

We, the DDS Self Advocate Coordinators, would like to thank you for including some of our accomplishments in the 5 Year Plan. We believe self advocacy makes a difference and everyone should have a voice.

We are proud of our advocacy to support that everyone should have a healthy relationship and we want the department to continue to support our Healthy Relationship Series that we co-teach with educators from Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. This series needs to be ongoing to make sure everyone has a voice and understand what a healthy relationship is and all of our stakeholders need to understand the importance of everyone having the right to have a healthy relationship of our choosing while implementing the Healthy Relationship Policy and Guidelines.

We continue to advocate for “People First Language” and strongly support the continuation of our “We Are People – Call Me by My Name” campaign and making sure everyone is committed to taking the “Disability Awareness Pledge”. We believe if everyone, including all the staff in DDS and the private provider staff, truly understand and take our pledge, this will change attitudes and hopefully the culture.

Being a strong self advocate is important for every individual the DDS supports. We want to continue to support all of the Self Advocacy Groups that are presently meeting and continue to develop and promote more advocacy groups. We want to expand the groups and encourage providers to develop Employment Advocacy Clubs as well as SA groups. We know that people having a voice and understanding their rights makes a difference in living the life they want. We have assisted in developing a Self Advocacy Advisor Manual and we plan to assist advisors to be the best they can be.

“Real Work for Real Pay” is very important. We want to continue to promote great jobs by continuing to do a yearly Employment Idol. We know people like to see the different kind of jobs people have around the state and we know that people selected as Employment Idols are proud to be recognized for their work and are great role models for others. The SACs will continue to be involved with all of the various “work partners” from all of our sister agencies.

In reviewing the Five Year Plan we understand there will be project groups to guide our department. We believe that one of the project groups should be “Self Advocacy Outreach”. This would include all the work we are doing to make sure people have a voice and understand their rights. This group could also be looking at speaking up if you believe you are being abused or neglected, learning all of our rights and making sure all staff support them, promoting healthy relationship, promoting our campaign, promoting people first language, and provide trainings and resources.

We are proud to be working for DDS and we are proud to be DDS Self Advocate Coordinators. Thank you for your consideration and review of our suggestions for the Five Year Plan.

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