ISPs) or "Individualized Habilitation Plans" (IHPs) to "Person-Centered Plans," to ensure the person receiving the services is "in charge." Person-Centered Plans are now mandated by law in many states, and this seems to represent great progress. However, some people with real-life experiences report that the "new" Person-Centered Plans are *no different* than the old ISP/IHP. Worse, in some states where Person-Centered Plans are mandated, there is no requirement for the person with a disability to be in attendance at the planning meeting! *How can it be a Person-Centered Plan if the person isn't even in the room?* So there's much that participants need to learn in this area: how does one ensure a person-centered plan is truly a Person-Centered Plan, what does it mean to be self-directed, and more.

People with disabilities should live self-directed lives—**be in charge of their own lives and make their own decisions**—just like people without disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities have a right to live, work, and participate in the greater community. The CMS Final Rule assures that Medicaid's home and community-based services programs provide full access to the benefits of community living and that services are offered in the most integrated settings:

- The requirements for Home and Coommunity Based Services (HCBS) settings are defined and described.
- Person-centered planning requirements are defined.
- States that are currently offering HCBS under existing state plans or waivers must develop transition plans to ensure that HCBS settings will meet final rule's requirements.
- Settings that don't meet the final HCBS requirements must work with CMS to develop a plan that will assure those programs/settings are brought into compliance.
- States have a one-year period to submit a transition plan that will meet the Final Rule requirements.

COMPETENCIES: After these topics, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the service coordination system and what services may be available.
- Understand the principles of choice and control, and their application to self-directed and/or person-centered planning for people with developmental disabilities. (This competency can be covered in-depth in this session, or *introduced* in this session, and then covered in greater depth in the session on Supported Living/Home of Your Own session.)

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- National speaker for best-practices presentation(s) on quality service coordination/case management and the importance of self-directed/person-centered planning, to include the person making his/her own choices and having control of his/her resources.
- National and/or in-state speaker on going beyond a state-mandated planning process to a "whole-life" planning process (MAP, PATH, etc.) that includes the person, of course, as well as the person's family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc., and may, at the direction of the person, also involve disability-related service providers.
- In-state speaker, also, if state/region has person-centered planning initiatives.
- Speakers who can provide important information on community services.
- Introduce the concept of people with disabilities and/or families using natural supports, in addition to or in lieu of, traditional, paid service-system supports. Natural supports are the same unpaid, ordinary supports used by people who don't have disabilities, like friends, classmates, neighbors, and co-workers. This concept can also be covered more in-depth during—and more specific to—the topics of Supported Living/Home of Your Own and/or Supported, Competitive, and Customized Employment.

Homework Options for Participants

- Learn about waivers, family support and self-determination.
- Learn about the variety of person-centered planning options/approaches.
- Learn about your state's efforts in working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (there could be a connection back to the new CMS Final Rule on Home and Community Based Settings).
- Review the new CMS Final Rule on Home and Community Based Settings.
- Review United Cerebral Palsy's report, "The Case for Inclusion," and inclusion scorecards for each state at ***cfi.ucp.org***. How does your state measure up?
- Investigate local government websites and/or their social media sites. How much of their business is conducted online? Are the online services they provide the type that people with disabilities use? What about the site's accessibility and ease-of-use for people with disabilities?

- Investigate the websites and/or social media sites of libraries, community outreach of universities, county extension services, etc., that might provide resources that might be helpful to people with disabilities/families.
- Interview an adult with a disability (could be a classmate) who has an ISP, IHP, or Person-Centered Plan and review the person's plan (with the person's permission). Is it working for the person? How could it be better? Is it really "person-centered"?
- Watch "The Evolution of Quality of Care in Developmental Disabilities" at ***mn.gov/mnddc/jim_conroy/index.html***.
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Supported, Competitive, and Customized Employment

Too many people with disabilities don't have an answer for one question: "What do you do for a living?" Real employment for real wages is something most of us take for granted; it's *expected* for adults in our society. The same should be true for adults with disabilities: to earn a living, to have a purpose, to achieve, to be connected, and to be seen as a valuable, contributing member of society.

We now know that with the appropriate supports, accommodations, modifications, and/or assistive technology, people with disabilities can be successful in the careers of their choice, including self-employment!

Real employment for real wages should also be true for adults with disabilities: to earn a living, to have a purpose, to achieve, to be connected, and to be seen as a valuable, contributing member of society.

COMPETENCY: After this topic, participants will be able to:

- Describe the importance of supported, competitive, and customized employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- Lecture with visuals by national speaker on best practices and "what's possible" in the employment arena; videos/DVDs must be captioned.
- Information on people with disabilities having a "career vision," instead of being limited to entry-level jobs.
- Large- or small-group discussions or exercises about the discovery process; using natural supports, such as using friends and/or networking to find a job; ordinary assistance on the job such as co-workers (instead of formal, paid, service system supports).

Integrating the Online Course: *Partners in Employment*

Partners in Employment (***partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-employment/***) focuses on helping people with disabilities prepare for a career, understand their personal strengths, build a circle of support, write a resumé/portfolio, participate in an interview, identify a specific career position, and understand the basics about employment laws.

After completing the *Partners in Employment* Online Course, learners will be able to:

- Describe the importance of supported, competitive employment opportunities.
- Understand the hiring process and how it might differ for people with disabilities.
- Create a circle of support that can help people with disabilities achieve their career goals.
- Identify the strengths, skills, and interests of a person with disabilities, and how these can lead to a satisfying career.
- Understand the concepts of natural supports, and how people with disabilities can positively impact employment success.
- Create impressive portfolios/resumés that showcase a person's skills and abilities, and present them in the best light.
- Network and identify potential employers.
- Prepare for a successful job interview.
- Evaluate a job offer to determine if it's a good match for the personal strengths, interests, and career goals of a person with disabilities.
- Understand how technology skills can help people with disabilities find meaningful employment.

The *Partners in Employment* Online Course is available in different formats:

English EZ Read: ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/employment-ez/index.html***

Spanish: ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/employment-sp/index.html***

Homework Options for Participants

Young adults with disabilities should have real work experience and two paid jobs before high school graduation to better assure that they will be successful in securing a job post-high school, and achieving personal employment and career goals.

- Create a scenario of a job that uses the principles of customized employment.
- Develop a career vision using natural supports (instead of paid service system supports).
- Investigate the impact of technology on the employment of people with developmental disabilities.
- Find jobs via networks and personal networking.
- Use the discovery process to learn about the interests, skills, and talents of an individual with developmental disabilities and match an employer/employment field that could result in a job for that individual.
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Supported Living and Home of Your Own

It's important for children and adults with disabilities to be included in their communities—to have a sense of belonging. To achieve inclusion in all areas of life, support may be needed. Some of these may be formal, paid supports from the service system. Others may be natural supports: the same unpaid ordinary supports used by people who don't have disabilities, such as friends, classmates, neighbors, and co-workers. When these supports are in place, inclusion, home ownership, interdependence, control over one's destiny, and participation in and contribution to one's community are all possible. Participants need to know how to find and maintain those supports.

COMPETENCIES: After this topic, participants will be able to:

- Know/understand the importance of home ownership/control as one of the defining characteristics of adult life in our culture and the types of lifelong supports necessary for creating a positive home environment for people with developmental disabilities.
- Understand the principles of choice and control, and their application to self-directed and/or person-centered planning for people with developmental disabilities. (This competency could also be included in the Service Coordination/Case Management training session.)
- Understand the need for all individuals to experience regular and ordinary changes in lifestyle across the lifespan.
- Understand that a flexible, responsive system of supports for the families of children with disabilities is the cornerstone for a true system of community supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Participants need to know how to **find and maintain supports** that allow inclusion, home ownership, interdependence, control over one's destiny, and participation in and contribution to one's community.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- There are many competencies for this topic; presentations can address all the competencies in one session or (as detailed previously in "Order and Arrangements of Session Topics") some of these competencies can be addressed in a different session with other related topics.
- Lecture with visuals by national speaker(s) on best practices and "what's possible" in supported living and family support issues (videos/DVDs must be captioned).
- In-state speakers can provide perspectives on Independent Living Centers in the area and on service coordination, state support systems, family support, and/or Medicaid waivers.
- Small-group exercises to practice self-directed/person-centered planning activities.
- Large- or small-group discussion/exercise on natural supports: where to find them, how to get them.
- Lecture on support systems at the state level for adults and children with disabilities, including family support and Medicaid waivers (unless this subject has been covered in the Service Coordination/Case Management training session).

Integrating the Online Course: *Partners in Living*

The *Partners in Living* Online Course ***(partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-living/)*** focuses on helping people with disabilities and families (along with educators, service providers, and/or others) to understand the important concepts of self-direction, family support, community living, home of your own, and assistive technology.

After completing the *Partners in Living* Online Course, learners will be able to:

- Identify what types of supports may be needed to create a positive home environment.
- Understand service coordination and be aware of the services that may be available to people with disabilities.
- Understand the principles of supported living: home of your own; choice and self-direction; relationships; community membership; and flexible, tailored services and supports.
- Determine if the unique support needs of individuals with disabilities and/or families are being met.
- Understand how assistive technology may increase self-direction, self-reliance, productivity, safety, and inclusion.
- Describe state-of-the-art technologies available for persons with significant disabilities, and apply some of these technologies to one's ideal home and career.
- Recognize how person-centered planning can impact all areas of one's life.
- Identify funding options in support of a person living a self-directed, meaningful life.
- Recognize key legislation that may impact self-direction, family support, community living, and access to assistive technology.

Homework Options for Participants

- Identify the ways to control one's home environment.
- Review the CMS Final Rule on Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Settings, and identify how the criteria for HCBS settings exemplify a "home of your own" and can be used to support an individual with home ownership.
- Visit both congregate residential facilities (ICF/IDD, small group home, and/or large group home) and the residence of a person with a disability that exemplifies "a home of your own."
- Identify natural supports in the community.
- Identify ordinary activities and locations in the community that people with disabilities can use and that result in community inclusion.
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Community Organizing, Advocacy, Meeting a Public Official, and Vision

In previous sessions, Partners participants will have learned about best practices in disability issues relating to education, employment, community living, and state/regional service systems. Participants also need to learn how to advocate for change in these areas. As noted earlier in this Handbook, Community Organizing should follow sessions that teach best practices on these topics. You want participants who are engaging in community organizing or advocacy efforts to speak about and promote what's possible and not what currently exists. Similarly, in creating a vision for people with disabilities in 2030 and beyond, you want participants to envision what's possible, and that can happen after learning best practices.

COMPETENCIES: After these topics, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate successful techniques for advocating for services to meet the needs of unserved and underserved individuals.
- Learn how to meet a public official and discuss issues.
- Identify strategies for beginning and sustaining grassroots organizing around specific issues.
- Create a shared vision for the year 2030 (and beyond) for people with disabilities.

Speak about and **promote what's possible,** and not what currently exists.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- Have participants review Joel Barker's "Power of Vision" DVD (close captioned), (***www.starthrower.com/p-328-the-power-of-vision.aspx***).
- For community organizing, a national presenter and small-group exercises are a must. In conjunction with the presenter, select an issue that's identifiable, small, and winnable. Have the small groups plan a full campaign that includes a variety of tactics, such as using the media, organizing meetings, direct actions, etc.
- Invite leaders of local, regional, or state advocacy organizations—to include community organizers associated with churches, poverty groups, unions, or social justice groups—to be part of a panel and to share their experiences on what strategies work/don't work.
- The Midwest Academy Strategy Chart ***(mn.gov/mnddc/pipm//curriculumchange chart.html)*** can be a helpful community-organizing tool.
- For advocacy, representatives of state advocacy organizations can present a roundtable discussion on their advocacy efforts. Encourage presenters to bring literature from their organizations.
- The Making Your Case booklet ***(mn.gov/mnddc/extra/publications.htm)*** can help participants fine-tune their skills when meeting with public officials. It's available as a PDF in English and in Spanish, as a plain text document (accessible for converting to large print or for screen-readers), as an audio file, and an Online Course.

- "Telling Your Story" is a free app created by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities ***(partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-making-your-case/)*** that helps participants learn how to quickly tell a personal story to a public official they may meet in a hallway, at a meeting, between committee hearings, etc. It's useful to convey the three main points of an issue to a policymaker in the most effective way, one that's most likely to create change. These personal stories, key points about a particular public policy issue, and a photo can be sent from the app to the elected official or other policymaker. The app is available for iPad, iPhone/iPod Touch, Kindle Fire, and Android tablet and phone.
- Creating a shared vision is a participatory exercise replicating a "high school reunion." It can help participants understand how policymakers and/or others may often hold antiquated attitudes and can then pave the way for participants to build a collective vision for the year 2030 and beyond. Have participants form into small groups based on the period of when they left high school (before 1960, 1960-1964, 1965-1969, 1970-1974, 1975-1979, 1980-1984, 1985-1989, 1990-1994, 1995-1999, 2000-2004, 2005 and beyond). Provide each group with several sheets of large flip-chart paper and markers. Once in these groups, participants select a team leader (to guide), a team recorder (to write), and a team reporter (to report out to the large group).

  The Coordinator provides a list of questions for each small group to answer about what was happening as they were leaving high school: who were their heroes/heroines, what were the major news headlines, what were the scientific breakthroughs, what were the fads and fashions, what was taboo (prohibited, not talked about, banned), and what did their parents tell them about sex.

  At the end of 20-25 minutes, have each team reporter share his/her team's report with the large group. The Coordinator can then facilitate a discussion about the lessons learned: are there "breaks" between decades, what does this exercise tell us about changes in values, when did disability appear, if participants plan to meet a public official they need to do "homework" about the person's background.

  The critical learning here is realizing that our values are set early in life and can influence how we operate, how we perceive and understand the world around us, and how we make decisions. The music of our youth may stay with us, but we might not ever want to wear the type of clothing from that time, and so on. More importantly, elected officials or other policymakers who have had little or no experience with people with disabilities may still carry negative attitudes (pity, for example) about them, but may not recognize how those attitudes are reflected in public policy decisions. Participants who are parents may also have had negative attitudes, but these changed to positive attitudes upon the births of their children, based on personal experiences. Unless and until policymakers/legislators have more personal experiences with and/or learn directly from people with disabilities/families, they will maintain outdated attitudes.

  After this discussion, participants go back into small groups and write vision statements for people with disabilities in 2030 and beyond; the groups record

Convey the **three main points of an issue to a policymaker** in the most effective way, one that's most likely to create change.

these on flip chart paper. The Coordinator and/or staff/speakers can move around the room to gently guide groups who may need assistance. Vision statements need to be stated in the form of a "positive," instead of a "negative." For example, "In 2030, all children will attend general education classes in their neighborhood schools," instead of, "In 2030, there will be no more segregated classrooms." This exercise is best scheduled after dinner on Day 1 of the weekend's training.

Integrating the Online Course: *Partners in Making Your Case*

Partners in Making Your Case ***(partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-making-your-case/)*** provides learners with strategies to effectively communicate with public officials by sharing their personal stories verbally and in written form. This Online Course also focuses on valuable skill-building activities on writing letters, providing testimony, networking, community organizing, and effective communication in positive, successful ways.

After completing the *Partners in Making Your Case* Online Course, learners will be able to:

- Demonstrate how to meet with a public official and discuss issues clearly and competently.
- Identify strategies for initiating and sustaining grassroots-level organizing around specific issues.
- Understand the media's role in promoting issues, and how to effectively use the media.
- Describe how a bill becomes a law at the state level.
- Demonstrate successful techniques for advocating for services to meet the needs of unserved and underserved individuals and/or families.
- Prepare and deliver testimony for legislative hearings.
- Prepare for and meet with members of Congress and/or their staff.
- Use credible resources and documentation to support their positions on issues.
- Identify critical federal issues and the process for presenting one's concerns.
- Tell their personal stories effectively and persuasively.
- Develop positive, on-going relationships with key policymakers.

The *Partners in Making Your Case* Online Course is available in different formats:

Spanish: *mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/makingyourcase-esp/index.html*

American Sign Language: *mn.gov/deaf-commission-stat/makingyourcase/*

Homework Options for Participants

- Watch, "Professor John McKnight: Capacity Building Beyond Community Services" at ***mn.gov/mnddc/mcKnight/index.html.***
- Join a coalition that focuses on social justice issues. Choose a local project in one's home community that's winnable; build alliances with others.
- Join a listserv when advocating for specific issues, including legislative and policy decisions at local, state, and federal levels.
- Review online forums (listservs, news groups, social media, etc.) on issues of interest; investigate and follow online action alerts.

- Attend a local meeting or write to a local official to discuss a critical disability issue. Be prepared to share the experience during the next Partners session and/or turn in a written summary.
- Prepare a brief outline of the major points surrounding a critical disability issue to discuss with a public official before the next training session.
- Create a personal story using the "Telling Your Story" app and apply it to a policy issue that concerns you. The app is available for iPad, iPhone/iPad Touch, Kindle Fire, and Android tablet and phone. It can be accessed from the Partners home page at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/***.
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

State Legislation

In order to influence policymakers at the state level, participants need to be competent in and comfortable with the state legislative process. (For locations that do not have a state policymaking level, integrate the competencies for this session into another session focused on levels of government.) If possible, schedule this State Legislation training session before the Federal Legislation session. While state and federal legislative processes may differ in significant ways, experience in the state legislative process lays a good foundation for the Federal Legislative training.

Partners participants across the country have successfully influenced legislation with their personal testimonies. This is a powerful avenue for systems change. Participants must have the opportunity to practice giving testimony in a comfortable environment before actual legislators and/or legislative staff members. When the time comes for the real thing, Partners will be prepared and feel more confident. *Meeting state legislators, legislative staff, and/or other influential presenters at this session can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for participants to meet and begin forming relationships with policymakers.*

Partners participants across the country have **successfully influenced legislation with their personal testimonies.** This is a powerful avenue for systems change.

COMPETENCIES: After this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand how a bill becomes a law at the state level.
- Draft and deliver testimony for legislative hearings or public meetings.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- This is a stand-alone topic for one entire weekend.
- Lecture with visuals on the state legislative process, including protocols as regards presenting testimony at legislative hearings, by a state legislator and/or legislative aide/staff (videos/DVDs must be captioned).
- Tour the state Capitol to become familiar with the building(s).

- Mock hearing on real issue(s) at the Capitol to allow every participant to deliver testimony in a realistic fashion. Invite experienced lobbyists (or other trainers experienced in public policy) as speakers who first coach participants in developing participants' testimonies. Invite legislators (and/or legislative staff) to conduct the mock hearings and then provide feedback to participants on the presentation of their testimonies.
- Short presentation by representative from Governor's office about applying for Governor-appointed positions and membership on state committees.
- Provide state legislative directory and other appropriate handouts to all participants.
- Participants meet with legislators and/or staff assistants individually at the Capitol. (This may require a change in the training session to Sunday/Monday or midweek.)
- Participants sign up for committee schedules, weekly summaries of legislative activities, email listservs, social media feeds, and/or other legislative communication.

Homework Options for Participants

- "Shadow" (follow around, with permission!) a state legislator for a day.
- Attend legislative hearings on any subject in order to become more familiar with the process.
- Contact a state legislator by phone, letter, or email to discuss specific legislation. This also makes the participant's name known to the legislator. Begin building a relationship.
- Search your state's legislative website. Determine what critical legislative information is available, and evaluate its usefulness and timeliness. Monitor a bill's progress through the legislative process.
- Become active: make phone calls, send letters/emails, and/or testify at a hearing.
- Review the Online Course Partners in Making Your Case ***(partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-making-your-case/)***.
- Use the "Telling Your Story" app; write your personal story and focus on an issue that most concerns you, and send to your legislator. The app is available for iPad, iPhone/iPad Touch, Kindle Fire, and Android tablet and phone. It can be accessed from the Partners home page at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/***.
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Federal Legislation

Becoming competent in federal legislative issues has never been more critical for Partners participants; in order to influence the policies that affect their daily lives, they need to learn how and when to connect with their legislators and other policymakers at the federal level. (For locations that do not have a federal policymaking level, integrate these competences into sessions on another level of government, as appropriate.) As detailed previously, this topic can be combined with the Supported Living/Home of Your Own session; the Supported, Competitive, and Customized Employment session; or with other appropriate topics.

COMPETENCIES: After this topic, participants will be able to:

- Understand how a bill becomes a law at the federal level.
- Identify critical federal issues and the process by which participants can personally address their concerns.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- Lecture with visuals by national speaker to demonstrate the legislative processes at the federal level; videos/DVDs must be captioned.
- Presentation(s) on the details and status of current and/or future disability-related legislation, funding, and/or hot topics at the federal level.
- Invite federal Congressional staff to attend this session in order to role-play "meeting a public official," and to help participants learn appropriate protocol and etiquette at the federal level, including effective communication approaches and protocols.
- Small-group activity to simulate a group visit to a federal legislator; have Congressional staff critique participants' efforts, debrief, and provide constructive criticism.

To **influence the policies** that affect Partners participants' daily lives, they need to learn how and when to **connect with their legislators and other policymakers** at the federal level.

Homework Options for Participants

- Call or visit the local office of a U.S. Senator or Representative.
- Visit the websites and/or social media sites of members of Congress; sign up for their constituent newsletters.
- Write letters or emails to federal officials about a current issue (if appropriate) or to simply inform them of the issues facing people with disabilities.
- Volunteer to work on a disability advisory committee of a member of Congress.
- Offer to provide ongoing information about disability issues to members of Congress.
- Obtain a Congressional directory.
- Review the Online Course *Partners in Making Your Case*. ***(partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-making-your-case/)***
- Use the "Telling Your Story" app; write your personal story and focus on an issue that most concerns you, and send to your federal senator or representative. The app is available for iPad, iPhone/iPad Touch, Kindle Fire, and Android tablet and phone. It can be accessed from the Partners home page at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/***.
- Read materials from speakers and/or Coordinator.

Parliamentary Procedure and Serving on Boards

By this time in the Partners training year, participants have learned about best practices in disability issues relating to education, community living, employment, legislative issues, and more. If they're to be effective in using what they've learned to stimulate positive change within any boards, commissions, and/or committees they serve on, they'll need to learn the ins-and-outs of board service and parliamentary procedure. While many might consider this a "boring" topic, there are speakers who can bring an entertaining and engaging approach to this topic (and participants respond with positive evaluations).

COMPETENCIES: After this topic, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate proper procedures for conducting a meeting.
- Understand the protocols of parliamentary procedure and serving on boards.

While many might consider this a "boring" topic, there are speakers who can **bring an entertaining and engaging approach** to this topic.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- Lecture providing "how to" information about boards, meetings, parliamentary procedure, with small-group activities to help participants practice skills for planning and conducting successful meetings.
- These groups may be helpful in identifying speakers on parliamentary procedure:
  - American Institute of Parliamentarians, 1-888-664-0428, email: aip@aipparl.org, website: ***aipparl.org/site/***. This organization offers an online quarterly newsletter and publications can be purchased through Amazon. Both members and non-members can submit questions at the website.
  - National Association of Parliamentarians, 1-888-627-2929, email: hq@nap2.org, website: ***www.parliamentarians.org***
- Board training may be widely available through United Way, League of Women Voters, and other community associations.

Homework Options for Participants

- Analyze the most recent or the next meeting attend(ed) for its use of appropriate parliamentary procedure.
- The *Partners in Making Your Case* Online Course provides guidelines for being a board member ***(partnersonlinecourses.com/partners-in-making-your-case/)***.
- Read materials from speakers and/or Coordinator.

Assistive Technology, Positioning, and Behavior

For people with disabilities, assistive technology can make the difference between interdependence and dependence, segregation and inclusion, isolation and participation. The same is true as regards to proper positioning for people with physical disabilities. More importantly, as some people have learned, proper positioning can mean the difference between life and death: if a person is incorrectly positioned, eating/swallowing may become difficult or even impossible; weight loss occurs; followed by hospitalization/ institutionalization, feeding tubes, surgeries, etc. In addition, breathing and movement can be negatively impacted when a person is not positioned properly.

Positive behavior supports, interventions, and/or other approaches may be common responses to the perceived "problem behavior" of children and/or adults with disabilities. But many know that "behavior is communication." In many cases, assistive technology (alternative, augmentative communication devices) and/or person-centered behavioral supports are the solutions that generate success for people with communication and/or behavioral support needs.

Many know that **"behavior is communication."**

COMPETENCY: After this topic, participants will be able to:

- Describe examples of state-of-the-art technologies that can benefit people with disabilities.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- Lecture with visuals, videos/DVDs (must be captioned) to illustrate the crucial "why" and "how" of technology; and/or demonstration(s) from physical therapist and/or other seating and positioning expert.
- Invite experts from local/state technology organizations, including a computer lending program, mobile "technology library," and/or others about assistive technology services and resources.
- Small-group exercises on how ordinary, off-the-shelf products can be utilized as assistive technology.
- These technology organizations may be helpful:
  - RESNA (Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America),1-703-524-6686, ***www.resna.org***
  - Ablenet, Inc., 1-800-322-0956, ***www.ablenetinc.com***
- Lecture from national-level behavioral expert on state-of-the-art behavioral/ communication supports.

Homework Options for Participants

- Visit a technology center or a rehabilitation technology laboratory.
- Get retail catalogs of assistive technology devices and aids.

- Visit electronics stores, in person or online, to learn more about ordinary products that may be helpful to people with disabilities.
- Research websites and/or social media sites that focus on universal design, assistive technology, positioning, and/or behavior supports.
- Interview a therapist or other specialist in the area of assistive technology and adaptive equipment, including seating and positioning issues.
- Interview someone with a disability who uses assistive technology or adaptive equipment.
- Watch interviews on positive behavioral supports: ***mn.gov/mnddc/positive_behavior_supports/index.html***.
- Become familiar with digital literacy, a lifelong learning process of capacity-building that uses communication tools and/or networks in creating and communicating information: ***mn.gov/mnddc/asd-employment/4-digital-literacy.html***.
- Become familiar with your state's rules regarding Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- Determine if PBIS is in your school and, if so, how PBIS is implemented.
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Media Skills

Media is no longer limited to "mainstream" television, radio, and/or newspapers. Today, and into the future, it also includes the power and influence of the Internet/social media. Participants need to learn how to use both—traditional media and Internet/social media—in order to generate positive outcomes in systems change, advocacy, etc., and to effectively share with others the best practices they're learning. This sharing can greatly multiply the outcomes of a Partners program!

COMPETENCY: After this topic, participants will be able to:

- Understand the role of, and how to use, the media (including social media) to effectively promote their issues.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- A member of the local media can present information on how to gain press coverage of disability issues. Participants can practice being interviewed on camera by TV or print media.
- An experienced social media guru can provide information on using the Internet/ social media for positive outcomes, how to avoid the pitfalls of negative social media backlash, and how and when social media should be used and/or avoided.

Homework Options for Participants

- Research members of the local media to determine who covers and/or who is interested in education, employment, health and human services, legislation/politics, and/or disability issues. Make contact with these reporters to build a relationship and offer to be a resource on disability issues.
- Critique disability-related Internet sites, blogs, social media, etc. Do they promote positive images of people with disabilities? Do they use pity or negative images to raise money? Do these sites focus on the inclusion, interdependence, participation, and productivity of children and adults with disabilities? What issues on social media generate positive outcomes? What issues generate negative outcomes?
- Write a "letter to the editor" of a local newspaper.
- Participants may decide to work together to create a social media site/page for their class or for their state's Partners program as a whole.
- Make an appearance on TV, a forum or interview, regarding a public policy issue or event.
- Review online resources that offer tips on how to build relationships with reporters or other media contacts, such as "7 Ways to Build Better Relationships with Journalists" ***(www.cision.com/us/2015/02/7-ways-to-build-better-relationships-with-journalists/)*** and "5 Ways to Build Relationships with the Media" ***(www.prnewsonline.com/water-cooler/2015/09/15/5-ways-to-build-relationships-with-the-media/)***.
- Review the Public Media Forum interviews: ***mn.gov/mnddc/media-forum/index.html.***
- Read materials provided by speakers and/or Coordinator.

Graduation is the beginning of new lives, new dreams, and new realities for people with disabilities and families in your state.

Graduation Ceremony

Graduation is a time of reflection and renewal. The eighth and final session will include a ceremony to honor Partners graduates and send them on their way. The scheduled curriculum needs to be covered during the afternoon and evening of Day 1 and the morning of Day 2. Plan your final session so that graduation ceremonies are the last item on the agenda. All the training should be completed prior to the actual graduation. Ceremonies at any other time during the weekend don't make sense. The graduation ceremonies can begin with lunch on Day 2.

Invite a representative from the Governor's office, a state legislator, or a leading public official to present a short congratulatory message to your Partners graduates. Also invite representatives from your state's Council on Developmental Disabilities (or other funding source) to the Saturday luncheon and graduation. But keep the focus on your graduates, not on invited guests.

After lunch, with all participants and guests in attendance, each Partners graduate can take a few minutes to describe what the program has meant to him/her and to briefly outline what they plan to do with their new skills. For most, graduation is a very emotional time; expect tears of both joy and sadness: joy about a new beginning and the accomplishments they bring to it, sadness that this extraordinary time in their lives is completed.

Some Coordinators communicate with the speakers who have presented throughout the year, as well as with other interested and/or influential persons, asking for greetings/congratulations for the graduates, and these can be read out-loud during the graduation ceremony or shared in a packet.

In some programs, Partners graduates are encouraged to invite immediate family members to the luncheon and/or to specific graduation activities. Others encourage Partners participants to extend a personal invitation to policymakers (state or Congressional members, heads of agencies, local politicians) to attend graduation as their guests. This is a prime opportunity to showcase the Partners program to interested guests. Coordinators may want to discuss graduation options with the class. If you don't have the budget to provide lunch to family members and guests, provide lunch only for your graduates, then have light refreshments for everyone at the end of the graduation ceremonies.

In many states, a group photograph is taken of the class during the sixth session. If the first one doesn't turn out well, a second photograph can be taken during the seventh session. This memento is presented to each Partner at graduation. Graduates should also receive a diploma/certificate; pins or bags with the Partners in Policymaking name may also be given to graduates. Advocacy organizations may donate complimentary memberships to graduates.

Between the seventh and eighth sessions, provide Partners participants with a professional press release from the funding agency that participants can send to local media. Arrange for a media relations person to meet and talk with participants, get their statements/testimonies/stories about the impact of the Partners program on their lives, and pitch stories to local newspapers. Brief interviews with participants can be videotaped and placed on YouTube or other social media.

It's the end of the Partners year and the beginning of new lives, new dreams, and new realities for people with disabilities and families in your state. Ensure that your state's graduation reflects the quality of your entire program.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

There are three important components to ongoing quality improvement within a Partners program: Session Evaluation, Speaker's Evaluation, and Participant Surveys. The success of a Partners program is not simply whether or not you have a great group of folks who want to do great things—the success of the program can only be measured by outcomes. Samples of these forms are available at ***mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/classroomcoordinators.html***.

Evaluations that take place during the training (Session Evaluation and Speaker's Evaluation) coupled with the long-term data (Participant Surveys) collected over time can help Coordinators and/or funders:

- Objectively determine if the program is meeting projected outcomes,
- Reveal where improvements should be made, and
- Maintain a quality program that meets or exceeds the projected outcomes.

Participant's Session Evaluation

Because Partners in Policymaking is competency-based, it's critically important for Session Evaluations to be used to assess whether or not participants are acquiring the competencies. It's one thing for participants to rate presentations, speakers, and/or activities highly, but it must also be demonstrated that the speakers and activities made it possible for participants to achieve the appropriate competencies.

Some Partners sessions may have multiple speakers covering multiple topics. If a Coordinator asks participants to complete the Session Evaluation forms at the end of Day 2, it may be difficult to recall the specifics of the first topic/speaker from the beginning of Day 1. Those comments and feedback are as important as a rating scale, but information overload can lead to faulty data collection. Thus, it's better to ask participants to rate each speaker immediately after that speaker's presentation.

The success of the Partners program can only be measured by outcomes.

Using the sample Session Evaluation form as a template, you can (1) create a Session Evaluation form that includes questions about an individual speaker/topic *and* the competencies for that topic (so you might have the same number of Evaluation forms as the number of speakers/topics or (2) have one longer Session Evaluation form that includes the same information/questions for each speaker/topic (with the separate and distinct competencies for each). In either case, ensure the Session Evaluation form(s) are in the participant packets so you don't waste time passing them out during the session. Similarly, don't waste time collecting the forms *during* a session; instead, ask participants to drop them in a box on the table near the door at the end of the day, end of the weekend, and/or while they're heading out the door on the way to break-time or meal-time.

Speaker's Evaluation

To maintain the highest quality program, Coordinators need to gather as much information as possible, and this can include the opinions and experiences of speakers. This information can help Coordinators in a variety of ways: from fine-tuning logistical issues to creating better methods of educating Partners participants.

Coordinators and speakers can form an alliance that enhances the learning of all participants. Honesty and integrity are crucial components of that alliance. Speakers need to inform Coordinators of any positive or negative experiences with the Partners program. The opinions of speakers can provide Coordinators with a new perspective and critical information to help them improve the training. If you're unwilling to take suggestions from your speakers, your program cannot benefit from the national perspective of Partners programs in other states.

The Speaker's Evaluation form can be given to speakers at the time of their presentations, mailed to them after they return home, or posted online for the speaker to download. Many speakers report that presenting at Partners is at the top of their list of favorite engagements, and most hope to be invited back to the program! With that in mind, some speakers may be reluctant to be totally honest with a Coordinator, fearing constructive criticism might be perceived as a "personal attack" on the Coordinator, which could result in the speaker believing he/she would not be invited back. Thus, give the speaker the choice of sending the completed form back to the Coordinator *or* to a trusted third party. That person can share the pertinent information with the Coordinator, but will keep the speaker's name and any other identifying information confidential. Make speakers aware that their anonymity can be preserved if they wish.

Participant Surveys

A quality Partners program will be able to demonstrate that its participants are achieving greater independence, productivity, self-direction, integration, and inclusion in all areas of life (IPSII—outcomes defined in the DD Act). The financial investment that's being made in each and every participant of your program should result in graduates who are competent in best practices and systems-change advocacy.

Evaluating participants over time provides documentation that Partners graduates are, in fact, achieving systems change through legislative advocacy, grassroots-organizing, assuming leadership in policymaking positions, and more. These Participant Surveys, coupled with the Session Evaluations, *provide the hard data to justify a funder's decision to continue funding Partners.*

The **Initial Survey,** to be completed by each participant prior to the beginning of Day 1 of the first training session, collects both demographic data and information that provides a baseline of the participant's leadership activities before participation in the Partners program. The **Six-Month Survey** measures the level of (short-term) change in a participant's

Participant Surveys, coupled with the Session Evaluations, provide the hard data to justify a funder's decision to continue funding Partners.

leadership skills and activities six-months after graduation. The **Long-Term Survey** continues to measure these changes annually for all graduates for up to three or four years.

Program evaluation need not be costly. Work with a local university to locate the right person to be your independent evaluator, such as a student or teacher from the areas of education, public policy, or statistics.

- The Initial Survey should be provided to participants, via email attachment or regular mail, before the start of the first session. Each participant can bring the completed survey to the first session or return it by email or regular mail prior to the first session.
- Six months after graduation, send the Six-Month Survey to graduates, or have them complete and submit the survey online.
- One year after graduation (as well as two, three, or four years after graduation), send the Long-Term Survey to all graduates or have them complete and submit the survey online.

All surveys are completed anonymously. The outside evaluator assigns an identification number to each participant. This number is used throughout every survey. Participants return the surveys directly to the evaluator in the self-addressed, stamped envelopes included with the surveys or the surveys can be submitted to the outside evaluator electronically. The reports prepared from the survey data should reveal both qualitative and quantitative data.

Being able to demonstrate the positive outcomes of a Partners program, as measured by participant leadership activities, can be *the determining factor* in whether a funder will invest in the program or not. But this shouldn't be the only reason to continuously measure outcomes for Quality Improvement. The outcomes revealed by the Participant Surveys can be used in a variety of ways:

- In your recruitment materials, boast about the outcomes documented in the Participant Surveys, such as, "95 percent of our Partners graduates [fill-in-the-blank]," and so on.
- The Coordinator can give presentations during the recruitment phase and "show off" the accomplishments of graduates in the quest to generate a large pool of qualified applicants for the next class.
- The Coordinator and/or members of the funding agency can use the data to promote graduates for leadership positions on boards and commissions, within legislative advocacy efforts, and other activities, to the influential power-brokers in the area.
- By looking at where/how graduates are successful and where/how they're not as successful, the Coordinator and/or funder can make changes to the program to remedy these shortcomings for future classes and/or address these issues in post-graduate trainings or support.
- In what other ways can you and/or your funder use this information to generate even greater positive outcomes?

Being able to demonstrate the positive outcomes of a Partners program, as measured by participant leadership activities, can be the determining factor in whether a funder will invest in the program or not.

Coordinator Responsibilities for Quality Improvement

- All aspects of the Partners program are assessed regularly through self-evaluation, Session Evaluations, Speaker's Evaluations, and Participant Surveys.
- Improvements are made to ensure that the program reflects the highest quality standards.
- The Coordinator is committed to continuous improvement of the program. If opportunities arise to make things run better, faster, or at less expense *without jeopardizing the integrity of the program,* those opportunities are taken.
- All evaluations and surveys are reviewed to determine actions that can improve the program.
- Improvements are tested and results measured.
- The Coordinator resolves concerns expressed in evaluations by participants and/or speakers to the satisfaction of the person who expressed the concern.

BUDGETS AND FUNDERS

Budgets

The Partners Coordinator must deal with the crucial issues of budgeting and financial management in his/her relationship with funders, and every Partners program will have a variety of cost constraints. The program may be budgeted based upon a per-person cost estimate, and the following information details what to expect for various per-person costs. Every effort should be made to be as cost-efficient as possible.

Be as cost-efficient as possible.

Critical Variables in Determining the Budget:

- **Coordinator:** Full-time, part-time position, or contractor.
- **Location of training:** Metro or non-metro.
- **Accommodations:** Hotel for training sessions and overnight lodging, or meeting facility at one location and overnight lodging at a hotel. All Partners participants or only out-of-towners stay overnight; one, two or three people to a room; consider PCA expenses.
- **Meals:** Select meals and types of service in advance; buffets usually cost less than plated meals.
- **Travel:** Watch for airfare specials. For participant car travel, and depending on state travel rules, compare actual mileage reimbursement vs. gasoline reimbursement per IRS guidance. In most cases, gasoline reimbursement will be much lower than miles-driven reimbursement.
- **Support Services:** Set a reasonable maximum per hour cost and enforce it.
- **Handouts/resource materials:** Seek lowest cost for copying. Print materials can be made available as an alternative format to posting all documents online for participants, or load items on a flash drive for each participant.
- **Speaker fees:** Set guidelines; negotiate a reasonable per-day fee.
- **Audio-Visual:** Costs for A/V equipment rented at hotels can be steep; investigate bringing your own.

Programs with $4,000 to spend for each Partner can typically afford:

- A part-time Coordinator. The program becomes part of his/her existing job duties.
- Meals/lodging/meeting room space outside of a metro area; this saves on hotel costs.
- Box lunches; buffet breakfast/dinner, selected in advance by the Coordinator.
- Two or three people to each sleeping room.
- Participants in local area may/may not stay overnight.
- Participants coming from same area(s) carpool.

- Handouts/reading materials are posted online for participants to download; paper copies are provided only for those who need an alternative format.
- The program pays reasonable maximum for childcare, PCAs, and/or support services (per hour cost).
- Check and compare airline ticket prices for speakers in advance; purchase when prices may be lower (e.g., in advance, fares cost less when purchased on certain days, etc.).
- Interpreters/facilitators as needed.

Programs with $5,000 to spend for each Partner can typically afford:

- Part-time Coordinator; the position may be contracted out.
- Meals/lodging/meeting room space within or outside of metro area; meals selected in advance by Coordinator; buffet or sit-down service.
- One or two people to each sleeping room.
- Participants in local area may/may not stay overnight.
- Encourage carpools, but individual travel may be affordable.
- Handouts/reading materials are posted online for participants to download or provide a flash-drive of all materials (PDFs) for each participant; paper copies are provided only for those who need an alternative format.
- Set maximum per hour cost for childcare, PCA, and/or support services.
- Purchase airline tickets at best price time.
- Interpreters/facilitators as needed.

Programs with $6,000 to spend for each Partner can typically afford:

- Full-time Coordinator and part-time assistant to help with logistics.
- Meals/lodging/meeting room space within metro area; meals selected in advance by Coordinator.
- All participants may stay overnight at hotel.
- Participants may travel individually, instead of carpooling.
- Handouts/reading materials are posted online for participants to download or provide a flash-drive of all materials (PDFs) for each participant; paper copies are provided only for those who need an alternative format.
- Cover all childcare, PCA, and support service costs. May set maximum per hour cost.
- Higher prices for air travel of speakers may be acceptable.
- Interpreters/facilitators as needed.

Programs with $7,000 to spend for each Partner can typically afford:

- Full-time Coordinator and part-time assistant. May contract out for logistics.
- Meet in metropolitan area.
- Single, maybe double rooms, for participants.
- All Partners participants stay overnight.
- Meals selected in advance by Coordinator.
- Snacks/beverages in addition to meals.
- Participants travel individually.
- Handouts/reading materials are posted online for participants to download or provide a flash-drive of all materials (PDFs) for each participant; paper copies are provided only for those who need an alternative format.
- Program may be able to pay all childcare, PCA, and/or support services.
- Interpreters/facilitators as needed.

Partners programs and their funders form **a bond that transcends** the financial association.

Funder-Program Relations

Funders make significant investments and commitments when they fund Partners in Policymaking programs. The return on the investment is long term: Partners graduates across the state achieve successes in legislative advocacy, systems change, grassroots organizing, and more. The relationship between a funder and a Partners program is more than that of a giver and receiver. A funder expects documented outcomes. A Partners program expects financial, programmatic, and promotional support from funders.

Partners programs and their funders form a bond that transcends the financial association. For this relationship to be mutually beneficial and result in successful outcomes, the expectations of both parties should be clearly understood.

The Funder Should Expect the Partners Program/Coordinator to:

- Incorporate the Coordinator responsibilities described in this Handbook into the Coordinator's job description and/or contract.
- Operate the program based on the recommendations in this Handbook to ensure all participants achieve all the competencies.
- Manage the program's financial resources responsibly.
- Provide documentation for match.
- Provide regular, timely debriefings and full reports about the Partners program.
- Provide personal testimonials from Partners graduates about their experiences in the program.
- Encourage and assist Partners graduates to serve on policy boards and/or commissions.

- Collect Session Evaluations from participants and Speaker's Evaluations from speakers.
- Work with the Independent Evaluator to ensure the Initial, Six-Month, and Long-Term surveys by participants are completed and the data is compiled, and reported to the funder.
- Invite and welcome representatives from the funding agency to attend Partners sessions and graduation as guests. (During training sessions, they should be seated at the back of the room [and should not participate in training sessions or activities]; during mealtimes, they can mix and mingle with participants.)
- Add Partners graduates to listservs, social media, and other networks.

The Partners Program/Coordinator Should Expect the Funder to:

- Allocate the funds to hire a Coordinator who is competent as a training director, and to fund the program to ensure a quality replication program, in order to graduate competent participants.
- Use a contract to describe Coordinator responsibilities, progress reporting requirements, and financial reporting requirements.
- Support graduates through information, referral, and connections.
- Provide funding for graduate activities separate from the basic program.
- Fund an outside Independent Evaluator to measure the program's outcomes by conducting Initial, Six-Month, and Long-Term Surveys of participants.

GRADUATES: WHAT'S NEXT?

What are your graduates doing? Do you ever hear from them again? Do they ever hear from *you* again? Do you know where your graduates are? Do you know what they're doing? If you don't know, who does?

How do Partners graduates stay connected with each other or with what's happening at the Council on Developmental Disabilities or the funding organization?

Are Partners graduates viewed as a valuable group in your state? Do you get requests along the lines of, "Do you know a Partners graduate who can ... [present testimony, serve on a board, write an editorial, appear on TV, and provide technical assistance]?" If not, something's amiss.

Are Partners graduates viewed as **a valuable group** in your state? If not, something's amiss.

Coordinators have the opportunity and the privilege of connecting graduates to people and organizations who can use their Partners expertise, along with their own life experiences, to create positive changes. Graduates have the responsibility to use their training in ways that enhance their own lives or the life of a family member, as well as the lives of people with disabilities in their communities. Each graduate has her/his own unique gifts and talents to contribute.

Some graduates may not require any post-graduate support. They're out in their communities, doing what they're supposed to: changing systems—changing the world!

Other graduates may need some assistance with networking and staying abreast of the issues. All graduates could benefit from regular communication from the funding agency or organization that operates the Partners program.

Consider the following methods of post-graduate support:

- Bring a class back together six months after graduation and/or have one training weekend per year, to bring together every graduate of your program. These activities are funded in whole or in part by the funding agency. Offer "advanced training" during the weekend on topics that are crucial in your state and/or that are relevant to the graduates. This post-graduate session provides the opportunity for graduates to reconnect with their peers from the same class, to develop relationships with graduates from other classes, and to learn new information. These events could also provide opportunities for Partners graduates to expand their networks of policymaker contacts.
- Ensure that Partners graduates are on the lists or connected to the Council on Developmental Disabilities; Protection & Advocacy agencies; University Centers for Excellence; organizations/agencies affiliated with disability advocacy, systems change, and legislative issues; and other listservs or social media. Make every effort to ensure these groups notify Partners graduates of special events, training, and new resources. These contacts will help Partners participants continue to build their leadership skills long after graduation.

- Send Partners graduates to Washington, D.C. to attend governmental seminars; the Partners funding agency or other group covers expenses.
- Compile directories of Partners graduates (with all graduates' names, addresses, emails, photos, and brief bios); distribute these every year to enable graduates to stay connected with one another.
- Provide funding to cover travel and/or other costs for graduates to deliver legislative testimony and/or attend or speak at conferences.
- Refer Partners graduates to the Resources page at the Partners national website ***(mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/resources.html)*** that includes links to other websites and resources that are grouped in 10 topic areas, plus videos, evaluation reports, and testimonials from Partners graduates in the United States and United Kingdom; and to other websites and/or social media sites that provide valuable, up-to-date resource information.
- Many Partners classes are now creating a Facebook page for their class. Partners graduates can be reached by sending notices or announcements or information about workshops, etc. to those Facebook pages.

RULES OF THE ROAD

The following policies and guidelines have been adapted from Minnesota Department of Administration policies. The wording applies to Minnesota, so edit appropriately for your location. The statements cover the following:

- Disciplined business conduct guidelines;
- Sexual harassment statement; and
- Alcohol and other drug use.

The **success of the program depends upon full participation** of Partners and speakers.

These policies and guidelines are an approach to prevent problems. They are designed to assure that everyone associated with Partners can carry out their duties and responsibilities in a productive, efficient, and professional manner, and in a safe working environment. The guidelines help Coordinators in their day-to-day work and relationships with everyone involved. They can also be applied to Partners participants and speakers. The guidelines and policies can be sent to all participants and speakers as part of their orientation; alternatively, this information can be inserted into the Participant Agreement that participants sign prior to the beginning of the first session.

Sample Disciplined Business Conduct Guidelines

We will respect our own time and the time of others by:

- **Respecting each individual:** Participants are expected to listen to others as they are talking and respect the privacy of each participant who shares a personal story. What is discussed and shared during each session should stay in the room and not be discussed outside of sessions.
- **Attending every Partners session:** Mandatory attendance is required. The success of the program depends upon full participation of Partners and speakers.
- **Being punctual:** Agendas are designed to ensure speakers have adequate time to cover each topic and participants adequate time to discuss issues, and develop and practice critical leadership skills. Everyone should be on time for all sessions.
- **Being prepared for each weekend session:** Participants are expected to complete and submit homework assignments, bring materials or personal devices for recording, and think in advance about each topic and how it relates to their lives.
- **Setting deadlines for completing outside assignments:** Participants should develop a schedule for completing and submitting homework assignments for each session, and selecting a major project and completing the project. Participants should adhere to that schedule.
- **Suggesting solutions rather than only identifying problems as issues are discussed:** Participants are expected to learn and practice problem-solving skills.

Participants and staff, however, are not licensed counselors and outside counseling should be sought when needed to address personal issues.

- **Paying attention to details:** This program has multiple details that require attention, including evaluations and participant match. Please complete and submit forms as needed.

We will use our limited resources wisely by:

- **Monitoring and controlling our expenses for the program and participants:** Whenever possible and feasible, we expect that reasonable judgment is used to obtain the best travel arrangements, including airfares and hotel accommodations.
- **Sharing information:** When you return home, participants are expected to share what they've learned with others.
- **Tracking time:** People involved in carrying out the program will assure the prudent use of available dollars for a quality Partners replication program.
- **Asking questions:** Challenging old ways of thinking and doing things.
- **Measuring our performance:** Using session evaluations, surveys, and any other data to determine if participants are achieving the competencies.
- **Joining organizations and staying connected:** Serving on boards, task forces, commissions, etc.; practicing leadership skills and sharing information and expertise with others.
- **Sending thank-you notes and recognizing the efforts** that each person makes to assure that Partners is a successful experience for everyone.

We will be responsive by:

- **Answering every letter and returning every phone call:** Promptly, professionally, and courteously.
- **Setting and meeting deadlines**: Renegotiating prior to missing deadlines.
- **Listening carefully to others:** Refraining from talking while others are speaking; taking care of personal business only during break times.

Sample Sexual Harassment Statement (2/08/2016)

Sexual harassment of any employee or third party in the workplace or public service environment, or which affects the workplace or public service environment, is strictly prohibited.

Sexual harassment under this policy is any conduct or communication of a sexual nature which is unwelcome. The victim, as well as the harasser, can be of any gender. The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex as the harasser. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

1. Unwelcome sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions, degrading sexual remarks, threats;

2. Unwelcome sexually suggestive objects or pictures, graphic commentaries, suggestive or insulting sounds, leering, whistling, obscene gestures;
3. Unwelcome physical contact, such as rape, sexual assault, molestation, or attempts to commit these assaults; unwelcome touching, pinching, or brushing of or by the body;
4. Preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment for submitting to sexual conduct, including soliciting or attempting to solicit an individual to submit to sexual activity for compensation or reward;
5. Negative treatment or threats of negative treatment for refusing to submit to sexual conduct;
6. Subjecting, or threatening to subject, an individual to unwelcome sexual attention or conduct.

Steps to take if/when harassment occurs:

- The individual affected should express concern about the harassment to the person causing the harassment that the behavior is objectionable and ask that it stop;
- Report harassment to a supervisor (in a workplace environment) or person responsible for conducting/overseeing a training/education program (outside of the workplace environment).

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. All employees and third parties are expected to comply with this policy.

Sample Statement on Alcohol and Other Drug Use (9/08/2009)

The State of Minnesota recognizes that alcoholism and other drug dependencies are a significant social problem with a potential for causing severe effects to the state's workforce. The State of Minnesota recognizes that it has a responsibility to maintain a drug-free workplace. The State also recognizes that drug dependency may be an illness. Consistent with this understanding, however, the State has an obligation to ensure that its employees perform their jobs efficiently, safely, and in a professional business-like manner.

The following prohibitions are included under the State's policy:

- No employee shall report to work under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, controlled substances, or other drugs which affect his/her alertness, coordination, reaction, response, judgment, decision-making, or safety.
- No employee shall operate, use, or drive any equipment, machinery, or vehicle of the state while under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, controlled substances, or other mood-altering drugs. Such employee is under an affirmative duty to immediately notify his/her supervisor that he/she is not in appropriate mental or physical condition to operate, use, or drive state equipment.
- No employee shall unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, transfer, or use a controlled substance in the workplace or wherever the State's work is being performed.

Thank you for using this Partners Coordinator's Handbook to generate positive change.

Let us know how this Handbook has been helpful to you and what recommendations you have to improve it.

Email: admin.dd@state.mn.us

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