



MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

October 2, 2024

Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain
2025 East River Parkway
Minneapolis, MN 55414

MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lee Shervheim, Chair
Jenny Arndt
Jason Blomquist
Dupree Edwards
Lisa Gemlo
Lisa Jemtrud
Heather Kainz
Lesli Kerkhoff
Joel Liestman
Elizabeth Marsh (via Zoom)
Katie McDermott
Alan Morrison
Christine Mueller
Mike Nichols
Garrett Petrie
Jenn Purrington
Connie Rabideaux
Jenny Santema
Erin Schwab
Bonnie Jean Smith
Sumukha Terakanambi

MEMBERS EXCUSED

Amy Hewitt
Abdi Matan
Chris McVey
Mary Raasch

STAFF PRESENT

Paul Nevin
Stephanie Nelson
Colleen Wieck

GUESTS

Marissa Agerter
Crystal Anderson
Randy Bloom
Ruben Chapa
Prince Cole
Danéa Davis
Jen Diederich
Kelly Flatley
Hannah Foster
Tamar Gronvall
Mandy Grunklee
Don Harreld
Betsy Hayes
Laura Isenor
Shaunte Martin
Derek Pearson
Tom Pearson
Dan Reed
Brenton Rice
Mary Schmidt
Lynn Schreifels
Pam Sunder
Nikki Villavicencio
Jennifer Walton
Lauren Z.

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lee Shervheim at 9:34 am.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Shervheim invited all present to introduce themselves.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Shervheim called for approval of the agenda.

MOTION: Smith moved, seconded by McDermott to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES (August 7, 2024)

Shervheim requested the Minutes be approved from the August 7, 2024 meeting.

MOTION: Morrison moved, seconded by Gemlo to approve the Minutes. Motion carried.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Annual Work Plan-Wieck described the Annual Work Plan which aligns to the Baldrige Criteria. **MOTION:** Smith moved, seconded by McDermott to approve the Annual Work Plan. Motion carried.

Annual Administrative Spending Plan-Wieck described the federal and state budget. The Council previously allocated the funding for the program goals at the August meeting. **MOTION:** Morrison moved, seconded by Liestman to approve the Annual Administrative Spending Plan. Motion carried.

Attorney General's Handbook-Copies of the 2024 Attorney's General's Handbook for Board Members were distributed to all Council members.

Mastcom summary-Members were directed to a three-page summary of the past year's work completed by Mastcom. Mastcom will be presenting at a future meeting when a new documentary is completed.

VI. PRESENTATIONS BY GRANTEES

The remainder of the meeting featured presentations by grantees. The PowerPoint presentations are attached to this set of minutes.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Jenn Purrington asked Council members to please help the Minnesota Disability Law Center by volunteering on November 5, 2024, to do accessibility surveys of polling places.

The **Voting Rights Access Project (VRAP)** is a program created by Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid's Minnesota Disability Law Center to support the broader government initiative known as the **Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA)** program. PAVA was established under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and aims to ensure that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in the electoral process, including registering to vote, casting ballots, and accessing polling sites. If you missed the October 1, 2024, training, please contact Jenn for more information.

Joel Liestman announced that Wednesday, October 16, 2024, is "Wear and Share Orange" as a visible message of building community through kindness, acceptance, and inclusion to prevent bullying. More information is available at the PACER website.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Shervheim called for adjournment of the meeting. **MOTION:** Liestman moved, seconded by Rabideaux to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Wieck
Executive Director

The logo features the acronym 'ACT' in large, bold, black letters. Below it, the text 'The Center for Disability Leadership' is written in a smaller, black serif font. A circular graphic with a rainbow gradient (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) surrounds the text. The words 'Advocating Change Together' are written in a cursive font along the bottom edge of this circle. The entire logo is set against a white background with several decorative elements: a large orange-to-yellow gradient arc, a smaller yellow arc, and four solid circles (two red, two yellow) scattered around the composition.

ACT

The Center
for Disability
Leadership

Advocating Change Together

Advocating Change Together

The Center for Disability
Leadership

Advocating Change Together (ACT) has been leading the self-advocacy movement in Minnesota since 1979. ACT works to educate and empower self-advocates in Minnesota to become leaders in their lives and to live side-by-side in their communities.



Jennifer

Walton

she/her/hers

Executive Director

Walton@selfadvocacy.org



Adam

Ruff

He/him/his

Self-Advocacy Academy &

Program Administrator

Ruff@selfadvocacy.org



Nikki

Villavicencio

she/her/sha

Disability Culture &

Leadership Specialist

Nikki@selfadvocacy.org



Shaunte

Martin

she/her/hers

Self-Advocacy Leader

Shaunte@selfadvocacy.org



Cynthia

Gayles

she/her/hers

Self-Advocacy Leader

Cynthia@selfadvocacy.org



Meredith

Kujala

she/her/hers

Program Coordinator

Kujala@selfadvocacy.org



Betty DeWitt

she/her/hers

Curriculum & Person-Centered

Programming Developer

Dewitt@selfadvocacy.org

We work for a society where people with disabilities:

Are Leaders in their lives & communities

Know their rights and how to stand up for them

Are celebrated and appreciated for who they are!

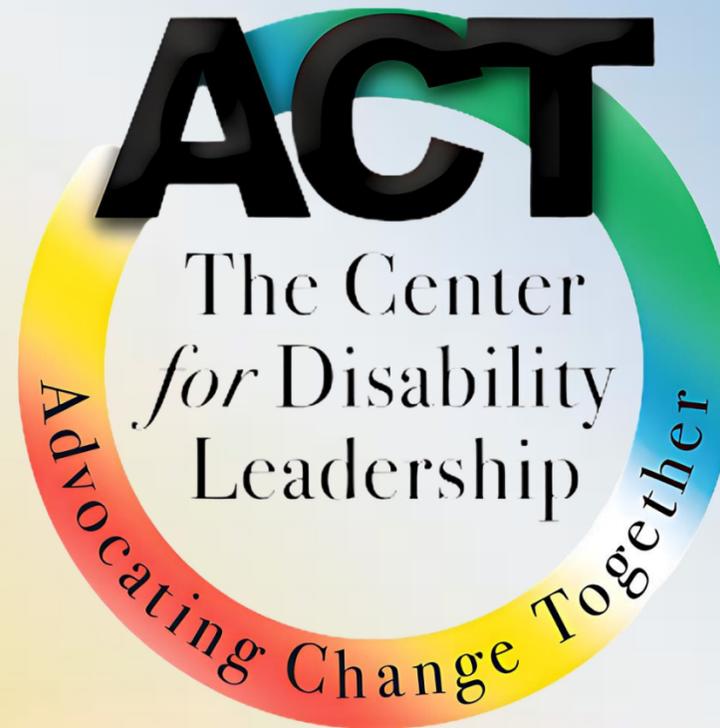
Programs & Events

Coffee Chat

Disability Pride Festival

Side-by-Side Chorus

Disability Power Day



Olmstead Academy

Self-Advocates of

Minnesota

Self-Advocacy

Academy

Self-Advocacy

Conference

From festivals to conferences, one-hour sessions to yearlong commitments, ACT has a self-advocacy opportunity for everyone!

Statewide Community Building

To further the Self-Advocacy Movement and to promote disability inclusion in Minnesota, ACT created the Self-Advocates of Minnesota (SAM) network in 2007.



The addition of the SAM network paved the way for our Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference & the ACT Olmstead Academy



WHAT IS SAM?

- **SAM is a network of self-advocacy groups around the state.**
- **ACT started SAM in 2007.**
- **There are 6 SAM regions.**
- **SAM is the organizing arm of ACT.**

Self-Advocates Minnesota (SAM) is a network of self-advocacy groups from all around the state. ACT organized the formation of SAM in 2007. Today, more than 50 self-advocacy groups across Minnesota are connected and working together. ACT continues to support, fund, and administer the SAM network and its Leadership Circle.

The state is divided into six SAM regions. Each region works with its member groups to build personal power, connect to the disability rights movement, and make community changes. All six regions also meet once a year to share best practices and accomplishments.

SAM Northeast

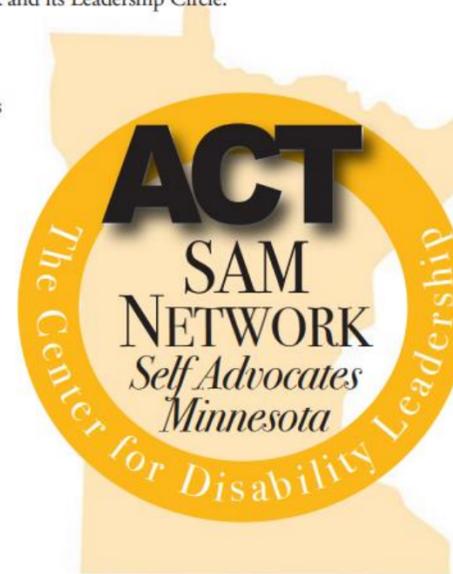
Reps: Don Curry and Kara Wilson
Allies: Karel Hedstrom and Summer Thomas
222 E Superior Street, Suite 302
Duluth, MN 55802
218-355-0680
khedstrom@arcnorthland.org
Arcnorthland.org

SAM Northwest

Reps: Patty McGlynn, James Lee and Dano Johnson
Allies: Carla Tice and Audra Nikle
2126 11th Ave NW
East Grand Forks, MN 56721
701-739-4554
carlatice5@gmail.com
701-317-1221
audranikle@gmail.com
selfadvocacy.org

SAM Central

Reps: Carly Mellott and Dustin Anderson
Allies: Maggie Treichel and Bev Kaler
832 Birch Street South
Cambridge, MN 55008
763-370-3946
maggiepeace99@gmail.com
320-224-1438
bevkaler@gmail.com
selfadvocacy.org



SAM Southeast

Reps: Karli Harguth and Joan Moor
Allies: Rebecca Ebsen and Cheryl Gardner-Ghionzoli
6301 Bandel Road NW, Rochester, MN 55901
952-915-3628
rebeccaebesen@arcminnesota.org
507-474-9535
cherylg@hco.org
Arcminnesota.org

SAM Southwest

Reps: Nate Clark, Mike Hutchens, Jonathon Wolner, and Roberta Gitz
Allies: Wilbur Neushwander-Frink and Rebecca Ebsen
501 South Second Street
Mankato, MN 56001
507-779-6292
wilburdfrink@gmail.com
Openartsmnnesota.org
952-915-3628
rebeccaebesen@arcminnesota.org
Arcminnesota.org

SAM Metro

Reps: Ryan Lewis-Johnson, Elizabeth Koltes, and Brian Heuring
Allies: Nikki Villavicencio and Adam Ruff
1821 University Avenue West
Suite 177
St Paul, MN 55104
651-756-7874
nikki@selfadvocacy.org
selfadvocacy.org

Power of Leverage



WHAT IS SAM ORGANIZING?

Organizing gives us the power to influence our community, including businesses, politics and/or other communities. We come together with a common idea for change, we make a plan and then we act!

Build personal power

Connect to the Disability Rights & Justice Movement

Make community change

CANDIDATE FORUM

Rev Up Minnesota is giving us an opportunity to host a candidate forum in **Congregational District 4: East Metro**

We can organize people with disabilities to encourage people to vote!

We can organize disability community to gain power in politics and the community as a whole.



“

VOTE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT BECAUSE IT DOES!

JUSTIN DART
FATHER OF THE ADA AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (AAPD)



REV UP!

Why Disability Justice?

- People with disabilities are approx. 25% pop
 - In our families
 - In our workplace
 - In our communities
 - Us
- Why now? Disability Justice intersects with the freedom of Homecare workers

PRINCIPLES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

1 INTERSECTIONALITY *“We do not live single issue lives” --Audre Lorde*
Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world “invalid.”

2 LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED
“We are led by those who most know these systems.” --Aurora Levins Morales

3 ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC
In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.

4 COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING
Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.

5 RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS
People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.

6 SUSTAINABILITY
We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.

7 COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY
We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.

8 INTERDEPENDENCE We meet each others' needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over our lives.

9 COLLECTIVE ACCESS As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.

10 COLLECTIVE LIBERATION No body or mind can be left behind
-- only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

Disability Pride & Disability Power!

- Nothing about us, without us, is for us!
- “Remember, you weren’t the one who made you ashamed, but you are the one who can make you proud. Just practice, practice until you get proud, and once you are proud, keep practicing so you won’t forget. You get proud by practicing.” – Laura Hershey



The Disability Pride Flag

Red: Physical Disabilities

Yellow: Cognitive and Intellectual Disabilities

Blue: Mental Illness

Green: Sensory Disabilities

White: Invisible and Undiagnosed Disabilities

Black: Mourning and rage for the victims of ableist violence and abuse.

Disability Pride Flag by Ann Magill

ACT DISABILITY PRIDE FESTIVAL

Following Gov. Walz 2022 declaration of July as Disability Pride Month in Minnesota,

ACT hosted the 1st Annual Disability Pride Festival in Minnesota on July 13th, 2023, at the MN State Capitol

On July 18th, 2024, ACT hosted the 2nd Annual Disability Pride Festival!



ACT 2nd Annual Disability Pride Festival in the media



What does Disability Pride mean to you?



OVERVIEW OF
PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING CLASS 41 (YEAR XXXVII)
SEPTEMBER '23 – MAY '24



Partners in
Policymaking®

Class 41 | Year XXXVII

PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING GRANT PROGRAM

- Created in 1987
- Over 1,100 Minnesota Graduates
- \$210,000 funding
- 35 participants accepted
 - Adults with disabilities
 - Parents or legal guardians of children with developmental disabilities
- 8 sessions (September – May)
- 128 class hours
- Local and national speakers, elected officials
- History, Inclusive Education, Employment, Community Organizing, County and Federal Government



A LOOK INTO CLASS 4I



- Start: 35 participants
- End: 29 participants
- 14 people with disabilities
- 15 parents, 27 children
- Capitol Visit

	Individuals with a developmental disability (IA 1.1)	Family member of an individual with a developmental disability (IA 1.2)
The number (%) who report increasing their advocacy	100.0%	100.0%
The number (%) of people who are better able to say what they want / say what is important to them	91.7%	100.0%
The number (%) of people who participating in advocacy activities.	83.3%	93.3%
The number (%) of people serving on a cross-disability coalition	58.3%	66.6%
The number (%) who are satisfied with the project activity	100.0%	100.0%

- bring a friend
 - support ind. goals
 - adapted devices/equipment
 - alternate activity
 - modified activity
 - ~~Special~~ education classes
 - more Adaptive Sports the basketball?
 - (DPE)
 - preferred activities
 - setting (indoors vs outdoors)
 - mindful activities
 - clear instructions (following directions)
 - noise canceling headphones / music
 - Unified Special Olympics
 - Connected to Professional Sports Teams
 - Peer support
 - Assigned Tasks
- optional
- body breaks
 - inclusion in typical classes.
 - extra recess
 - Dance Team or cheer squad instead of PE



⑤ NOTE-TAKING

- Note cards
- Posted notes
- note taking on Laptop
- legible
- voice notes
- pictures
- proxy note taker
- teacher notes
- Highlighting
- peer notes
- access to slides or presentation/documents

IPads

- smart pens
- study groups
- look up computer
- Annotations
- ↳ Color coordination

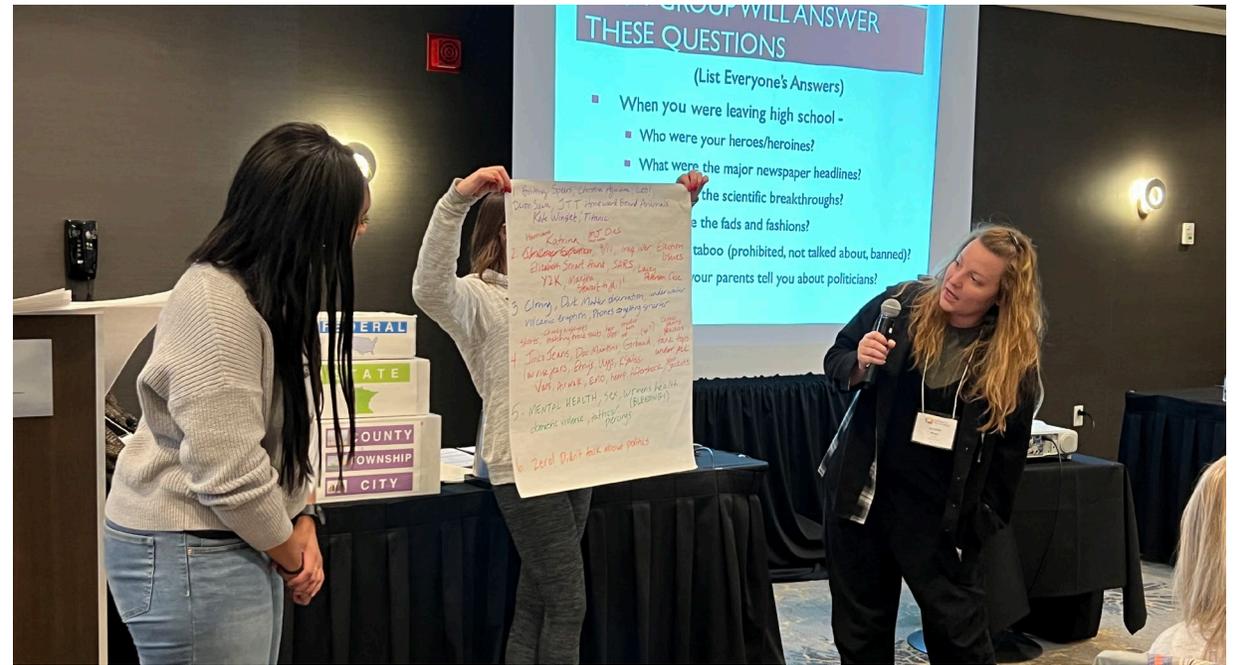
- video^{no keyboard} so you can take notes later
- pen + pencil

recording lectures
carbon paper

slides in advance
note taker/sharing

talk-to-text

Para & PCAS





MEMBERS OF PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING CLASS 41 PARTICIPATE IN DISABILITY AND PROGRESS KFAI RADIO SHOW



Video

Mother's mission to educate
students that those with Down
syndrome are "amazing friends"





CRYSTAL ANDERSON
PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING CLASS 41 GRADUATE

INTERSECTIONALITY STUDIES – RESEARCH OVERVIEW



Phase 1 – 2022: Intersectionality Exploration and Understanding

Literature reviews and qualitative Narrative Research among n=49 self-advocates and parents or family members of people with developmental disabilities. Purpose was to explore:



Phase 2 – 2023: One Minnesota Baseline Survey

In 2023, a total of 593 people from four separate groups based on race and ethnicity, and disability status, were surveyed about their experiences. **The study provided baseline measures that can be used to gauge our progress over time** in eliminating discrimination and achieving the One Minnesota promise for all Minnesotans.



Phase 3 – 2024: Life Experiences Of Young Minnesotans With Marginalized Identities

This study is focused on young Minnesotans (ages 13-22), to better understand their life experiences and the extent to which those with marginalized identities feel included in the One Minnesota promise of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Research Methods: Quantitative pilot study (n=261) and qualitative online Community engagement (n=7) provide preliminary insights which can help inform the design and fielding of a future potential statewide survey of young Minnesotans.





LIFE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG MINNESOTANS WITH MARGINALIZED IDENTITIES

INTERSECTIONALITY STUDY III

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

7 AUGUST 2024

Research conducted by,
MarketResponse International
Project #2526



For the Minnesota Governor's Council
on Developmental Disabilities

MEASURES OF DISCRIMINATION

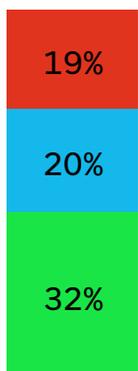
Total Discrimination Indices

Within the past 12 months,
do you believe you....

- Were restricted from opportunities, privileges or activities
- Encountered barriers or obstacles to needed products or services
- Were unfairly treated, worse than others are treated

Discrimination Index

71



TOTAL WITHOUT Disability (n=176)

The three questions used to measure incidences of discrimination are shown here. Adding up the YES percents from the three questions yields a *total discrimination index* for each group.

As shown, twice as many incidences of discrimination were experienced by Minnesota teens and young adults with disabilities, as compared to youth without disabilities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A DIFFERENT REALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Twice as many incidences of discrimination were experienced by Minnesota teens and young adults with disabilities, as compared to youth without disabilities.

The young respondents selected words that best describe the way they typically feel when they are out and about and interacting with other people in their community. Words selected most often reveal very different perceptions among young people with disabilities, as compared to those without disabilities.

The TOP 5 WORDS selected by . . .

Young people WITHOUT disabilities:

Friendly

Anxious

At Ease

Confident

Accepted

Young people WITH disabilities:

Friendly

Anxious

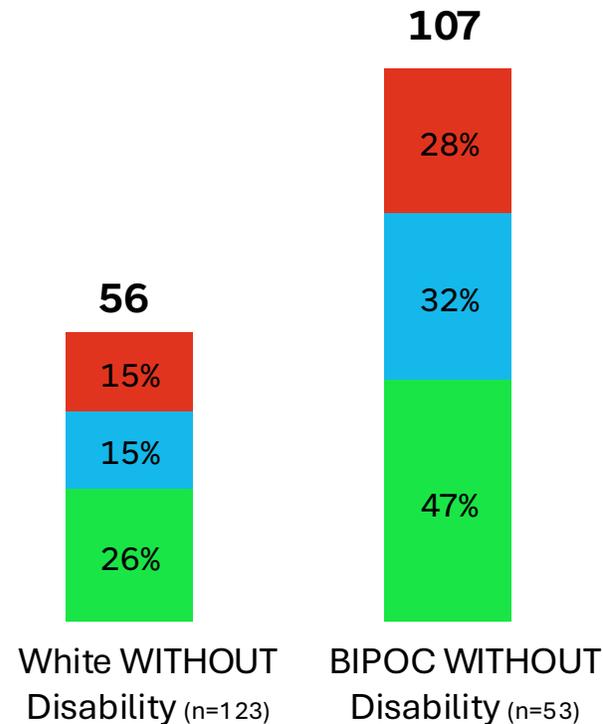
Misunderstood

Excluded

Frustrated

INTERSECTIONALITY IMPACTS – Disability And Ethnicity

Total Discrimination Indices –
by Disability Status and Race, Ethnicity



BIPOC teens and young adults WITHOUT disabilities experience twice as many incidences of discrimination, as compared to white youth WITHOUT disabilities.

White youth with disabilities experienced the highest number of discrimination incidences.

- Were restricted from opportunities, privileges or activities
- Encountered barriers or obstacles to needed products or services
- Were unfairly treated, worse than others are treated

* Given the relatively small sample size of n=26, caution is advised in making statistical inferences to the population of young BIPOC Minnesotans with disabilities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Discrimination Experiences

When describing their discrimination experiences, including unfair treatment, barriers to products or services, or restrictions from privileges, the following top six themes emerged.

	White WITHOUT Disability (n=48)	BIPOC WITHOUT Disability (n=33)	White WITH Disability (n=46)	BIPOC WITH Disability (n=17)
Social Exclusion, Favoritism, and Bullying	17%	24%	35%	35%
Inadequate Support Services for People with Disabilities	6%	6%	46%	18%
Disability Discrimination in Education	4%	3%	28%	24%
Workplace Discrimination	15%	15%	9%	18%
Racial Discrimination	6%	33%	0%	6%
Healthcare Discrimination	8%	3%	11%	12%

Differences of 20% or more, between groups with sample sizes greater than 30, are likely to be statistically significant at the 90% level or greater.

To improve the lives of young Minnesotans with disabilities, the State would need to better understand the issues – and provide solutions related to – support services for disabilities, discrimination in education, and workplace and healthcare discrimination.

Among young white Minnesotans WITH disabilities, 79% reported experiences with discrimination, examples of which are shown below under four general themes.

Inadequate Support Services for Disabilities

Living in northwest Minnesota creates a barrier to needed services for an individual 18-22 with disabilities, because of the lack of availability. There are limited resources and opportunities for individuals with disabilities living in greater Minnesota. We lack supportive employment and meaningful transition programs. Individuals with disabilities lack community and leisure opportunities. At a minimum, our smaller schools struggle to provide level 3 settings for those students with higher needs. Within our region, our students do not have access to a Level IV facility. Currently, the nearest facility is over 100 miles away. That is not equity in education!

I haven't been able to have PCA services due to not being recognized as disabled. It took almost 3 months to get a MN Choices assessment scheduled after a 3-year battle for SSDI certification. My disability wasn't recognized, I felt like I didn't matter.

At my school, they told me my diagnosis wasn't "valid" because I got it from a Primary Care Physician not a specialist. I have been on the wait list to get my diagnosis confirmed by a specialist for 7 years. This loophole allowed them to not give me any accommodations at school. It made me feel like my education was not a priority and they wanted easy students and money rather than using resources to help people.

I rely on services provided by waivers. Every year we have to answer the same questions about my disability just to access needed services, and it gets old. It is unfair because my condition and supports aren't going to change a lot from year to year. I need help with basic daily living activities. Each year it seems like I have to prove it over and over again just to maintain my current level of services.

DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCES: BIPOC WITH Disabilities (n=17)

Among young BIPOC Minnesotans WITH disabilities, 65% reported experiences with discrimination. Some examples, in their own words, are provided below.

Social Exclusion, and Workplace Discrimination

At work I was not invited to activities because they thought my disabilities would make me not fun. It made me feel “less than,” and made me look at my coworkers differently.

*Visiting any store and interacting with the cashier. I can't always understand what they are saying. **Everyone around me gets irritated when I take too long. I get anxious and frustrated. I felt disrespected.***

I was treated unfairly due to my race at my old job. People assumed I didn't speak English and therefore ignored me. I was also treated unfairly by a customer due to my gender. I was threatened because I did not smile.

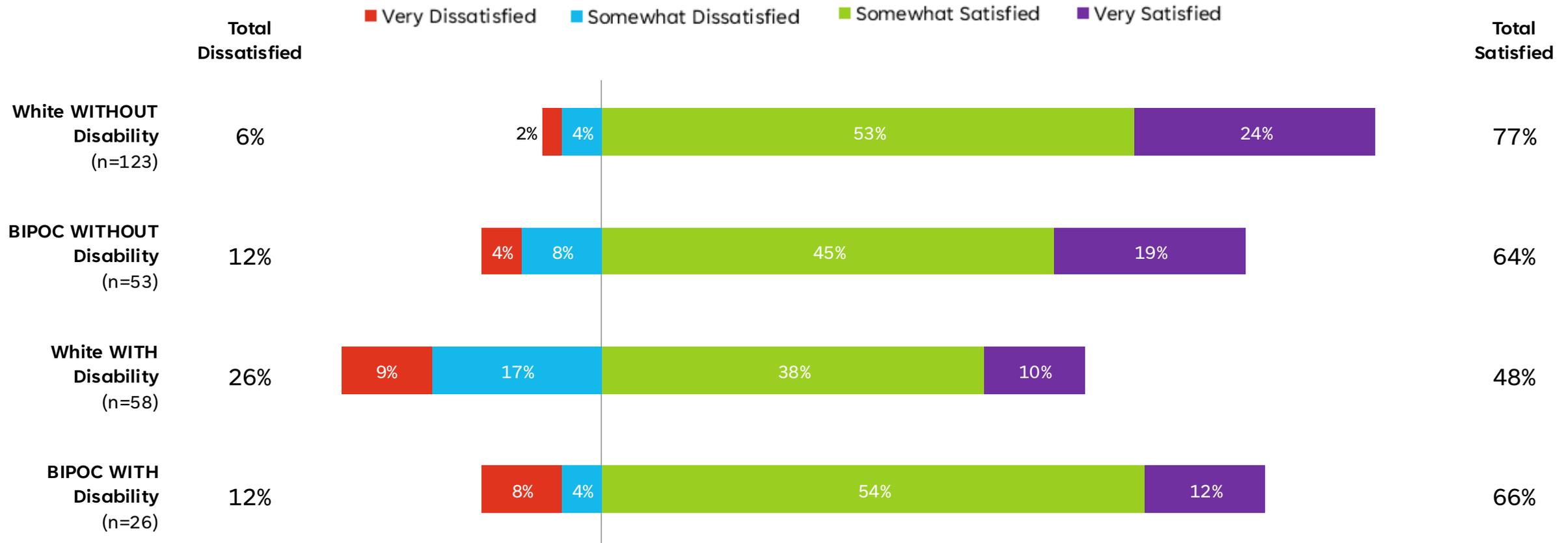
Disability Discrimination in Education

*The education staff don't ask me relevant questions and are not providing me with transition services that address my needs and wishes for the future: to live independently in the community (with support) and be employed in the community (with appropriate supports as needed). The school has a "program" that I must "fit into." I have asked for assistive technology to support me in my transition plan. **I have learned and use some assistive technology that my parents have shown me how to use, but I am not allowed or encouraged to use it at school or during my transition program. I am angry, I am supposed to be able to have the assistive technology I need to succeed, but because the school staff don't want to learn the technology, they don't provide it** or even worse, they forbid me from using my phone with picture schedule app that I use at home. They say that other students can't use their phones so I can't use mine.*

I have always felt like I have ADHD. I expressed this to my mom, and she had countless meetings with my school and doctor, and no one would do anything or even test me. They don't want to listen or help, and I couldn't do it anymore. I dropped out my 10th grade year. Now I am a year behind in school. I started smoking weed to try to help. I was really good at track and football, and I gave it all up.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Satisfaction in the Community

White people with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be dissatisfied with how they are treated, included, and accepted in their communities, as compared to BIPOC youth, with or without disabilities.



All things considered, how satisfied are you with the way you are treated, included, and accepted by your community as a whole?



Life Experiences of Young Minnesotans With Disabilities

Qualitative Research Report

22 August 2024

Research Conducted by,
MarketResponse International
Project #2526



For the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

Starting in 2022, MarketResponse International has conducted research studies focused on the intersection of developmental disabilities with race and ethnicity and other marginalized communities, which leads to social discrimination and disparities in areas such as:

- Health Care
- Employment
- Education
- Housing
- Social Services (home and community-based services)



This qualitative research report is part of the Phase III Intersectionality study, completed in July 2024, which is focused on young Minnesotans (ages 13-22), to better understand their life experiences and the extent to which those with marginalized identities feel included in the One Minnesota promise of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Qualitative Research Method

A qualitative online community discussion was conducted among a sampling of young Minnesotans with disabilities (and parents) who participated in a statewide online One Minnesota survey. A total of 7 respondents participated in the online dialog, which took place over a 2-week period.

Variety of Subject Areas Covered in this Qualitative Report:

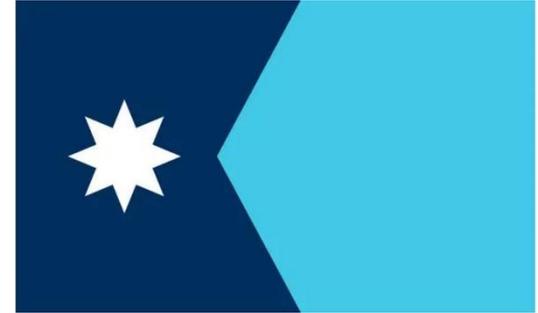
- 1) Experiences in the Community
- 2) Positive Education Experiences
- 3) Negative Education Experiences
- 4) Frustration in Accessing Waivers and Receiving Support Services
- 5) Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

SUMMARY:

- Benefits of knowing youth with disabilities
- Supporting young Minnesotans with disabilities

APPENDIX: Letters to the Governor

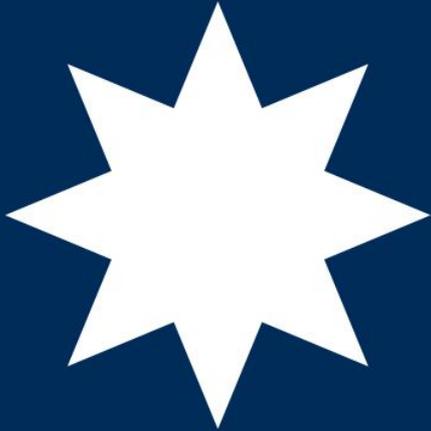
All respondents' quotes, from both parent advocates and self advocates, are shown in *italics*.



Qualitative Research Caution Advisory

Caution is advised in interpreting the findings from this research and making inferences to the larger populations of people with disabilities, as it is qualitative in nature and based on opinions of a small number of people with disabilities, including some family members who assisted in completing the survey.

Detailed Findings



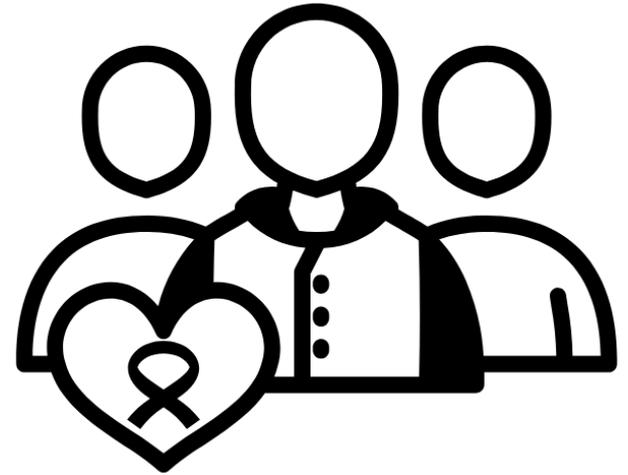
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Experiences in the Community

A Little Patience Can Go a Long Way in Creating Positive Experiences

For this youth with disabilities, by receiving a little bit of help, he is not only able to be included, but also able to volunteer in his community, which is a benefit to all.

*In my community the experiences have been pleasant. In Gonvick, which is the town next to Clearbrook, I had always volunteered to help at the Gonvick Lions Club rodeo. **Every year I had helped, the people in the Lions Club had helped me participate. For example, I had need to step away to cool off when I was getting overwhelmed while handling money or helping explain how to do something a couple times before I remembered it.***



Experiences in the Community

Negative Experience - Compassion Needed

For some young Minnesotans with disabilities, occasional meltdowns can happen. Those who can empathize with these moments are saddened when others aren't compassionate and understanding.



A meltdown is an involuntary reaction to nervous system overload.

[Meltdowns & Calming Techniques in Autism - Autism Research Institute](#)

I have seen people snicker or speak rudely to others like me that are in the middle of a meltdown or just not acting "normal" in public. This makes me sad and wonder why people can't just understand.

Experiences in the Community

Negative Experience - Mental Health in the Workplace

Misunderstanding mental health symptoms can lead to job insecurity. There is opportunity for workplace awareness and support to ensure fair treatment and proper accommodations for all employees.

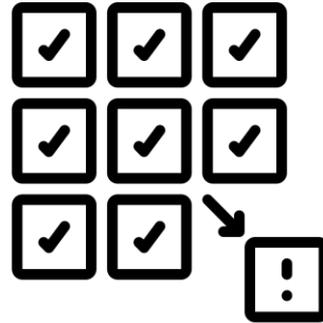


I nearly lost the job I had for the last semester of school, because when I was having a panic attack they thought it was a seizure and didn't want me to come back. There were even supports in place to help, but they had my mom take me to the doctor so the doctor could write them a note saying that I've never even had a seizure. I was able to go back to work after that. And I'm grateful I don't have seizures because I don't even know what would've had to happen then. It's hard to not always have access to a quiet place, to process if something comes up, and (hard not having) people who could understand.

Experiences in the Community

Negative Experience - Summer Camp Disaster

A 14-year-old boy with autism had previous positive experiences at youth YMCA summer day camps. After moving to a new town, he was able to sign up to the local program through a grant. Despite extensive family preparation and the mother taking off work to assist, it was a disaster.



- *“They violated the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as his human rights”*
- When concerns were brought to the community the family was told to move away.
- Untrue statements were made about how the child's IEP needed to carry over to the summer camp.

*It was a terrible time for our family, and we felt **incredibly isolated**. We **contemplated moving**, but ultimately stayed. We have never come across as much **ignorance and pure hatred towards those who are different** since moving here. We are doing what we can to try to make it a more **inclusive community**.*

Experiences in the Community

Negative Experiences - Not Enough Accessible Bathrooms

Access to accessible bathrooms can be a challenge in public buildings. "Is there a good (accessible) restroom?" is a big deciding factor (determining) where we go for events.

Accessibility bathroom issues

Quotes from a mother with a 14-year-old daughter who is nonverbal and uses a wheelchair

Long wait times and not enough accessible stalls

We stand in line like everyone else. But when it is our turn, we also need to wait for the family camping out in the only (accessible) stall, while my daughter is uncomfortably sitting in her soiled garments.

The extended wait times to use the only stall designed for her wheelchair seems to always be in use.

Can lead to not going out at all

Sometimes I wish we were back at home, so she is able to use the restroom in dignity in a timely manner. But that is not fair for her to not go to events with the family either.

Places that accommodate are remembered

We also have favorite events we attend because they have "a good (accessible) stall", that can fit her wheelchair, a caregiver, and a sink with soap and paper towels.

Positive Education Experiences

For Minnesota youth with disabilities, positive education experiences are underscored by the critical role of individualized supports in promoting inclusivity and enhancing the educational experiences of students with disabilities. These supports not only facilitate participation in key events, but also foster a sense of belonging and accomplishment, contributing to memorable and positive educational experiences.



Classroom Inclusion



Comprehensive Support at Events



Extracurricular Activities



Graduations and Milestones

Positive Education Experiences

Classroom Inclusion

The inclusion in various classes such as cooking, fashion and design, art, ceramics, and drawing facilitated not only learning but also creativity and peer interactions, contributing significantly to the students' overall positive educational experiences.



*Each of the girls took classes with peers - cooking, fashion and design, art, ceramics, and drawing. **The inclusion and being able to create and learn were awesome highlights** which made for really good days.*

Positive Education Experiences

Comprehensive Support at Events

Events like school dances are made accessible and enjoyable through the provision of para support, which included help with ticketing, navigating the venue, ensuring dietary needs are met, and facilitating social interactions. These events can be considered highlights for students when inclusive practices are considered, even in traditional school activities.

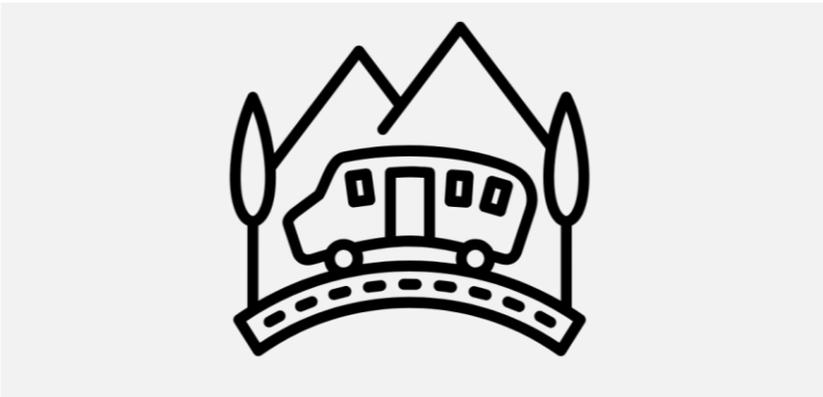
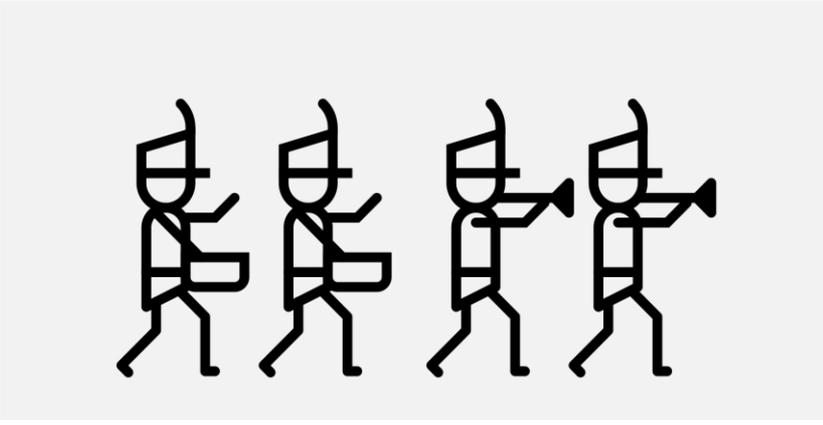


*For Prom, we had para support. They met us at the prom venue, helped us navigate through the ticketing process, and then also supported us during the dance to make sure we had breaks when needed. **The supports were extremely helpful in making sure we had a great time.** The school really did everything necessary to make for a wonderful event.*

Positive Education Experiences

Extracurricular Activities

In this example, participation in the extracurricular activity of the school band trip to Wisconsin Dells provided a sense of belonging and opportunities for social engagement outside the regular classroom setting.



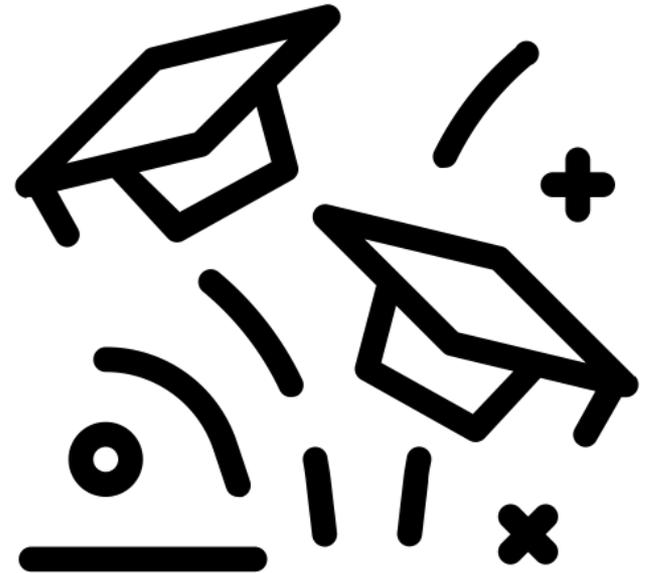
*I was able to go on the school band trip to Wisconsin Dells. It was a wonderful experience and **made me feel like I was part of the group.***

Positive Education Experiences

Graduation and Milestones

Full inclusion in the graduation ceremony, with appropriate supports, enabled students to participate fully and be recognized alongside their peers, marking significant milestones in their educational journey.

*My kids graduated last year. They were **fully included in the graduation ceremony** and activities. They had all the **appropriate supports to make them comfortable and successful**. It was a **huge honor** to see them walk across the stage and be recognized.*



Negative Education Experiences

Young Minnesotans with disabilities encounter various challenges in educational settings. There are many instances where the needs of students were not adequately understood or met, leading to frustration, exclusion, and emotional distress for both the students and their families. The themes that emerged include:

Lack of Appropriate Accommodations



Ineffective and Harmful Teaching Methods



Emotional and Physical Distress



Need for Understanding, Adaptive Educators

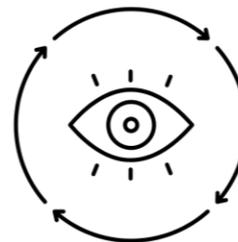


Negative Education Experiences

Lack of Appropriate Accommodations

Young Minnesotans with disabilities frequently encounter situations where educators fail to provide the necessary accommodations. This lack of tailored support often left students struggling with tasks that could have been made accessible with minimal adjustments. These unmet needs result in frustration, hindered learning, and feelings of exclusion for both the students and their families. The absence of visual aids, adaptive materials, and other essential supports make the educational experience unnecessarily challenging.

*During our freshman and sophomore years, we had a lead **teacher who was not open to adapting** things to make them more understandable. We tried for an entire year to get this educator to understand that **some students need the visual cues** to help them navigate and understand, but **she never understood that inherent need.***



*I know my **daughter felt excluded**, because something that should be simple, like identifying which classroom was hers by picture rather than by name, became much harder than it needed to be. It was very frustrating and also very eye-opening that **not everyone 'gets it.'***

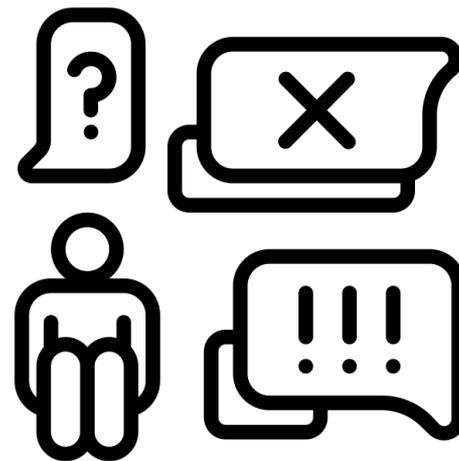
Negative Education Experiences

Ineffective and Harmful Teaching Methods

Some young Minnesotans with disabilities encounter experiences where educators use teaching methods that are not only ineffective, but also harmful to the student's well-being. In these cases, educational approaches do not align with the student's abilities or needs, leading to distress and a sense of failure.

Repetitive and overly simplistic lessons can cause frustration and emotional outbursts in students who were capable of more advanced learning.

The teacher would hold up a letter in front of her and say 'A' and proceed to do this for some time before moving on to 'B'. My daughter would pound on the tray and scream at the top of her lungs. She was obviously upset with all of this. When were they going to teach something more? I felt like I was failing her, all I could do was leave and cry in the parking lot that day.



Negative Education Experiences

Emotional and Physical Distress

Emotional and physical distress for students with disabilities can occur when understanding and proper accommodations are not met, which may reveal a deep impact of feeling misunderstood, excluded, or even physical harm. Feeling of being different or "wrong" because of their disabilities is often compounded by the inappropriate actions of educators, leading to a deep sense of inadequacy and emotional pain.



Physical restraint, used as a method of control, leaves deep emotional scars.

I had a teacher hold me down during a meltdown that left bruises. It made me feel like there was something wrong with me or that I was a bad kid for not being able to control my emotions at that point in time.

Negative Education Experiences

Need for Understanding, Adaptive Educators

There is a critical need for educators to be trained not only in academic aspects but also in understanding the diverse needs of students with disabilities

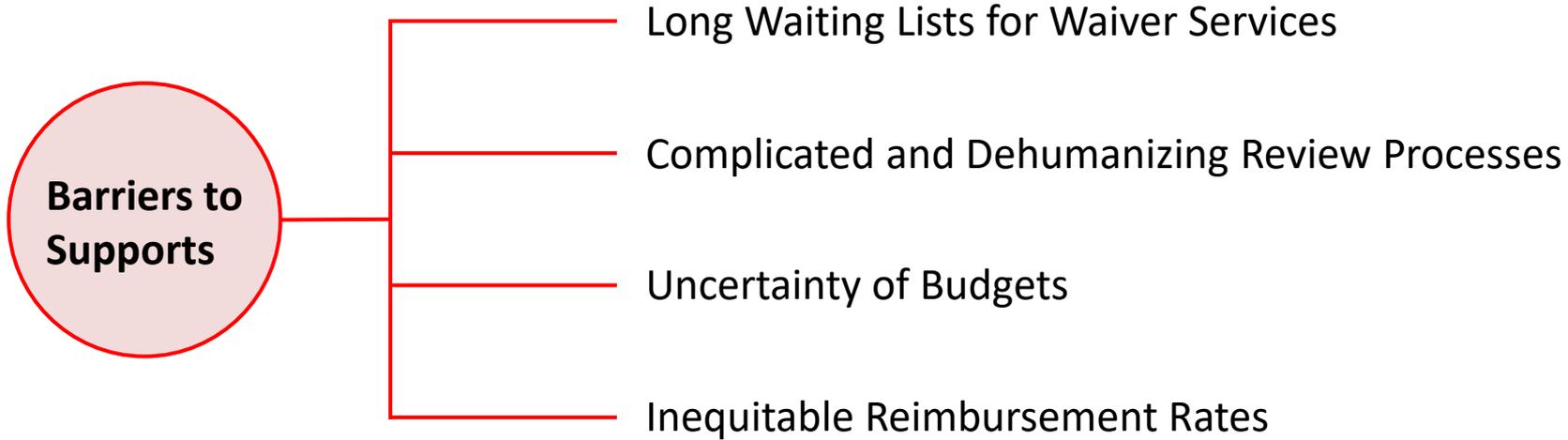
- While many educators are compassionate and professional, **a lack of understanding in a few can have a disproportionately negative impact**
- Essential qualities for educators working with students with disabilities include:
 - **Adaptive** teaching methods
 - **Individualized** support
 - **Willingness** to learn and adjust

*We ran across **a few who 'didn't get it,'** and that was **frustrating and difficult to navigate.** The vast majority have been awesome, compassionate, understanding, and extremely professional.*

***Adapting work to students' abilities is crucial,** yet it was often overlooked.*

Frustration in Accessing Waivers and Receiving Support Services

There are significant barriers in the process of receiving support for people with disabilities. Access to waiver funds are a focus of frustration to some families. Solutions include requesting the same reviewer each year to avoid the learning curve, extending the SMRT review cycle, ensuring consistent budget support, and basing reimbursements on support needs rather than types of residential settings.



Frustration in Accessing Waivers and Receiving Support Services

Long Waiting Lists for Waiver Services

The initial process of getting on a waiver is lengthy, with long waiting periods.

First, getting on a waiver takes time. There are waiting lists - there have been times when there were not long lists - but we've waited several years to get on a waiver.



However, once on a waiver, the services seem to be more consistent.

On the flip side of that, once you're on a waiver, it seems to 'stick.' At least that has been our experience.

Frustration in Accessing Waivers and Receiving Support Services *Complicated and Dehumanizing Review Process*

The annual review requires individuals to repeatedly prove their need for services, which is time-consuming and often feels degrading.

The process to receive supports - especially waiver funds - is difficult, time-consuming and at times dehumanizing.

Every year we have to redo our review. It feels like we have to prove that we are still disabled, and the services required are still needed.

Going through the same info, year after year, and sometimes it seems we have to convince someone who just met your child (or young adult) who you live with 365x24x7 that they need supports. It is a dehumanizing and degrading process.

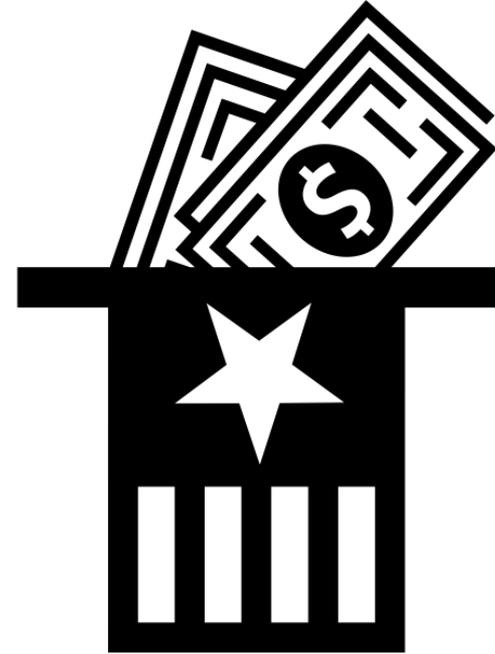
It was suggested that a streamlined process, such as extending the review cycle to every 2, 3, or 5 years, would make better sense, compared to current practices.

Frustration in Accessing Waivers and Receiving Support Services

Uncertainty of Budgets

There is a constant uncertainty regarding the budget allocations for basic services and supports, which causes stress and unpredictability for families.

There is always uncertainty about budgets. What will the budget be? Will it cover the basic services and supports that are needed?



Frustration in Accessing Waivers and Receiving Support Services

Inequitable Reimbursement Rates

The possibility of differential reimbursements based on living situations, is a frustration to some. It is believed that reimbursements should be based solely on the individual's needs rather than their living arrangements.



*There shouldn't be different reimbursements for various living situations on the waiver. There are discussions going on now that seem to be moving in the direction of providing greater funding to a group home or residential setting than a person's own home (or with family). This is just wrong. **Reimbursements should be based on what supports the person needs, independent of where they choose to live.***

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Education Goals and Desires

Families of students with disabilities have a commitment to nurturing their student's unique abilities, preparing them for a fulfilling future, and ensuring they have opportunities for both personal and social growth. This is achieved through a deep educational foundation and consistent individualized support. Success is measured by:

Personalized Learning and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The importance of a tailored educational experience is evident in how families strive to create an educational environment that aligns with their students' needs and abilities.▪ Communication is a significant milestone, with achievements centered around enhancing the ability to express oneself.
Preparation for Independent Living and Career Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There is a strong emphasis on helping students transition into adulthood by acquiring practical skills and exploring various job opportunities. This preparation extends to those aiming for independence in work, relationships, and daily living.▪ Aspirations such as obtaining a driver's license, finding fulfilling employment, and pursuing relationships are central to their goals.
Creative and Social Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Opportunities for artistic and social engagement, such as acting classes and art lessons, which provide avenues for self-expression and joy are valued.

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Education Goals and Desires

Fulfilling education goals and desires can mean pursuing academic interests and steps towards independence.

I am hoping to learn more about science and history. It will mean a lot to me when I achieve those goals.



I want to get my driver's permit. I want to learn how to drive. My transition program has been helping me study and learn what it will take to get a driver's permit. I got a perfect score on the mock test.

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Life Goals and Desires for Young Minnesotans with Disabilities

Goals and desires for young Minnesotans with disabilities have to do with *lifestyle*, their *living situation*, and *work*. The significance of reaching their goals means:



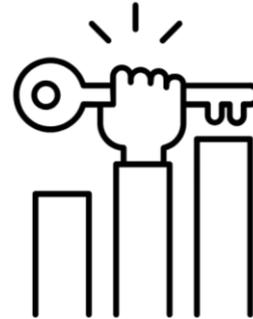
Lifestyle	Living Situation	Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Leading an independent and fulfilling life▪ Maintaining a healthy work-life balance▪ Engaging in hobbies and social activities▪ Prioritizing physical and mental well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Living independently, possibly in their own home or apartment▪ Residing in an accessible and supportive community▪ Having a stable and secure living environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Being employed in a meaningful and rewarding job▪ Pursuing career advancement and professional growth▪ Having opportunities for entrepreneurship or self-employment▪ Working in an inclusive and accommodating workplace

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Achieving Goals for Young Minnesotans with Disabilities

For young Minnesotans with disabilities, reaching their goals signifies:

- **Personal and financial independence**
- **A sense of accomplishment and improved quality of life**
- **The ability to contribute positively to society while being recognized for their abilities.**



*In five years, I want to be living on my own in an accessible apartment, working at a job that I love and that values my contributions. **Achieving this will make me feel truly independent and fulfilled.***

*My goal is to have a balanced life where I can engage in hobbies, maintain my health, and work in a supportive environment. **Reaching this will give me a sense of accomplishment and allow me to contribute positively to my community.***

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Achieving Goals for Young Minnesotans with Disabilities

The aspirations of young Minnesotans with disabilities are to achieve independence and fulfillment through education, meaningful work, and personal milestones.

Supportive environments, whether through friends, family, or professionals are important to realize goals and feel valued in their communities.

In five years from now I want to see myself in college and living with some friends. For work I want to continue working at my tech job. When I reach my goals, I will feel very good.

I want to continue to live with my family. I would like to have a driver's license so I can help out more with my family. I would like to have a job where I feel valued and respected. It was a dream come true to attend a NASCAR race. Meeting my goals would make me feel like I am worthy. It would be good to have support from family and possibly a PCA to meet my daily needs.

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Importance of Supports and Accommodations



Young Minnesotans with disabilities may have varying levels of need for accommodations and support. Some feel confident in their ability to access necessary help, while others recognize the need for specific support services, to achieve greater independence and meet their goals.

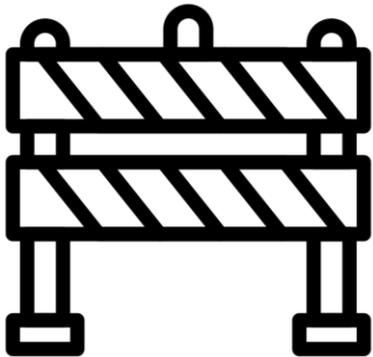
I don't really need any accommodations at the moment, but if I do need them, I know who to ask. Either my parents or staff at college. The process is simply just having a conversation with them about it.

*I would benefit from an (individual learning) specialist and a PCA to help me achieve my goals. **I want to be independent, but I just need a little help. I would be better supported to meet my goals if I had the help I needed.***

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Barriers to Achieving Goals for Young Minnesotans with Disabilities

Societal perceptions, can hinder young Minnesotans with disabilities the ability to fully participate and be accepted in the community. They emphasize the importance of being recognized for their unique abilities and valued for who they are, rather than being judged for their differences.

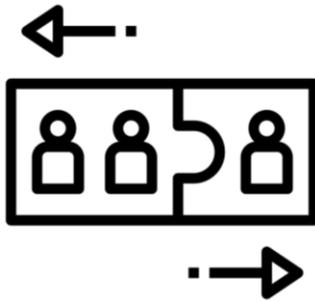


*Some societal barriers that are holding me back is the fact that **I have slower processing times than other people, and that hinders me from working with others.***

*The general public looks at us differently. We are different but that is not a bad thing. We are differently abled. WE have value to the general population. **Being accepted for who I am would be the ultimate goal.***

Hopes, Desires, Dreams, Goals

Barriers to Achieving Goals for Young Minnesotans with Disabilities

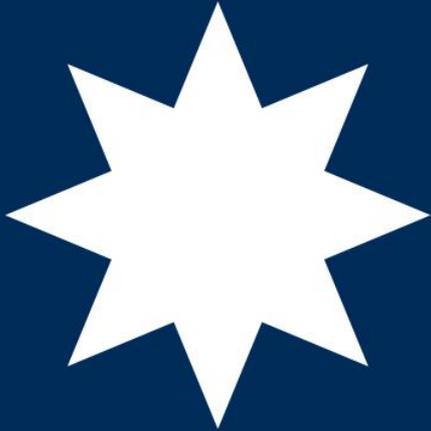


Discrimination and lack of understanding from others are significant barriers to achieving goals, and impact confidence and well-being. Patience, kindness, and education are essential to creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for young people with disabilities.

A lot of barriers that people with disabilities are faced with when trying to achieve their goals are rude people and discrimination. This has had a toll on my confidence as I was treated very poorly in elementary school. I wish they would be more accepting of kids with disabilities, and to be more educated on how to help them.

I think people just don't understand how I am able to function and that causes a barrier to accomplishing my goals. If people would just be patient and kind and understanding that would help me.

Summary



- Benefits of knowing youth with disabilities
- Supporting young Minnesotans with disabilities

SUMMARY – Benefits of knowing youth with disabilities

What the Minnesota Youth Want You to Know About Them

Young Minnesotans with disabilities were asked:

Thinking about other people in your community who may see you around from time to time, but don't know you personally,

- What would you want them to know about you?
- How would it benefit you if they knew you better?
- How would it benefit them if they knew you better?

Youth with disabilities often face significant challenges when stepping outside their comfort zones and participating in public life, frequently feeling judged by others. Recognizing their strengths and including them fully in the community can help break down barriers and foster a more supportive and understanding environment.

*I am a caring, interesting, loving, awesome individual that just wants to be included. **You might see a different side of the puzzle if you could just live a day in my shoes.** They would see how hard it is for me to leave my home and be in the public. **I go outside my comfort zone just to leave the house.** It's just hard. My mom says I don't see the looks I get sometimes, and I really don't care and neither does she. But she notices all the same.*

SUMMARY – Benefits of knowing youth with disabilities

What the Minnesota Youth Want You to Know About Them

Young Minnesotans with disabilities desire to be understood beyond appearances, as pity and fear from others lead to avoidance rather than connection. They believe that recognizing shared similarities could foster meaningful relationships, which will create an environment where they feel truly included and valued in the community.

*Sometimes there are “looks” of pity, sadness, nervousness, or fear that lead to avoidance. I want them to know that **they don’t need to pity or be afraid of me.** It would help them be better able to make a connection and understand **we are more alike than different, and they could gain a friend or at least have a meaningful conversation or a good laugh.** That would help me to be more of an actual part of the community, more valued, more included; not just tolerated or accepted, but **actually included, engaged, and appreciated.***

SUMMARY – Benefits of knowing youth with disabilities

What the Minnesota Youth Want You to Know About Them

When youth with disabilities are included, and the community knows more about them, everyone benefits.

What should the community know about me?		How I would benefit	How the community would benefit
Acceptance Without Pity	<i>There is no need to pity or fear me.</i>	<i>I would feel more included and valued in the community.</i>	<i>They could make a connection, understand our similarities, gain a friend, or have meaningful conversations.</i>
Communication Abilities	<i>Despite expressive communication deficits, I can communicate using an augmentative and alternative communication device.</i>	<i>I would be treated with dignity and spoken to directly.</i>	<i>They would get the chance to know me.</i>
Understanding Nonverbal Communication	<i>My daughter, though nonverbal, understands everything and has feelings, wants, and interests.</i>	<i>My daughter would feel valued, accepted, and have dignity.</i>	<i>They would see her sense of humor and learn what a true friend is.</i>
Uniqueness of Individuals	<i>Each person is a unique individual with their own goals, dreams, fears, talents, and opinions.</i>	<i>Understanding and appreciation of our uniqueness and individuality.</i>	<i>They would be enriched by understanding perspectives they hadn't considered before.</i>
Caring and Inclusion	<i>I am a caring, interesting, loving individual who wants to be included.</i>	<i>More understanding of the challenges I face and better inclusion.</i>	<i>They would see different perspectives and understand the effort it takes for me to be in public.</i>
Fun and caring personalities	<i>I am a very fun person and very caring.</i>	<i>It would enable me to talk to more people.</i>	<i>They would have a caring person to talk to.</i>

SUMMARY – How Can We Support Young Minnesotans with Disabilities?

By focusing on improving these areas, Minnesota can be a place where young people with disabilities can work towards achieving their aspirations and leading fulfilling lives, rather than having to fight for their basic rights.



Accessibility

- Accessible housing and transportation
- Workplaces equipped with necessary accommodations
- Universal design in public spaces and services



Assistive Technologies

- Access to modern and effective assistive devices
- Regular updates and maintenance for assistive technologies
- Training and support in using these technologies



Education and Training

- Inclusive and supportive educational institutions
- Vocational training and skill development programs
- Continuous learning opportunities to stay updated in their field



Health and Wellness

- Comprehensive healthcare services, including mental health support
- Programs promoting physical fitness and well-being
- Assistance with managing chronic conditions and disabilities



Social Support

- Strong support networks, including family, friends, and community groups
- Peer support and mentorship programs
- Access to social services and advocacy organizations.

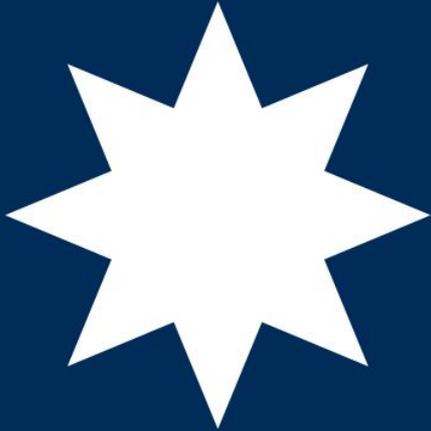
SUMMARY – How do we support young Minnesotans with disabilities?

Needed Supports and Accommodations - In Their Own Words

*The single biggest help that the government/community can provide is **funding to support living with a disability**. This includes - **living support for daily tasks - (PCA or care assistance), transportation, job search assistance, housing assistance**. Each of these is a unique barrier if they are not available and accessible.*

*We also live in the metro - where there is access to many services and organizations. **Not everyone in MN lives close enough to access these services**, so being able to **bring services statewide** is a significant issue and needs to be addressed.*

Appendix



- Letters to the Governor

Appendix

Letters to the Governor

Respondents were asked to write Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, and other State leaders a letter regarding what life is like today, and how it can be enhanced, for a better future for young people with disabilities in Minnesota.

The letter below shows a positive perception for supports for people with disabilities in Minnesota, compared to other states.

We are grateful for the services that are available to us as Minnesotans. Traveling to other states and listening to other forums, it is apparent we are ahead of the country when it comes to supports for our people with disabilities in our communities.

We cannot go backwards, please do not limit/cut these programs that our youth need to move forward, live a full life and move towards living independently with these supports. Please help us keep PCAs, nursing and respite services, by reimbursing at a rate that retains these quality caregivers.

Appendix

Letters to the Governor

Continue to move forward, maintain an inclusive stance, and focus on what is possible. These are the main themes of this letter.

First, I would like to thank Governor Walz and Lt Governor Flanagan for their work and support of individuals with disabilities. The 2023 legislative session included a number of bills (passed) that were helpful to people living with a disability, such as increased wages for PCAs, allowing students to attend transition until their 22nd birthday and many others.

The challenge for all of us is to keep moving forward and not go backwards. Standing still is the same as moving backwards. We have to agree that disability rights are human rights - and the ability to make choices, live the type of life we choose and have the appropriate supports in place to allow us to do this is a basic human right.

Also, we need to maintain our inclusive stance - decisions need to be made with the community in mind. We work on person centered planning - the idea that the individual has the best information to make informed choices about health, money, living, education, transportation, work and community. Let's never forget that simple idea; never forget the humanity behind every decision and the people who are impacted and affected by the decisions we made.

Lastly - let's continue to make MN a place where all are warmly welcomed. We need to focus on what is possible - vs. what has been done before. One of the organizations that we work with has a statement in their mission which says, "Taking a position of possible". To those (and their families) - with a developmental disability - so much of our world has been centered and grounded by negative statements like, "they can't do that, or that might be too much." I love the concept of taking a position of possible. We all will be surprised at what can be achieved when we look at things through the lens of possibility!

Minnesota is a great state and a great place to live. We have natural beauty to enjoy, a rich history, people who care and a community that has been created to encourage and enrich. Let's continue to make sure it is accessible, available and all can enjoy.

Thank you!

from your
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Ambassadors *for* Respect



PeaceMaker
Minnesota



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



Meet Cindy, our Ambassador from Merrick, Inc.

Cindy has been a working client at Merrick for 5 years, and participating in Ambassadors for Respect for 3 years. She loves arts and crafts, movies, and shopping. Her favorite part of being an Ambassador was when a fourth grader approached her after a training and shared that he has disabilities too.



Meet Christine, from Merrick, Inc.

Christine has been a working client at Merrick for 10 years, and has been participating in A4R for 2 years. Christine likes to be active outside, playing sports and riding bike. She likes being an Ambassador because she likes spreading the word that people need to stop bullying.



Meet Danéa, Merrick's Ambassador Coach

Danéa has been employed with Merrick for 2 years, and the Self-Advocacy Facilitator since April 2023. She is currently a psychology counseling Master's student pursuing dual licensure. Danéa's favorite thing about being an A4R coach is watching the Ambassadors' confidence grow throughout each school year and watching (in real time) that confidence make an impact in the classrooms.



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

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



What is Ambassadors for Respect?



A4R is a program that begins with teams of Ambassadors.

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

Ambassadors are taught bullying prevention skills.

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

These bullying prevention skills are taught through activities.

7. Is there anything you might try to do differently now that you've seen this training?

This lesson showed me how much bullying
effects people and how to stop it.
stop bullying.



Our Program Partners Include:

- **Merrick, Inc (Vadnais Heights)**
- **Focus House (Willmar)**
- **COMPASS Transition Program (Elk River)**
- **CHOICE, Inc (Eden Prairie and Maple Grove)**
- **The BUILD Program (Bethel University)**
- **Cannon Valley Special Education Coop (Faribault)**
- **WACOSA (St Cloud)**
- **MSS (Oakdale)**
- **Career and Life Transition Program (Roseville)**
- **STAARS Transition Program (Hastings)**
- **PHASE Industries (Mora and Cambridge)**
- **UDAC (Duluth)**



Training Data Results

25 schools, 75 classrooms, and 1,719 students were trained last year.

Outcomes: Fourth Graders

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

95% of students said they learned how to use Person First Language.

96% of students could list three ways to advocate for oneself and others.



Dear Ambassadors,
Thank you for teaching
us about Person-first talking.

Also a thank you for helping
us improve our community.

I hope you like my letter!

Your friends Panda.

PS. I'm the kid in the
second row with a jean jacket.
Also I won a pin.



The Ambassador (IPSII) Survey has shown outstanding results. According to our 2023-24 surveys:

97% of participants responded that they are satisfied with the A4R Program.

95% of Ambassadors reported that, due to participation in the Ambassadors for Respect Program, they are increasing their advocacy.



“I loved being an Ambassador because it's my passion to make people feel confident in themselves.”

- Madyson, BUILD Program

63 people served as
Ambassadors in 2023-24.

Ambassador Coaches

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

“A few of our readers initially struggled with how to answer questions posed by students and staff had to interject during the presentations but now all of them are confident and ready to tackle anything that happens in the classroom. They went from being nervous to speaking in front of a large room of students to being excited to speak with the students and they are able to fill the set up and take down time with easy and light conversation. We’ve had 2 instances where one of our readers took over the role of another reader in addition to their own when something came up. Everyone is super prepared, excited and ready to just roll with the punches.”

–Ambassador Coach



**Thank you for
supporting our program!**

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



Employment Services

Pam Sunder-Director of Employment Services
Hannah Foster-Art Employment Manager
Randy Bloom- Business and Community Partnership Development
Kelly Flatley-Employment Specialist
Lauren Z. – Person Served

MSSS

OUR MISSION

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

ABOUT OUR SERVICES

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

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

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

MSS Employment Services

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

The discovery process:

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

Grant Overview

Overall Goal

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

Progress Highlights/Successes



Goal: Assist (20) adults with developmental disabilities in securing competitive employment.

Results: 12

Goal: Assist (10) transition age young adults with developmental disabilities in securing competitive employment.

Results: 5

* Data is for 11 months

Grant Highlights/Successes

Employment Awareness Training

Goal: At least ten (10) to fifteen (15) individuals with developmental disabilities and their families will participate in training sessions to increase awareness and understanding about the importance of paid work experiences

- Employment training was conducted over a 6-month period from November-June**
 - 13 adults participated, meeting for an hour every other week**
 - The training utilized the eTrac interactive, e-learning program**
- eTrac consists of 6 main employment categories and combined classroom lecture and practical exercises to engage participants through role playing interviews, etc.**

Businesses Training/Education

Goal: At least three (3) businesses will receive education and training on disability related employment issues, including work incentives and workforce development, person centered planning, and assistive technology designed to build community capacity around customized employment that results in competitive integrated employment for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Result: Disability Awareness Training was provided by Randy Bloom to 15 business leaders on 9/10/24 at an in-person presentation hosted by the St. Paul Rotary.

Comments from attendees included:

“It has been a while since I have been informed about the way society is dealing and including people with disabilities. I now feel much more informed of current situations. Thank you.”

“Great presentation!”

“The information level was great.”

Current Initiatives

Co-Collegiate Mentorship Program Expansion

Pairs students with individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in the same area of study

Mentors act as informal liaisons with school staff working to increase independence and encourage self-reliance in academic situations.

❖ Currently collaborating with 3 Post Secondary Education sites to establish and support Co-Collegiate programs

Exploring Employment in the Arts Course

- ❖ **Six-week course that blends group classroom-style learning with 1:1 consultation & support**
- ❖ **Curriculum covers a variety of art-related jobs and careers, exploration of art mediums, self-marketing as an artist, educational opportunities, and more**
- ❖ **Virtual and in-person options**
- ❖ **Over the past year, 21 students participated, with two classes taking place at transition programs in the Metro area**



FRESH
EYE
ARTS
+ GALLERY

Fresh Eye Arts Studio Programs in Eagan and St. Paul

Serving 45+ artists

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

In 2023, 36 Fresh Eye artists had work
in 31 exhibitions



Six Fresh Eye artists applied for and were chosen for a paid opportunity for Pianos on Parade, a project that places artist-painted pianos around the Twin Cities for open play during the summer months.

In photo: Josiah paints his nature design.



**Paul Macharia next to his
prize-winning painting at
Courage Kenny's Art of
Possibilities**

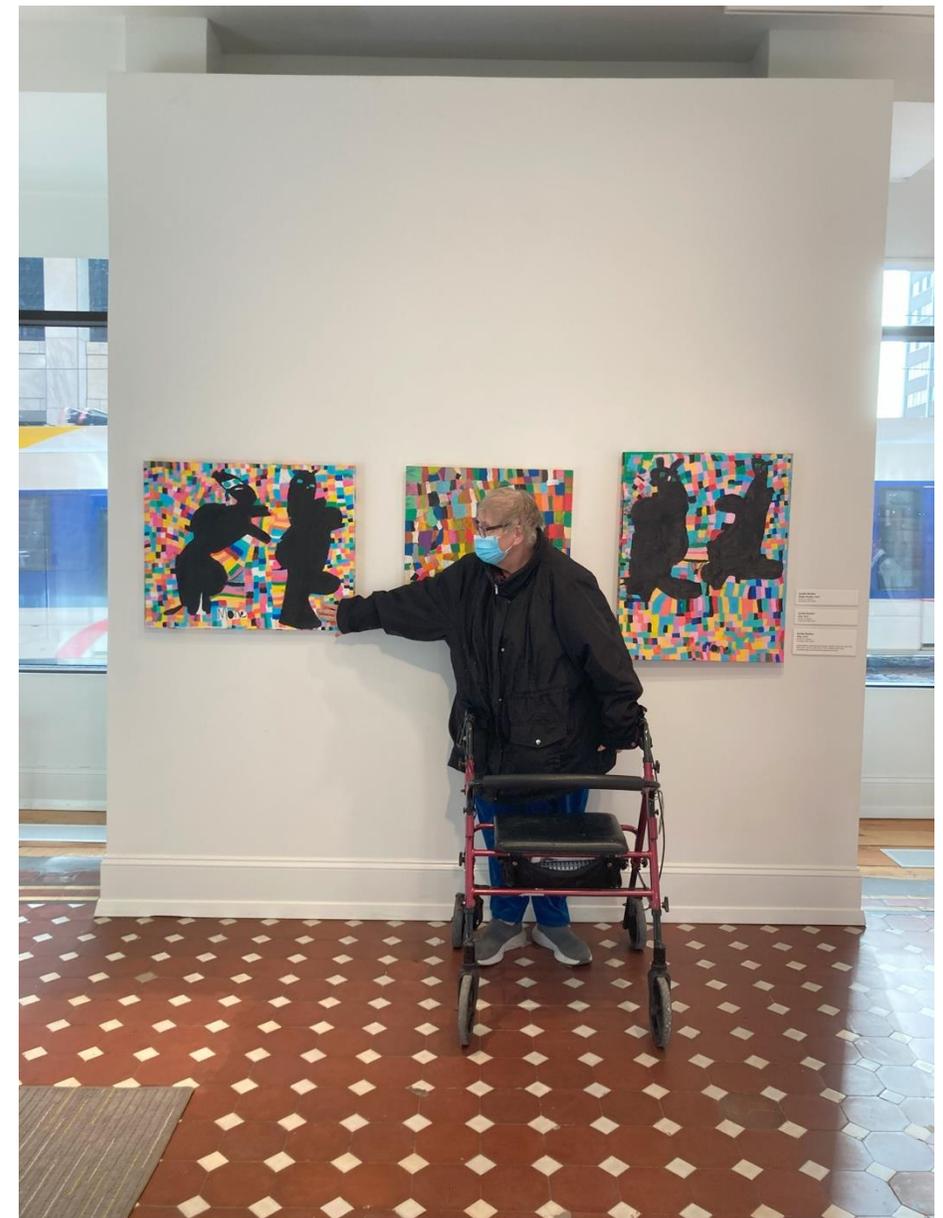


Artist Lynda Mullan was invited to an Arts Leadership Event at Hennepin Arts (formerly Hennepin Theater Trust) where she met Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey





Lynda Mullan in front of her artwork and the vinyl exhibition description at the Minnesota Museum of American Art

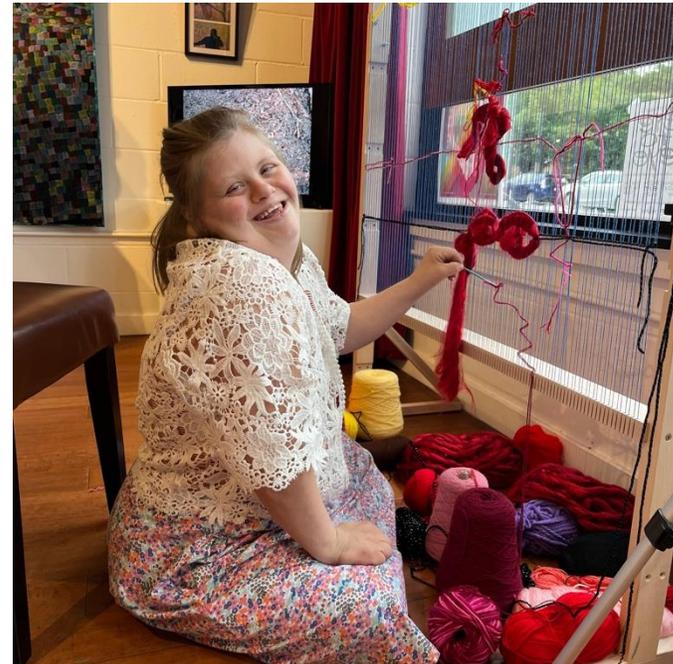


**Lamine and Isa's artwork
at Royal Grounds Coffee
in Minneapolis**



Fresh Eye Gallery

- ❖ **Opportunities for artists to exhibit their artwork and curate exhibitions**
- ❖ **Along with art on exhibition for sale, there is a gift shop for artists to sell work**
- ❖ **10 exhibitions in 2023**
- ❖ **Community artists and artists with disabilities exhibit art in the same space**



From the caregiver of an artist who has been participating in the Art Employment program virtually:

“Just want to say that your program...[is] absolutely life changing. This is something he has needed for the 30 years I have known him, and we just did not know how to create! Thank you so much. It is really important that you know how transformative and positive this is!”





Randy Bloom, Business and Community Partnerships

eTrac is an innovative online training curriculum designed to teach work readiness and job seeking skills to people struggling to overcome barriers to employment. Barriers include learning disabilities, gaps in employment history or mental health challenges.

eTrac's comprehensive curriculum contains six separate courses – the first five focus on a specific phase of the job search process while the sixth focuses on how to successfully keep a job. eTrac is animated, narrated, and is fully accessible for adaptive technology. Content is presented using engaging animation and real-world videos, simulations and interactive exercises. Each of the 6 eTrac courses include pre and post test exams, measuring retention of eTrac curriculum. eTrac is CARF accredited.

Major current MSS eTrac partnerships include:

- ❖ State of MN VRS**
- ❖ South Dakota VRS**
- ❖ Texas A&M University**



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

Video: The Power of eTrac 3.0



MSS Success Story

**Person served shares
their Employment
Experience with MSS**

Lauren Z.



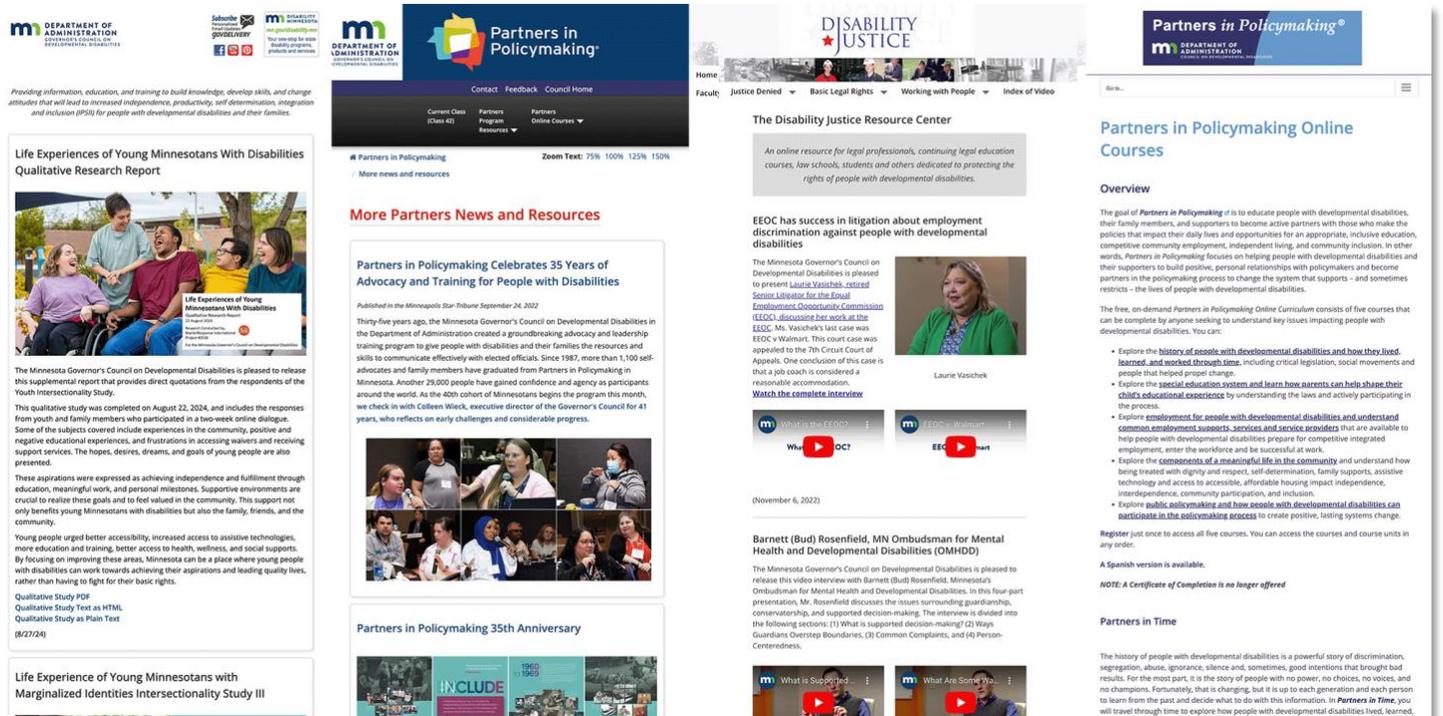


Conclusion

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

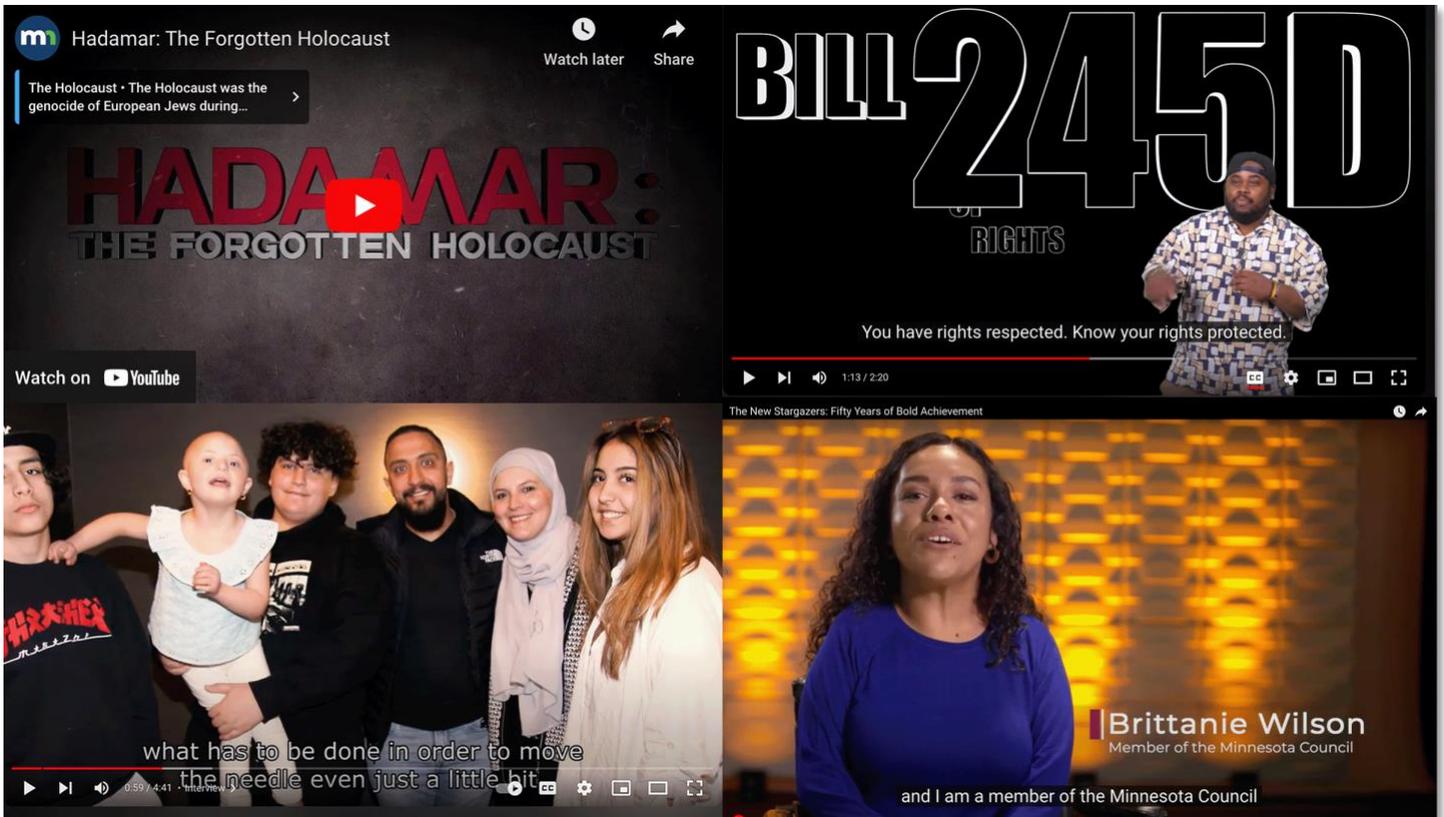
2023 - 2024 Summary of Accomplishments and Progress

Web and Social Media:



- Intersectionality Survey Results posted for two studies.
- Publicized Mobile Museum Exhibit with schedule and feature
- Major progress maintaining, optimizing and modernizing the behind-the-scenes code for the MNDDC and Partners sites for usability, accessibility, and search improvements. Utilized SiteImprove for accessibility improvement, spelling check, and broken link scans.
- Implemented new template and navigation improvements for the Disability Justice Site
- Maintenance and customer support for the Partners Online Courses site, including the Spanish language version
- Updates to the Project SEARCH site
- Facebook: Posting Partners Session photos
- Facebook: Treat People Like People social posts
- Facebook: 3 to 5 posts per week
- GovDelivery: Email bulletins announcing important features, Partners registration, and RFPs
- Archived legacy Partners session photos

Video



- Completed two short “social media” videos to drive new viewers to the Council YouTube channel and web site.
- Made progress on a 30-minute documentary *The Crusade of Forgotten Souls* on the reform of Minnesota state hospital system in the late 1940s and early 1950s.
- Completed a short documentary that provided an overview of the Welsch-Jensen cases for an event in March 2024.
- Converted several DVDs and uploaded for viewing to see if they could be added to the Council YouTube channel.
- YouTube: Completed migrating all video segments found on the MNDDC site to the Council YouTube channel.

Web Traffic Numbers (September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024)

- **888,464** visits to MNDDC and Partners sites
- **700,414** visitors to MNDDC and Partners sites
- Pages on MNDDC and Partners sites were viewed **2,761,279** times
- **2,484,144** files (PDF documents) were downloaded

Top pages for the year are the Home page, pages in Parallels in Time, and the Ed Roberts page.

Top document downloads are mostly found under Parallels in Time.

The top publication is “It’s My Choice.”

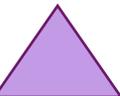
Top YouTube videos:

Content	Views
1  Willowbrook: The Last Disgrace Nov 12, 2020	16,769
2  Hadamar: The Forgotten Holocaust Aug 27, 2020	7,490
3  President John F. Kennedy: The President's Panel on Mental ... Aug 19, 2021	3,794
4  Dehumanization and the Total Institution Jul 12, 2018	2,407
5  Marc Gold and Try Another Way Sep 4, 2014	2,056
6  In Our Care: Glenwood State Hospital and School Aug 29, 2014	1,984

MHConsultingGroup

MN Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

October 2, 2024



Topics

CQI Initiatives

245D Bill of Rights Training Package

CQI Initiatives

Council's FY2023 Business Results

- Verified data and trends
- Provided recommendations for improvements

PPR Reporting Process – Federal Reporting Requirement

- Implementation of a streamlined reporting process and templates
- Verification of grantee ACL measurements
- Assisted in the in preparation of this federally required report

• Customer Satisfaction

- Continue to move to online platform - Survey Monkey
 - Publications/Website/Online Classes
 - MIHEC Group (Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium)
 - 245D Supplemental Materials
- 3rd Party results verification

245D Bill of Rights Training Package

○ Background:

- The Olmstead Plan calls for targeted efforts to prevent abuse and neglect.
- Continued effort in the public education campaign

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities produced this package of resources around the Bill of Rights for Individuals Receiving Waiver Services:

1. **Situational Videos:** The Council, co-created, with people with disabilities, a series of skits illustrating the Bill of Rights for Individuals Receiving Waiver Services.
<https://mn.gov/mnddc/>
2. **245D Easy Read Guide:** The Guide is a simplified version of the Minnesota Statute 245D (Sec. 245D.04 MN Statutes). The rights are presented in plain English with images that help to explain each of the rights.
3. **245D Know Your Rights Workbook:** The 245D Know Your Rights Workbook explains what each right is about and includes lessons to aid in understanding.

Some of these rights are similar to those described in **the Supervised Living Facilities Bill of Rights Training** – MN Dept of Health.

Supplemental Materials:

made with 

Know Your Rights Easy Read Guide for Waiver Services

From [Minnesota Statutes 245D.04 Service Recipient Rights](#)



m DEPARTMENT OF
ADMINISTRATION
GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

DISCLAIMER: The following is provided by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities for educational purposes only. This information does not replace Minnesota and federal laws related to Minnesota Statute 245D.04.

Know Your Rights

WORKBOOK FOR PERSONS RECEIVING WAIVER SERVICES



m DEPARTMENT OF
ADMINISTRATION
GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Workbook for Know Your Rights –For Persons Receiving Waiver Services 1

User-Centered Feedback:

- 245D Bill of Rights **Situational Videos** are well liked by all the individuals who participated in this study.

“The overall idea, and the videos. The people in the videos are actual PIP graduates!!! I love that the most!”

- The **Easy Read Guide** was well liked as it used **simple language**, incorporated **pictures**, and was **easy to understand**.

“Simple language and graphics. Easy to understand for almost any level.”

“They’re easy to read because the wording is kept to a minimum and not overwhelming. I liked the pictures with it. I would like it in larger print.”

- Most said the **Know Your Rights Workbook** does a good job explaining each right and includes lessons to aid in understanding.

“It was simple for a person at any level. The exercises were creative, so they were not boring. I liked the notes to be able to write on the bottom. Liked the answers at the bottom of the exercise.”

“Consistent with the [easy read] guide. Easy to follow.”

Appendix

CQI 2024 Summary:

2024 Accomplishments :

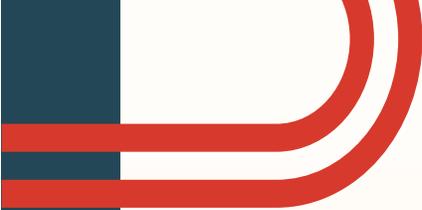
- Grant Management System to conform with new Federal Requirements
 - Developed a Standardized Reporting tool that will allow for the Council to improve its commitment to continuous quality improvement. Better data tracking the work of the council's grantees will help it identify areas for improvement, while celebrating successes.
 - Updated Grantee Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Templates to capture new Federal Requirements for SOGI (Sexual Orientation Gender Identification)
- Preparation of annual Program Performance Reports (PPR)
 - Provided written narratives based on activity reports submitted
- User-Centered Projects
 - MHCG work on the 245D Bill of Rights project advances how individuals and their families understand their rights. Our work on surveying user satisfaction bears this out.

Progress in Meeting Performance Goals:

- Met all Performance Goals for FFY 2024

Challenges

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



SUMMARY OF AUGUST 2024 EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS TRAINING PRESENTED BY

THE EDUCATION LAW ADVOCACY PROJECT
(ELAP) OF SOUTHERN MINNESOTA REGIONAL
LEGAL SERVICES (SMRLS)

Co-Sponsorship by the Minnesota Governor's Council
on Developmental Disabilities.

WHO WE ARE

Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) provides free, high-quality legal help to low-income people living in southern Minnesota in critical civil matters. For over 115 years, SMRLS has helped individuals and families secure and protect their basic needs. The firm is well recognized for its innovative practice, strong partnerships, and high standard of work.

SMRLS started the Education Law Advocacy Project (ELAP) in 1995 to help families enforce the educational rights of students through collaborative approach. Since then, ELAP has represented thousands of students and their families in obtaining educational services, empowering families in navigating the school system, and in some cases, improving educational policies at the school district level.

SMRLS Website: <https://www.smrls.org/>

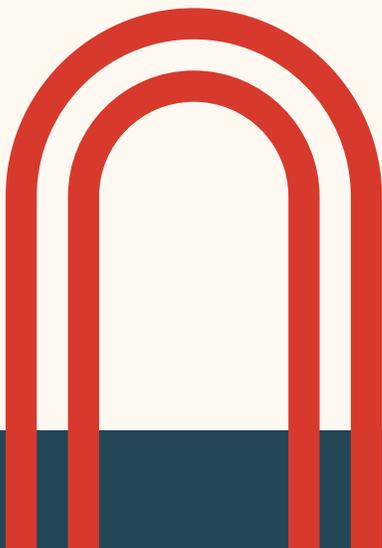


AUGUST 2024 EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS TRAININGS

With the generous co-sponsorship of the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, ELAP was able to provide free, virtual trainings this summer to professionals and parents.

ELAP presented in both *English* and in *Spanish* on the following four topics:

- Navigating Bullying and Students with Developmental Disabilities
- Attendance and Students with Developmental Disabilities
- Understanding Early Learning and Children with Developmental Disabilities
- Improving Transitions to Adulthood for Students with Developmental Disabilities



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



COMMENT

These trainings were so informative and very good. I passed this along to all the other co-workers and school staff. All the school and child welfare agencies should be made aware of this.



COMMENT

Fantastic Training. I am glad I was able to watch it on you tube as I was not available on 8-1. I will be sharing this information with my families.



COMMENT

Estuvo entendido todo.
(I understood everything)

REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS

A TOTAL OF 196 PEOPLE REGISTERED TO ATTEND THE SUMMER TRAININGS.

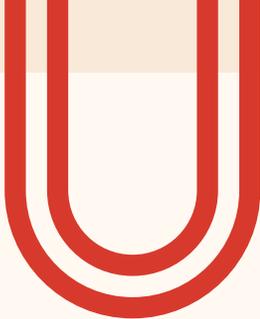
Participants identified themselves as:

- Parents and Family of Children with Developmental Disabilities
- Assistant County Attorneys
- Court Appointed Attorneys
- Guardian ad Litem
- Public Defenders
- Education Advocates with Pacer, Minnesota Disability Law Center, and the Arc
- School staff from various school districts
- Social Workers with various counties, non-profits, and tribes

A snapshot of some of the organizations that registered:

- Advocacy Center of Winona
- Austin Aspires
- Autism Society of Minnesota
- Children’s Home Society
- Council on American-Islamic Relations
- Family Voices
- Fraser
- Hiawatha Academies
- Northland Counseling
- Solutions Not Suspensions
- We Are Families Rising





AUGUST 2024 PRESENTERS

LAURA ISENER

Laura Isenor is a Senior Attorney with ELAP. Laura has practiced law since 2011. Prior to joining ELAP, Laura was a prosecutor handling juvenile delinquency, truancy court, and child protection cases. Laura worked to reduce the number of cases sent to court by developing pre-charging diversion programs and sitting on a local team designed to reduce suspensions and increase mental health referrals.

RUBEN CHAPA

Ruben Chapa is a Staff Attorney with ELAP helping families navigate bullying issues, special education rights, and students struggling behavioral. Ruben is fluent in spanish and presented at all of the spanish sessions. Prior to joining ELAP, Ruben clerked with ELAP SMRLS, the Advocates for Human Rights, and a private firm handling Family Law and Estate Planning.

ABIGAIL ADKINS

Abigail Adkins is a Staff Attorney with ELAP. Abigail has practiced law in Minnesota since 2022 and in Florida since 2019. Prior to joining ELAP, Abigail advocated for students in Florida to receive special education and community-based mental health care in order to prevent undue disciplinary measures, involuntary psychiatric evaluations, and privacy violations.