

DDS

2023 End-of-Year Report



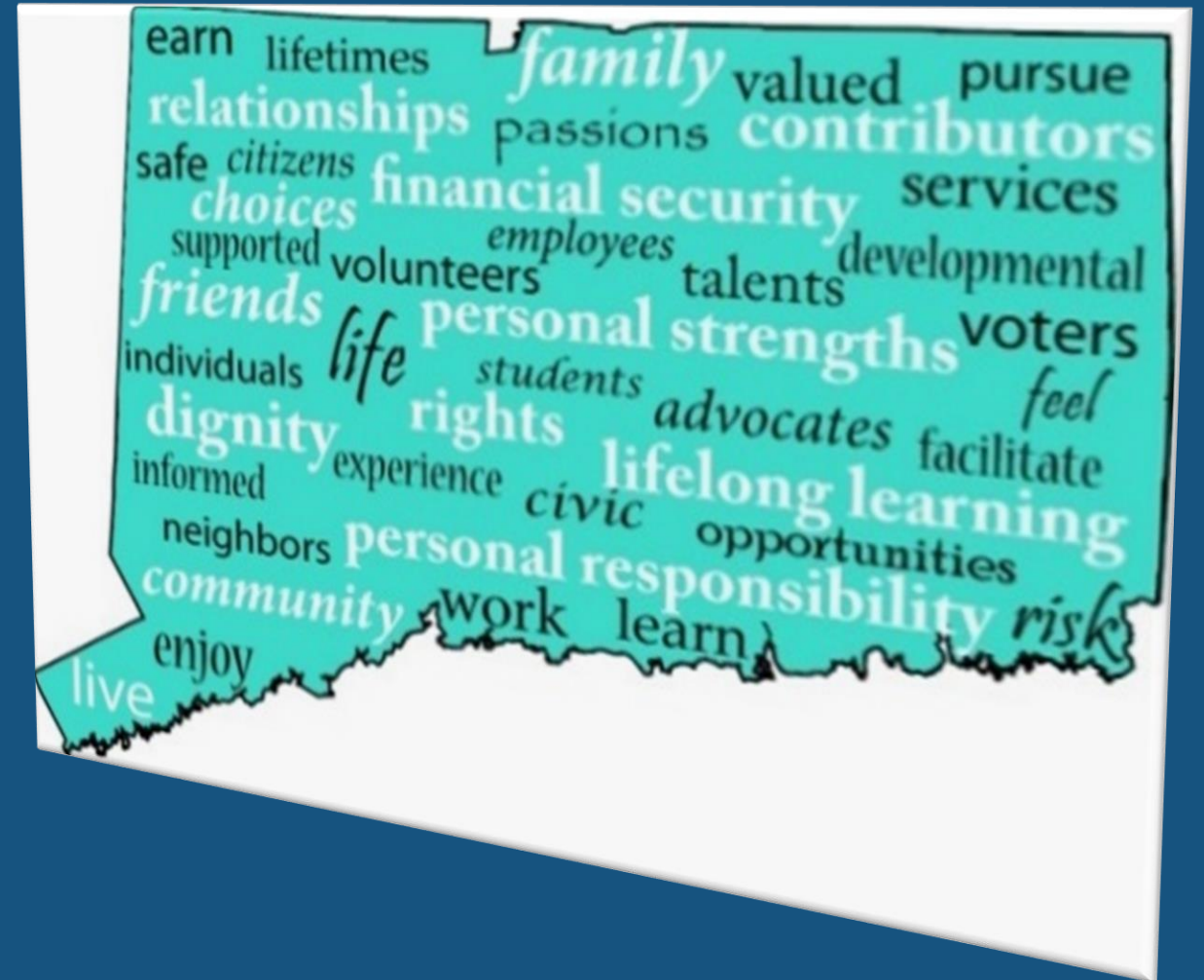
Self-Advocate Coordinators at Work!

Who are the SACs?

Legislature Supported
A Voice of the People
Making a Difference

What do they do?

Promote Self-Advocacy
Spread the Word!
Promote Individual Involvement
Lead by Example
Support Regional and State
Activities



West

Jeremy Powell



Josse Torres

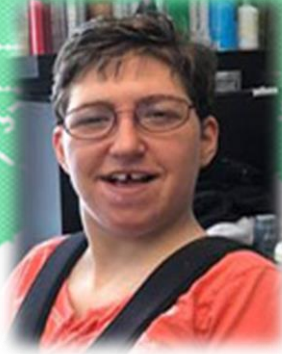


Yana Razumnaya

Natasha Cole



Paige Librandi



Carol Grabbe



Kellie Hartigan



Kevin Arce



Varian Salters



North

South



South Region Self-Advocate Coordinators



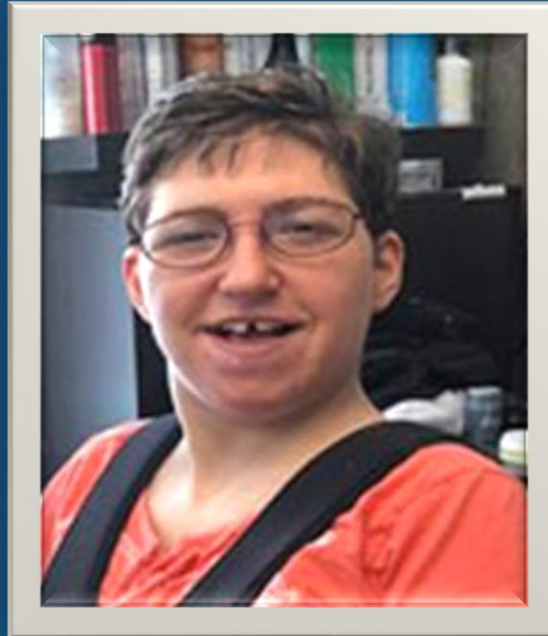
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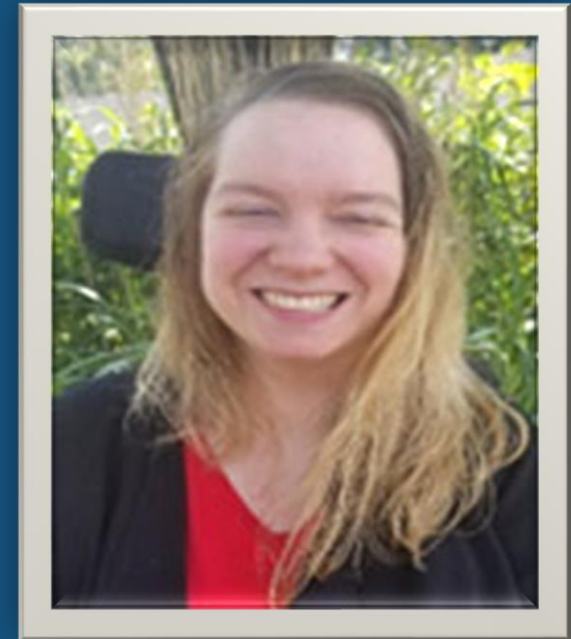
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Self Advocate Coordinator

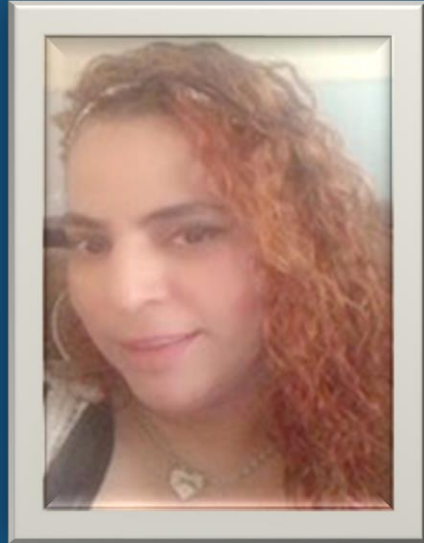
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West Region Self-Advocate Coordinators



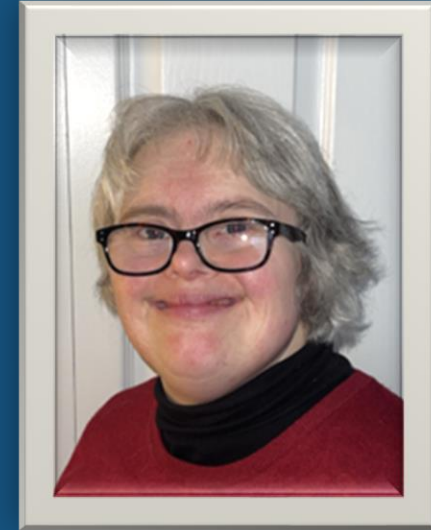
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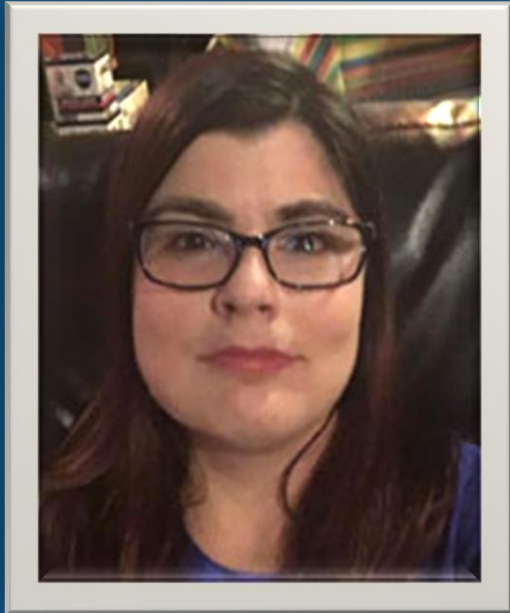
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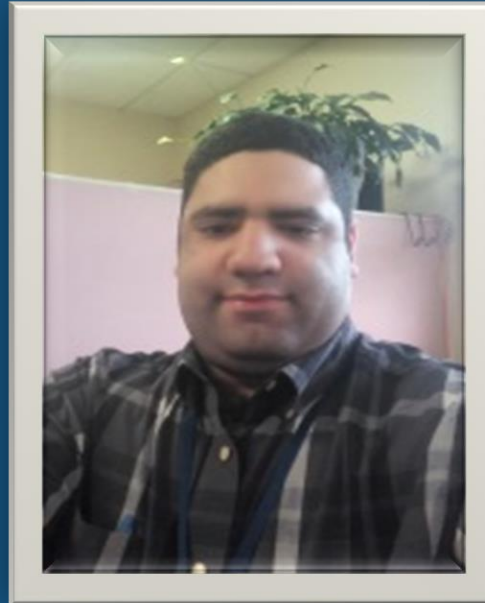
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Varian Salters

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SACs Support the VOICES of All the Advocates of DDS!

- Where it all began - 2004 - CT Legislature supported DDS in creating 10 state positions to represent the people supported by the department – 10 Self-Advocate Coordinators (SACs)
- The SACs are State Employees
- SACs lead the department in Making A Difference!



FAB Monthly Calendar

2023

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <p>January 2023</p> | <p>February 2023</p> | <p>March 2023</p> |
| <p>April 2023</p> | <p>May 2023</p> | <p>June 2023</p> |
| <p>July 2023</p> | <p>August 2023</p> | <p>September 2023</p> |

WE Are People. Call ME By MY Name!



- Since February 2015, the “We are People – Call Me by My Name” campaign has asked that everyone be called by their given name.
- The DDS Self Advocate Coordinators (SACs) have promoted “People First Language”.
- SACs hope to eliminate the words and terms: “client”, “patient”, “ward”, “them”, “handicapped” & the “R” word.

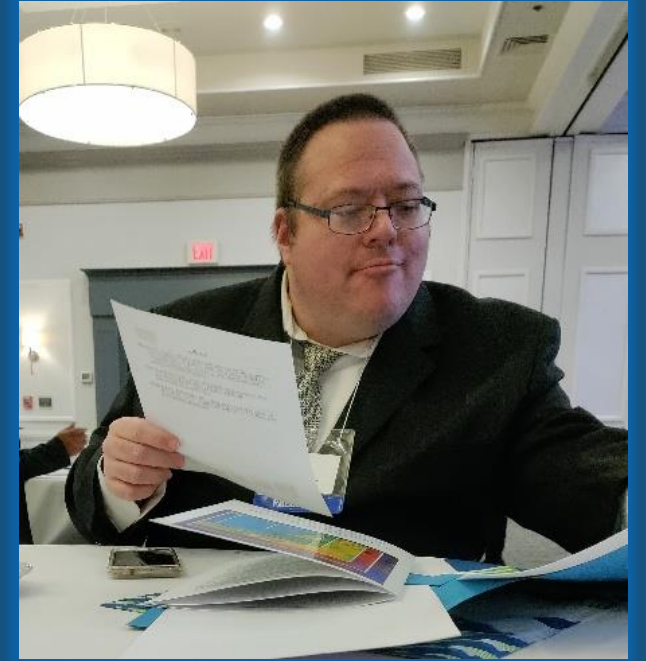
Take the Pledge!

- The SACs have written “The Disability Awareness Pledge” and challenge everyone to take the pledge to reaffirm a commitment to seeing the person and not the disability
- **1,178** pledges reported this year!
- All new employees now take the pledge with Onboard Training
- Over **6,659** people have taken the Pledge!
- The SACs are challenging each one of us to be the change that makes a difference.
- SACs are promoting all stakeholders to
- **Take the Pledge** and keep it moving forward!
- Together, we all can be the CHANGE!



Self Determination/Self Direction Varian's Focus Area

- SACs submitted 12 success stories to the “Advocates Corner” promoting Self Determination and Self Direction with advocates and families across the state.
- We have about 2,500 people Self-Directing their services.
- 8 SACs did 22 presentations on Self Determination.
- 6 SACs out of 8 use Self-Directed Services.



Self Determination Self Direction

- Our outreach contacts increased from 164,777 last year to 167,159.
- Teaching each other & our advocates how to connect meaningfully even though we may not see each other in person.



- We continued to create PowerPoints & Presentations educating advocates across the State.
- Advocates are hosting virtual, in-person & Hybrid Self Advocacy Groups.
- SACs created 12 Virtual Bulletin Boards, 20 CTFSN presentations and 24 Advocacy Presentations this year.
- SACs hosted 228 Advocacy Groups with 3,336 participants this year.

Self Determination/Self Direction

Dory moved on to a new position on June 30th, 2023!

We so much appreciated her time with us & her expertise!



Self-Advocacy

Kevin's Focus Area

- This year the Self-Advocate Coordinators provided 23 presentations specific to Self-Advocacy reaching 571 individuals.
- We have done research for 95 informational resources on the topic of Self-Advocacy.



On Board Training

The SACs provided Virtual On-Board Training for new employees for DDS throughout the years of 2022-2023.

* 466 people attended a total of 17 classes.

Self Advocacy Groups

- We have Self-Advocacy Groups all over Connecticut.
- There are a total of 23 active Self-Advocacy Groups all over the state of Connecticut, both in-person and virtual, with a total of 278 individuals attending these groups every month, which in turn is around 3,336 individuals who attend SA groups every year.
- We always wish to spread the word about Self-Advocacy.

Rock & Roll Express Self-Advocacy Group

Come learn how to "speak up & speak out" for yourself!

 Welcome to the Rock & Roll Express Advocacy Group Regular Meeting 

 Time: 6:30PM –7:30PM

Cost: Member Dues \$15.00 A Year.
Make Check payable to DDS Trustee Fund

March Topic:   **Assistive Technology!**

On Teams: Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app
[Click here to join the meeting](#)

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NThiOGNhNzgtMjdjZS00MThiLThjN2EtODI4NjM0MGFkMzVi%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Id%22%3a%22118b7cfa-a3dd-48b9-b026-31ff69bb738b%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2269d89063-5011-4811-80b6-646120096d98%22%7d

We Have Fun Game & Refreshments So Please Come & Join Us!!




Calendar Dates 2023



March 21st, 2023
April 18th, 2023
May 16th, 2023
June 20th, 2023
July 18th, 2023
Aug. 15th, 2023

Hybrid on Microsoft Teams & In-person at DDS Willimantic




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Or Advisor Claire Lary
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Special Olympics

Natasha's Focus Area

SACS promoted Fall, Winter, and Summer games all held In person. The games were held at Yale and in Fairfield.

The events were Track & Field Sports, including the standing long jump, Softball Throw and Speed Walking.

Special Olympics athletes were given Fitbits to record their daily steps. Inspire to track TORRINGTON -- The CT Department of Developmental Services collaborated with Special Olympics to provide opportunities for fitness, healthy living, and socialization.



Healthy Living and FIT 5



Healthy Athletes

Special Olympics is the largest sporting organization in the world for people with intellectual disabilities (ID). Special Olympics is creating a world where people with ID have the opportunity to be healthy.



Opening Eyes
(Vision)



Special Smiles
(Dentistry)



Fun Fitness
(Physical Therapy)



Health Promotion
(Health and Wellness)



Healthy Hearing
(Audiology)



Fit Feet
(Podiatry)



MedFest
(Sports Physicals)



Strong Minds
(Emotional Well-being)

The SACs have been promoting FIT 5 which helps remind individuals to drink 5 glasses of water, do 5 workouts, and eat 5 fruits/vegetables a day. Screenings, such as Healthy Mind, Unified Sports, Fit Feet, and Healthy Smiles are provided. The SACs are promoting a collaboration between DDS & Special Olympics with our Fit Club Group and DDS Recreation.

The Torrington DDS Advocacy Fit Club has done one event at Club 24 this year with 5 individuals. Individuals have been encouraged to go to the gym solo. We have locked in our memberships through 2023.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Cultural Competency



***May 1, 2023 – The DEI Committee welcomed Shelly Carter, Connecticut’s First African American Woman Fire Chief at STS. Cantine Cuties food truck catered.**

***July 12, 2023, Celebration to Honor Nelson Mandela’s Birthday – This event was an Inspiration to All! We enjoyed music from Saxophone player, Quinn Mitchell. Natasha read a Passage from Nelson Mandela in his biography and Wild Bills BBQ catered the event.**



Aging

Carol's Focus Area



The Sacs attended the Aging Matters Conference this year and it was in Person!!! The conference was a HUGE success! The theme for the conference was Aging My Way - Assistive Technology.



The Self-Advocate Coordinators share many helpful resources in their communities.

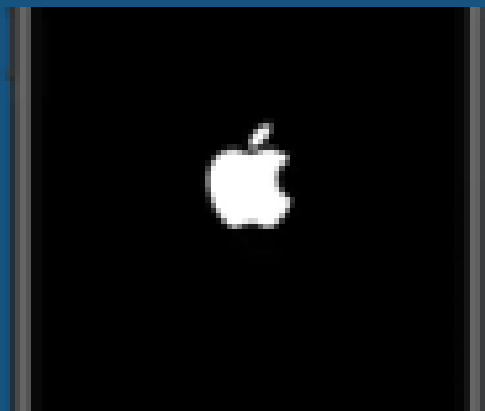
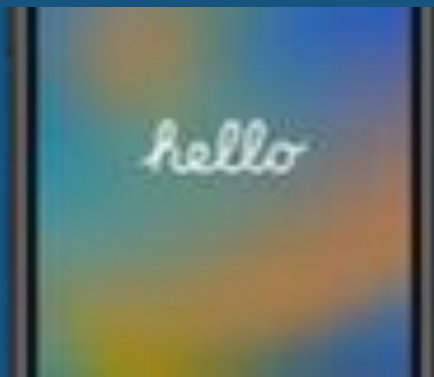
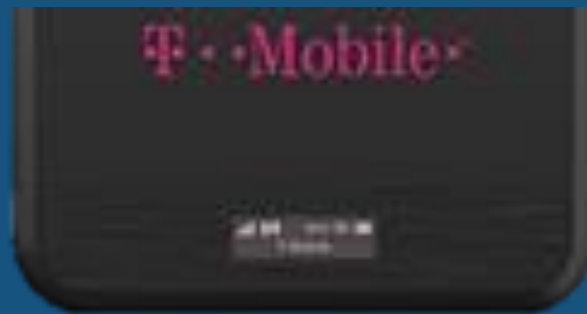
Assistive Technology

Kellie's Focus Area

This year the Self-Advocates are facilitating an exciting technology training opportunity entitled **AT & Me**.

AT & Me is an opportunity for people supported by DDS to learn how to use technology to live more independently and to improve their daily living skills.

People who participate in **AT & Me** will learn how to use the equipment provided to them.



Assistive Technology

We continue to promote community services in Connecticut that offer services to people with disabilities to take part in product demonstrations, equipment restoration, expos, classes, and computer use.

Removing barriers for all individuals.

Self-Advocates spread the word regarding Assistive Technology through their Self-Advocate meetings all year round!



Housing

Paige's Focus Area



This year the Self-Advocate Coordinators are excited that DDS has a new Director of Housing. Elba Caraballo started in May 2023. She is excited to be in her new role as our Director of Housing. One of Elba's main focuses will be on supportive housing that is inclusive for people with ID/DD.

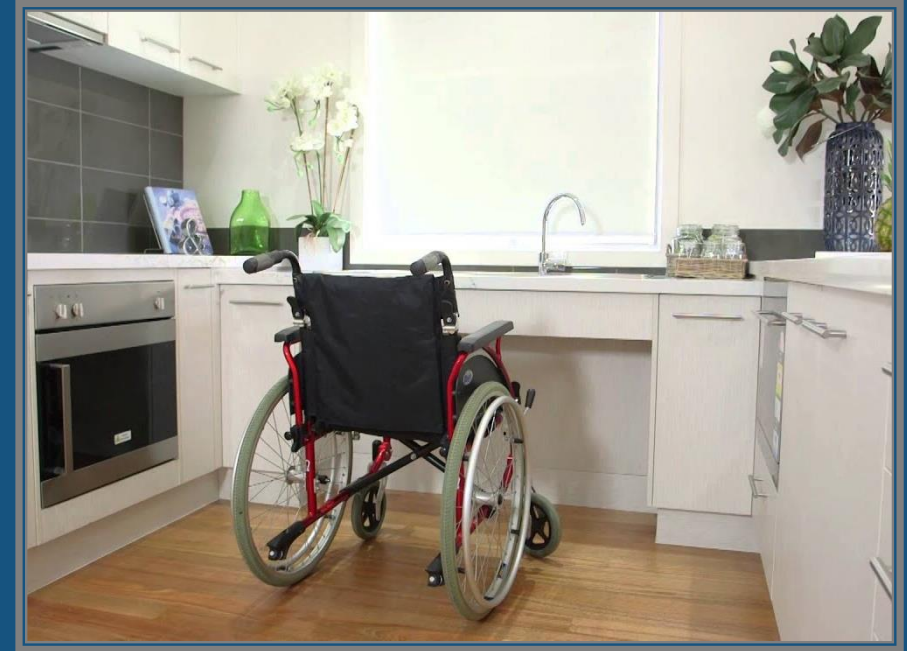
The Self-Advocates spread the word that The Torrington Housing Authority (THA) is currently accepting Public Housing Waiting List Pre-applications for senior citizens and people with ID/DD. This opportunity will be available in five communities



Self-Advocates Educate People Regarding Accessible Buildings/Housing

Outlining features people need to live
independently!

- Wider doorways
- Clear floor space
- Low countertops
- Assistive technology
- Grab bars in the bathroom
- Elevators
- Hoyer Lifts



Public Safety

Jeremy's Focus Area

- The SACs talked about the importance of staying safe during a shooting and being aware of your surroundings.
- The SACs did a presentation on tips during a mass shooting.



RUN

When there is an active threat.
Once you are safe,
call 911



HIDE

If escape is not possible, hide.
1. Block the door
2. Avoid Windows
3. Silence your cell



FIGHT

Only as a last resort and if your life is in danger.

- It's not a topic we like to talk about but as SACs we need to make sure our individuals are safe everywhere they go.
- The SACs showed a few YouTube videos on how to safe stay everywhere you go.
- We also talked about being mindful of going to large events and how dangerous it can be.

Internet Safety

- The SACs presented a PowerPoint on How to Use the Internet.
- SACs talked about How Not to Give your Password to Anyone or your Credit Card Information Online.
- The SACs reminded all to be mindful of scams in text messages and phone calls.

N New opportunities

- the online world is full of them, communication, learning, collaboration, the possibilities are endless
- remember to embrace them but think critically

25

S Safe

- online personal safety is just as important as offline safety
- always remember to “think before you post” and speak to a trusted friend if something is bothering you

A Advice

- advice is available from many places and if something goes wrong online you can get help
 - it's always best to talk to someone if you have any concerns
 - the Insafe helplines are a good place to start
- <http://www.saferinternet.org/web/guest/helplines>

F Fraud

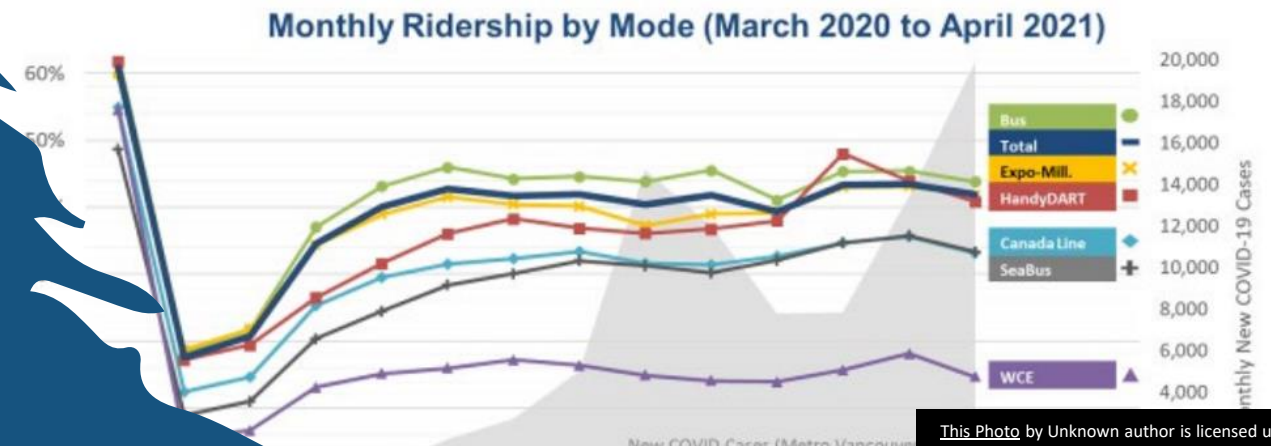
- be wary of emails promising something that sounds too good to be true and take care not to respond to spam or phishing messages
- protect your personal information

Transportation

Yana's Focus Area

- Fares had been suspended on all public transit buses in Connecticut since April 1, 2022.
- The usual cost of a 31-day bus pass is \$63 leading to a substantial savings for riders.
- CT Transit bus ridership went up substantially, in part due to free fares.
- April 1, 2023, fares for all buses and ADA paratransit in Connecticut have resumed.
- CT DOT launches new pilot program making bus passes available on smartphones

Resilient and Steady Ridership Recovery



Our Transportation GURU has Traveled On

In June Self-Advocate Coordinator, Yana Razumnaya, started a new job with the Historic Mark Twain House in Hartford as a docent.

While we miss her expertise and humor, we wish her the very best in her new endeavors!



Employment

Jossie's Focus Area



Jossie began to connect with new CMs and individuals who are Spanish speaking.

Advocacy includes creating virtual bulletin boards, promoting FAB topics, Employment and Resources.



| Spanish | | English | | |
|---------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| 1 | uno | one | 7 | 8 |
| 2 | dos | two | 9 | 10 |
| 3 | tres | three | siete | seven |
| 4 | cuatro | four | ocho | eight |
| 5 | cinco | five | nueve | nine |
| 6 | seis | six | diez | ten |

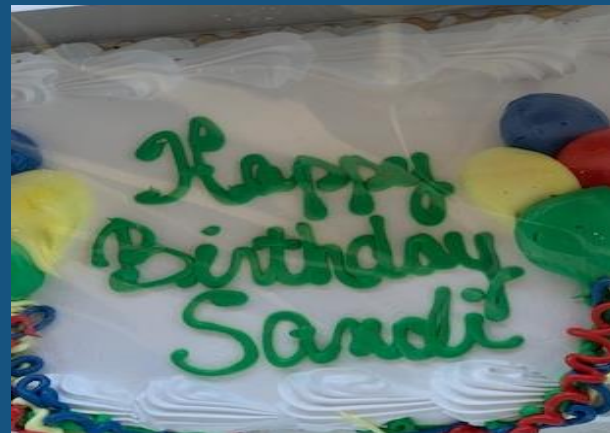


Recreation and Fun Events

AUGUST Zoom RECREATION 2023

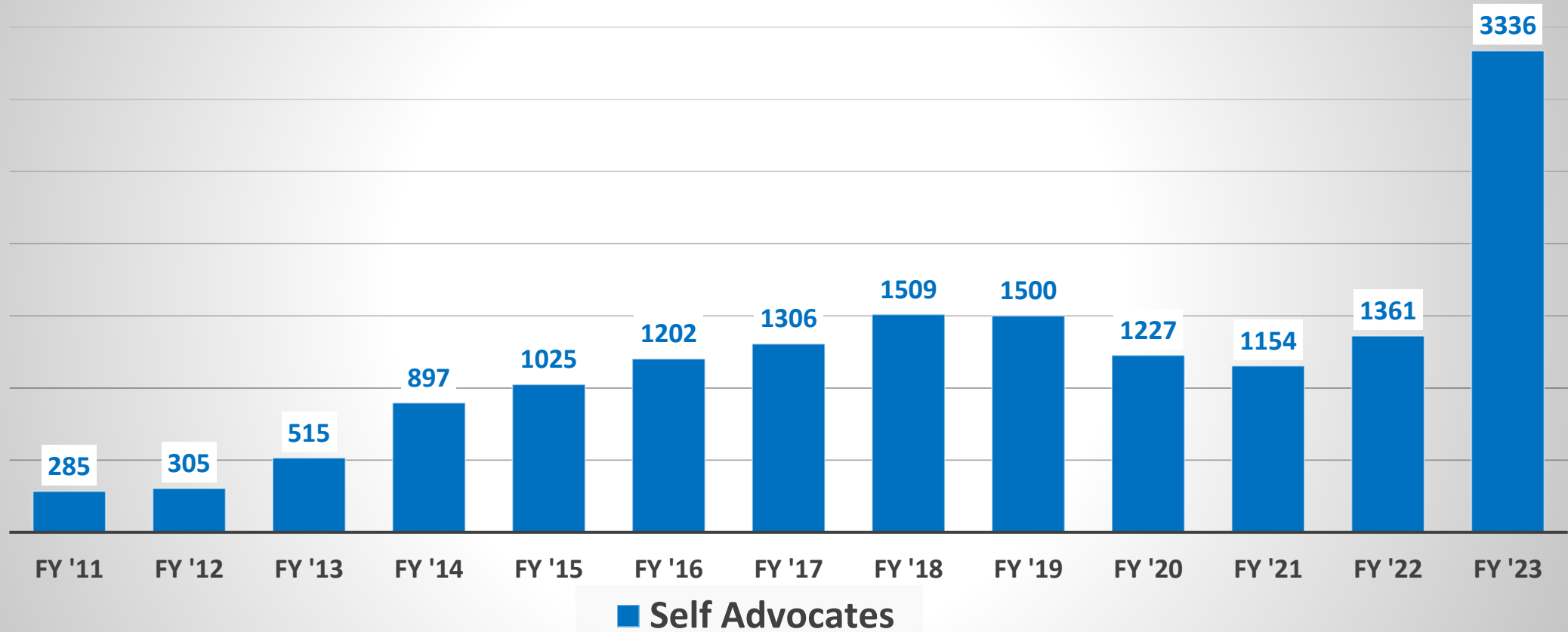
(free) Zoom account needed to participate
<https://tinyurl.com/62rn5ujn>
 Meeting ID: 222 399 8386
 Passcode: 479813

| TUESDAYS 5:30-6:30PM | WEDNESDAY 5:30-6:30PM | THURSDAY 3-4PM |
|--|--|--|
| 1 Supermoon Tuesday | 3 HEALTHY EATING & MOVING WITH Natasha! | |
| 8 Paige's Trivia & Video Dance Party? | 9 THE GOOD LIFE social group WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? with Ali | 10 no event |
| 15 Yana's CRITTER CORNER SING ALONG JUKEBOX | 23 Virtual Recreation for CT adults (20 + up) receiving DDS services Contact Corinne Jackson with any questions corinne.jackson@ct.gov | 17 JEOPARDY! with your host, Carol TREBEK!! |
| 22 with Ann Marie & Jason!! | 24 no event | 31 BINGO |





Self-Advocates Continue to Reach Out to Their Groups!



**Total Number of Participants in
2023 Advocacy Groups = 3,336**

Virtual Connections!

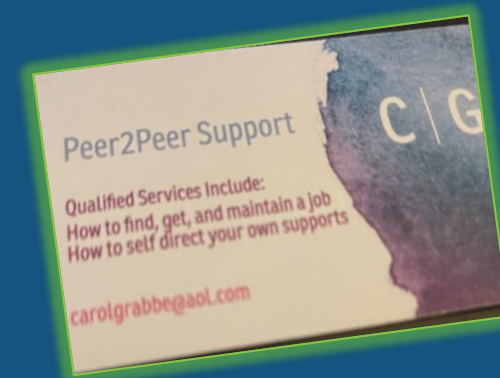
Technology Continues to Increase our Outreach!!!



- **Virtual Flyers**
- **Virtual Bulletin Boards**
- **Virtual Self Advocacy Meetings**
- **Virtual 1:1 Advocacy**
- **Virtual Trainings**



Self-Advocate Coordinators Continue to Lead the Way by Providing Education & Training



Regional Leadership Forums

Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance

Peer 2 Peer Support

DDS New Employee Training

Developing, Updating, and Supporting
the DDS Advocates' Corner website

Secondary Transition Symposium

Youth Leadership Forum

Ongoing presentations to DDS staff and
all Stakeholders

DDS Council

CT Family Support Network Collaboration
and trainings

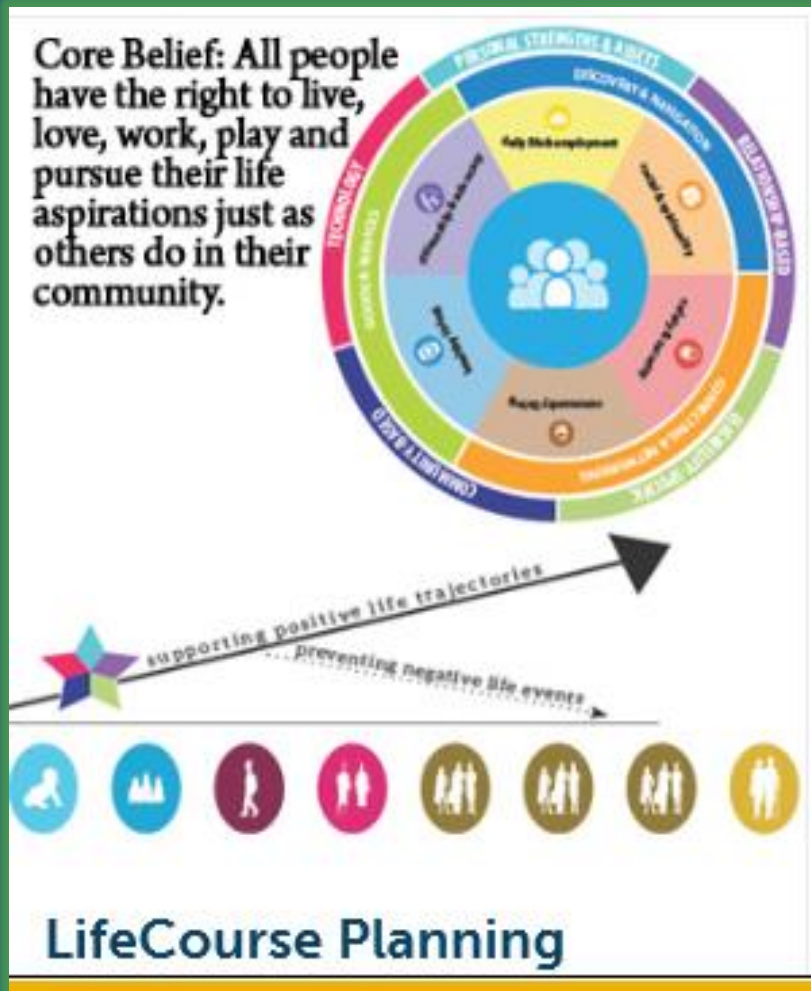
Ongoing trainings for Healthy
Relationships

Write and Share Success Stories to post
on the DDS Advocates' Corner website



Leadership

Statewide & Regional Conferences, Trainings, & Committee Work:



- Hiring Interview Committees, Qualified Provider Interviews
- Provider Qualification Review Board
- Promote community living options
- SACs are Ambassadors for Charting the LifeCourse
- CT Coalition for Aging and Developmental Disabilities Conference
- Development Committee
- Family & Mentoring Leadership with CTFSN
- Training area hospital on "How to Best Support Me" during hospital stay
- Membership with Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance Committee
- Membership with Sexual Abuse Prevention and Awareness Task Force

SACs Promote Awareness of Abuse & Neglect

& Promote Knowledge of Human Rights, Self-Advocacy & Self-Determination to Help Prevent Abuse!



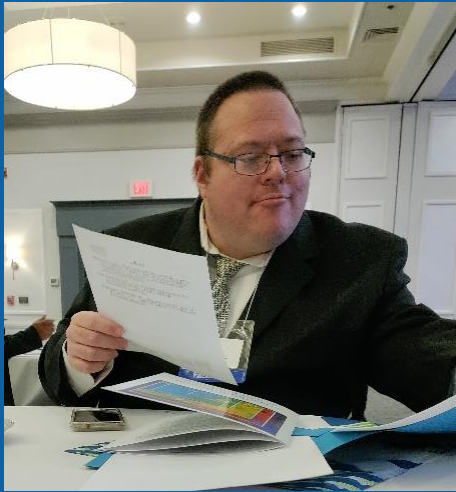
- Sexual Abuse Prevention and Awareness Task Force –
- Promotion of month of April to spread the word #itsnotok and continuing throughout the year to remain active in promotion of awareness of abuse and neglect
- Training and promotion of the Degrees of Mean
 - SACs together with staff have been training providers and individuals in promoting positive relationships to recognize abuse and neglect - the Degrees of Mean
- **It's Not Ok**
 - The Healthy Relationships Series helps to prevent sexual abuse
- **Peer 2 Peer Services**
 - Can allow people to learn from someone else's experiences which may prevent abuse



AAIDD Conference - Inclusion Innovations

Facilitating Pathways To Community

October 28, 2022 - Mystic Hilton



Assistive Technology Innovation Conference

June 22, 2023 – Sheraton, Rocky Hill

SAVE THE DATE

CONNECTICUT'S ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION CONFERENCE
A collaboration between the Developmental Disabilities Council, Dept. of Developmental Services and CT Tech Act Project

June 22, 2023

Sheraton Hartford South Hotel
100 Capital Blvd.
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY EXPO
will feature a chance for hands-on experience with AT devices, interact with exhibitors and service providers.



Introduction of AT & Me – 9 individuals were trained at the start of this new opportunity!



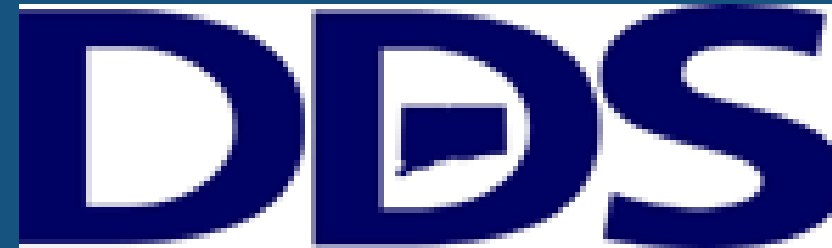
Youth Leadership Forum

Great news! YFL 2023 is back in person!!



- There were a total of 46 students excited to attend the Forum.
- All participants completed a community service project and learned about Life Course.
- The young adults focused on leadership and learned how to advocate for themselves.

Collaboration with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England and DDS Healthy Relationships Series



- The SACs of DDS along with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England teach individuals about safe and meaningful relationships.
- Click on this link for more information: [Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc.](#)
- The classes are held virtually all year long – Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer.
- The information that is taught in the classes is simplified and easy to understand.
- Over **84** individuals have taken the course just this past year.
- All individuals who attend all classes get a certificate.

Virtual Winter Healthy Relationship Series 2023

***15 participants maximum registered for each class



Building Meaningful Relationships
Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships
Your Body, Your Choice: Consent 101

In these virtual classes, we will learn about different types of relationships, how to make friends, and how to stay safe online. Healthy vs. Unhealthy behaviors will be discussed along with different types of communication and how to resolve arguments. In the last session, we will discuss consent and boundaries and how to tell when someone gives consent or not. We will also discuss how and why relationships end and how to deal with some of those feelings.

The three classes are:

1. Recognizing healthy or unhealthy relationships
2. Fighting fair and safely
3. Evaluating your relationship.




New Provider Orientation



- The SACS completed virtual and in person new Provider Orientation throughout the year of 2022-2023.
- 75 total people attended.
- We teach about what we as DDS employees believe in.
- We talk about how important it is to take the People First Language Pledge and seeing us for our abilities and not our disabilities.

SACS
Share the Latest
News on the
Updated
Advocates'
Corner
Website
Advocates' Corner



New Website Feedback

[CT.gov Home](#) / [Advocates' Corner](#)

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- Life Tips >
- Transportation >
- My Plan - Life Course >
- Recreation and Respite >
- Employment >
- Emergency Preparedness >
- My Vote Matters >
- Topics A-Z >

Search Advocates' Corner

by Keyword 

Highlights & Happenings

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- [Healthy Relationships](#) >
- [Peer to Peer](#) >
- [Living the Mission](#) >
- [SAC end of year report](#) >
- [Take the Pledge](#) >
- [COVID-19 Updates for DDS Individuals and Families](#) >





Looking Forward to
More Opportunities
for All!

Fiscal Year
2024

Continue to Promote Living a Self-Determined Life
 Promote Advocates' Voices by expanding and developing Self-Advocacy Groups
 Continue Virtual Connections
 Continue to Promote Healthy Relationships
 Continue to Promote various Living Options
 Interview and Share Success Stories of Special Olympics Athletes
 CT CoP - Promote and lead by example the Individual Plan (IP) and use of the CT Life Course Materials while expanding IP
 Buddy Support
 Degrees of Mean - Continue to Promote and Train Providers, Staff and Self-Advocates
 Continue to Provide Education and Training to Individuals, Families, DDS Staff, Providers, and Sister Agencies on the Department's Initiatives
 Youth Leadership Forum – participate, train, role model and support the youth of CT to become great Self-Advocates
 Continue to Promote REAL WORK for REAL PAY
 Continue to Teach and Promote AT & Me
 Support STEP – Supporting Transformation to Empower People