

Live, learn, work and enjoy community life in places where they can use their personal strengths, talents and passions.

“I am a self-advocate coordinator. I go to dances and to the movies. I am on a bowling league and I am part of Special Olympics.” *James Louchen*

“I like to do volunteer work, outreach, and help people through my work with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups and issues.” *Carlos Colon*

“I live on my own and hire my own staff to assist me to be more independent in my home. I attend church every Sunday. I meet with some of the church members on Wednesdays for bible studies. When I want to go out into the community I call and schedule pickups from CT transit so that I can be independent out in the community.” *Latasha M. Linwood*

Have safe, meaningful and empowering relationships.

“I have a great, safe, and empowering relationship with my handsome fiancé’, Ray. We first met in 1991 at Aetna, our workplace. We immediately became the best of friends. From there on is when we fell in love, making this our 25th year together. We have been living together for about 14 years.” *Carol Grabbe*

“I have safe, meaningful relationships and empowering relationships with the people I work with. Knowing my kids are safe lets me work at my job without worrying all the time.” *Jossie Torres*

“I have close relationships with my mom, my sister, her husband and my two nephews. I’m also close with my Aunt Jan and Uncle Ron and now have a spiritual relationship with my dad. I like going to the Tri-County Arc County Community dances, Best Buddies events at ECSU, and the Third Thursday Street Festival. I always like meeting new men and women to make new friends and in the future maybe have a girlfriend again.” *Varian Salters*

Have families who feel supported from the earliest years and throughout their lifetimes.

“I support families and parents with ID as well as their kids...helping them to make new friends, keep “old “ friends and get to know each other. I will keep supporting my families through advocacy and staying together.” *Jossie Torres*

“Family is very important to not only my life, but in everyone’s life. We can rely on them and they “have our backs!” *Genna Lewis*

“I look to my support staff as my brother and sister. Whenever I feel emotional regarding anything, my staff is whom I depend on. Seven years ago, they made it comfortable for me to express myself.” *Jamar Cherry*

Have lifelong opportunities and the assistance to learn things that matter to them.

“About 12 years ago, I got the chance for a lifelong opportunity to learn to speak up for myself. I attended my first self-advocacy meeting in Middletown. Ever since then, self-advocacy has made me a better person. 10 years later I am proud to be a Self-Advocate Coordinator for DDS, and I continue to spread the word, Speak Up! Speak Out! Never Stop!” *Carol Grabbe*

“Through conferences, committees, meetings and people I have met through my work, I’ve learned so much! I especially learned a lot from having my own home, my freedom, making my own choices and making decisions without worrying about being told what to do. I have had the opportunity to learn how to dress professionally, how to be a presenter and training staff.” *Jossie Torres*

“I didn’t know much about self-advocacy before I got this job, but my Case Manager helped me to take on the job and a leadership role. Finding out how we can help people.” *Carlos Colon*

Make informed choices and take responsibility for their lives and experience the dignity of risk.

“I’m choosing where I want to live! Looking at all options until my mission is complete!” James Louchen

“I am officially moved in. I rely on city transportation, and I advocated for myself to have more freedom and accessibility to better transportation. I am free to go where I please, that’s appropriate.” Jamar Cherry

“I’m going to be moving out of my house in June, and I realize that I need my family for support, but looking forward to it! I am going to write a book about my experiences. I will share it with others.” Genna Lewis

Earn money to facilitate personal choices.

"I'm working hard on saving money towards a vacation!" *Carol Grabbe*

"I buy coffee, office supplies, suits, ties, haircuts and I go on vacations! I'll be going to New Jersey this year!" *Jaime Louchen*

"I'm saving money and working hard to go on a trip in late May/early June." *Genna Lewis*

"I'm learning how to take control of my money, and advocate for the correct amount on my food card. Saving money is a safer way to go, oppose to just shopping paycheck to paycheck." *Jamar Cherry*

"I'm currently saving money to go on a trip!" *Latasha M. Linwood*

Knowing their rights and responsibilities and pursuing opportunities to live the life they choose.

“My job comes first. I am looking at other jobs in the state. I want a full time position. I have the same rights as everyone else. Just because I have an intellectual disability, I still have rights! I am a person and human being first! I know my rights and teach others how to advocate for themselves. I am living the mission and vision.” *James Louchen & Jossie Torres*

When I feel that I have the time I would like to further my education and go to school or fashion, because I want to own my own clothing line one day.” *Latasha M. Linwood*

“I have rights and I make my own choices!” *Carlos Colon*