

DDS

2021 End-of-Year Report

Taking Charge During a
Challenging Year!



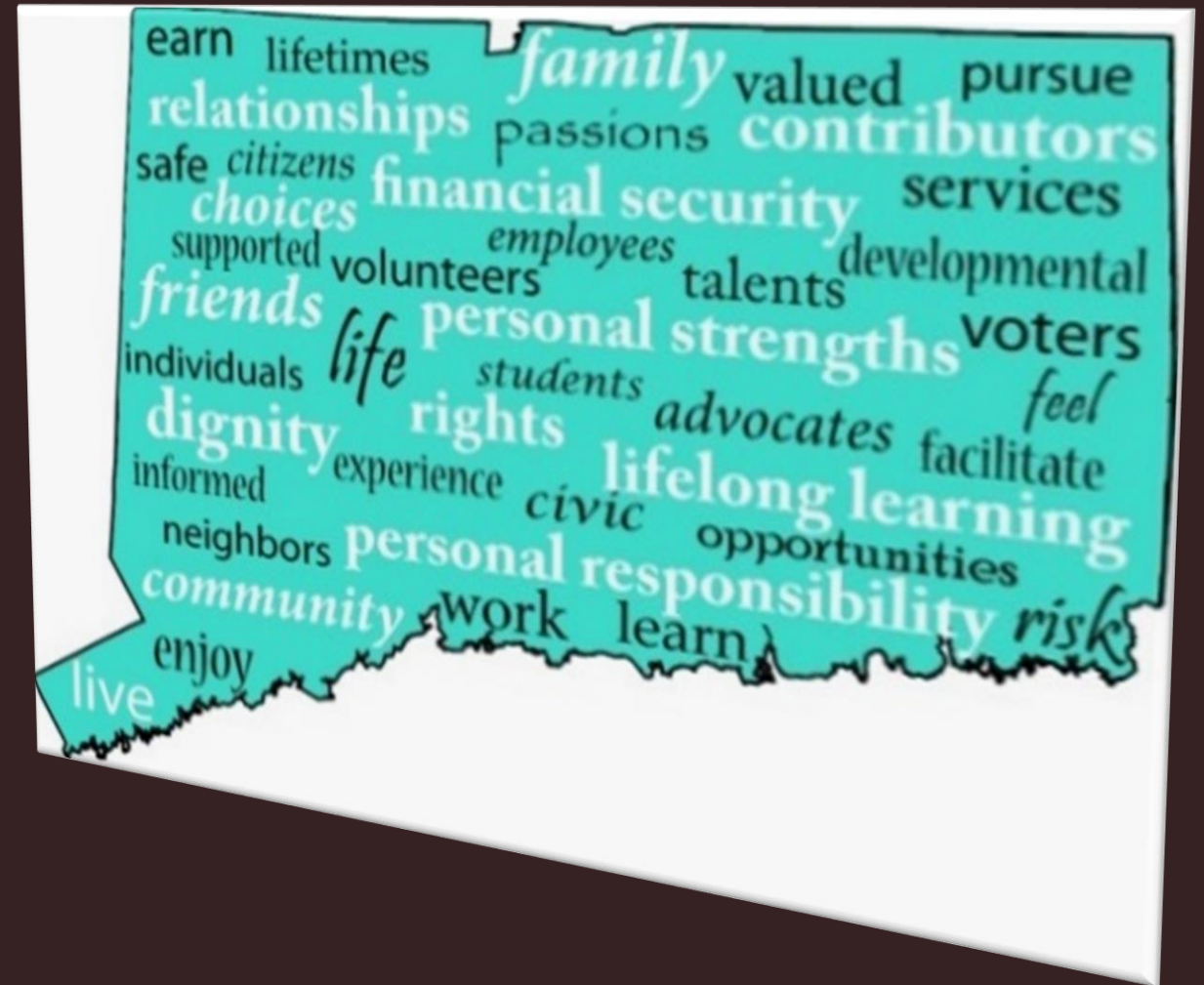
Self-Advocate Coordinators at Work!

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





James Louchen

Yana Razumnaya



Kevin Arce

Varian
Salters



North

West



Josse
Torres



Natasha Cole

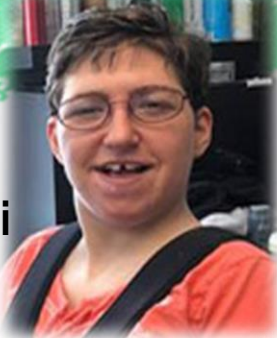


Kellie Hartigan

South



Jeremy
Powell



Paige
Librandi



Carol Grabbe



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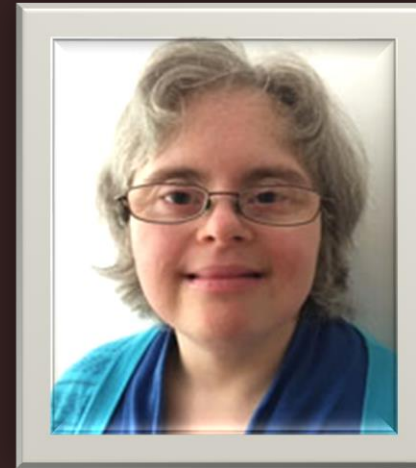
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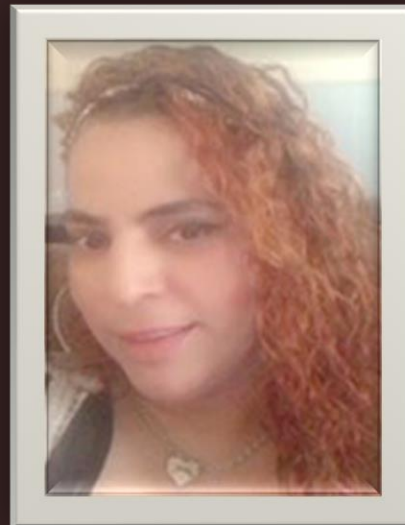
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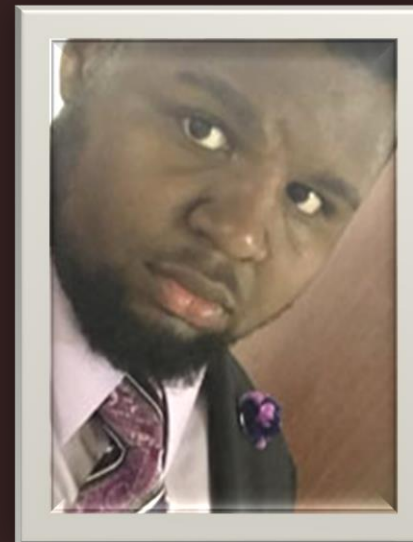
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South Region Self-Advocate Coordinators

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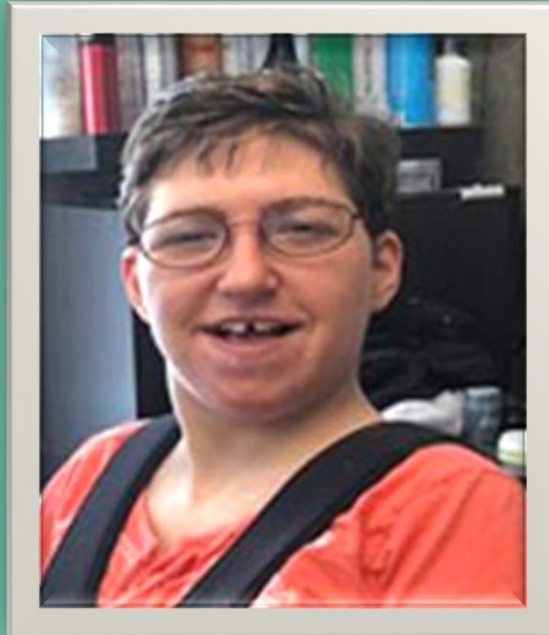
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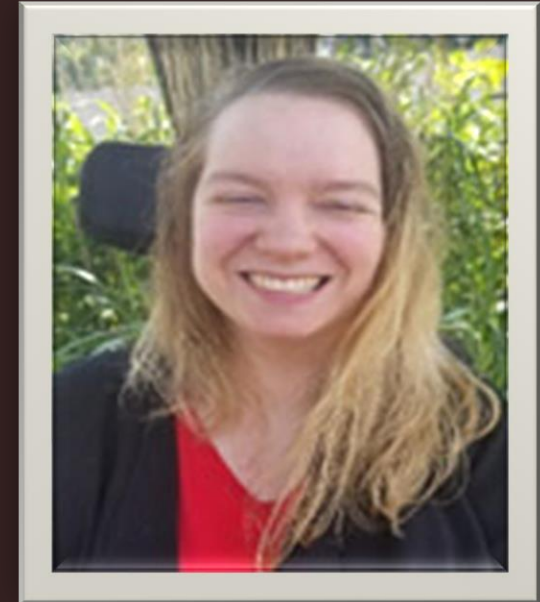
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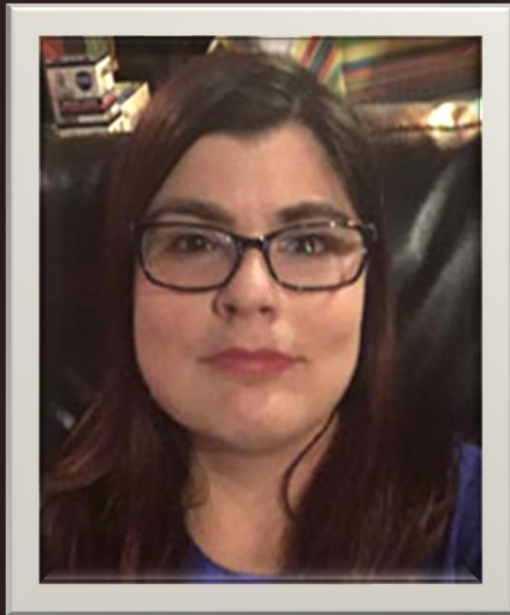
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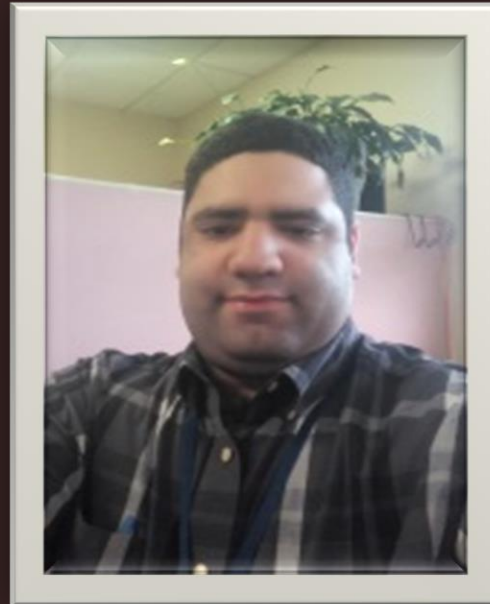
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North Region Self-Advocate Coordinators



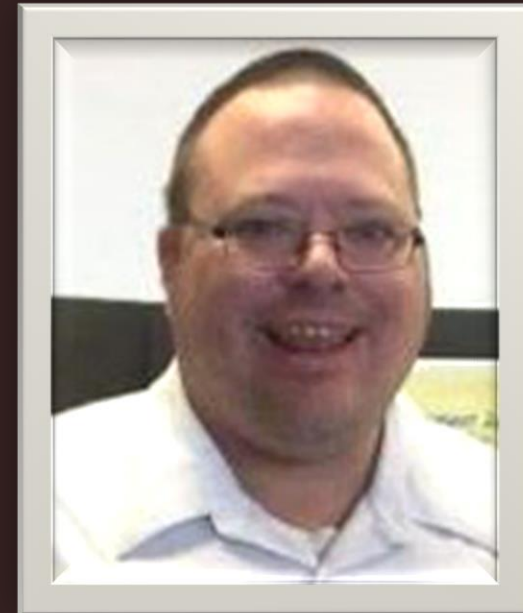
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SELF-ADVOCACY
IS THE ABILITY TO ARTICULATE
ONE'S **NEEDS** & **MAKE**
INFORMED DECISIONS
ABOUT THE **SUPPORT**
NECESSARY TO MEET
THOSE NEEDS.

KNOWLEDGE LEADERSHIP KNOWLEDGE COMMUNICATION

SACs Support the VOICES of All the Advocates of DDS!

- 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!

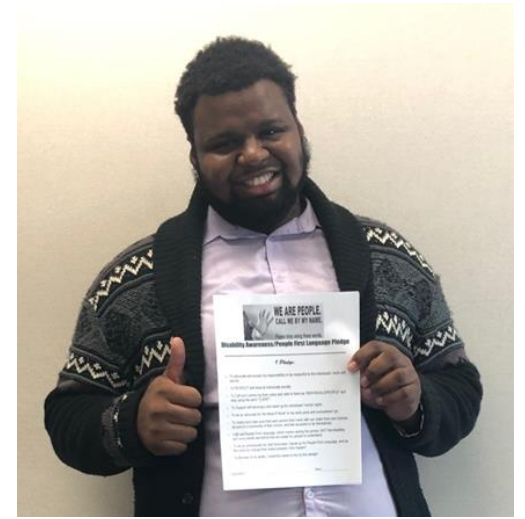
WE Are People. Call ME By MY Name!



- 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
- 837 pledges reported this year!
- All new employees now take the pledge with Onboard Training
- Over 4,172 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!



TAKE THE
PLEDGE

Self-Advocacy Building Voices



<p>song and dance party with Paige Tuesday 6pm</p>	<p>Moving to Music Thursday 3pm</p>
<p>CRITTER CORNER with Yana Tuesday 6pm</p>	<p>NAME THAT TUNE! With Corinne Thursday 3pm</p>
<p>email your song requests to: lovemusicsandsound@gmail.com Sing-Along with Ann Marie Tuesday 6pm</p>	<p>TEST YOUR TRIVIA SKILLS WITH CAROL Thursday 3pm</p>
<p>Yoga & Guided Meditations Tuesday 6pm</p>	<p>Game Time with Kellie Thursday 3pm</p>
<p>NEVER HAVE I EVER SHOW & TELL Tuesday 6pm</p>	<p>THE GOOD LIFE SOCIAL GROUP Want to have conversations and share thoughts while getting to know new people? Join us on zoom every 3rd Wednesday of the month. This month: 8/18 at 5:30pm http://tinyurl.com/...</p>

Please contact Corinne Jackson at corinne.jackson@ct.gov

Empowering Others to Speak Up!

- Developing, supporting, empowering, and expanding Self-Advocacy Groups in CT
- Adding a recreational activities calendar for the advocates
- Being an IP Buddy to support individual advocacy
- Supporting and participating in “CT Cross Disability Alliance”
- Completing NCI’s – Virtual and In-person Peer Interviewing and sharing Self-Advocacy information
- Working with all the CT Private Providers and stakeholders to support advocates having a voice
- Promoting Peer 2 Peer waiver service and employment opportunities as a Peer 2 Peer qualified provider



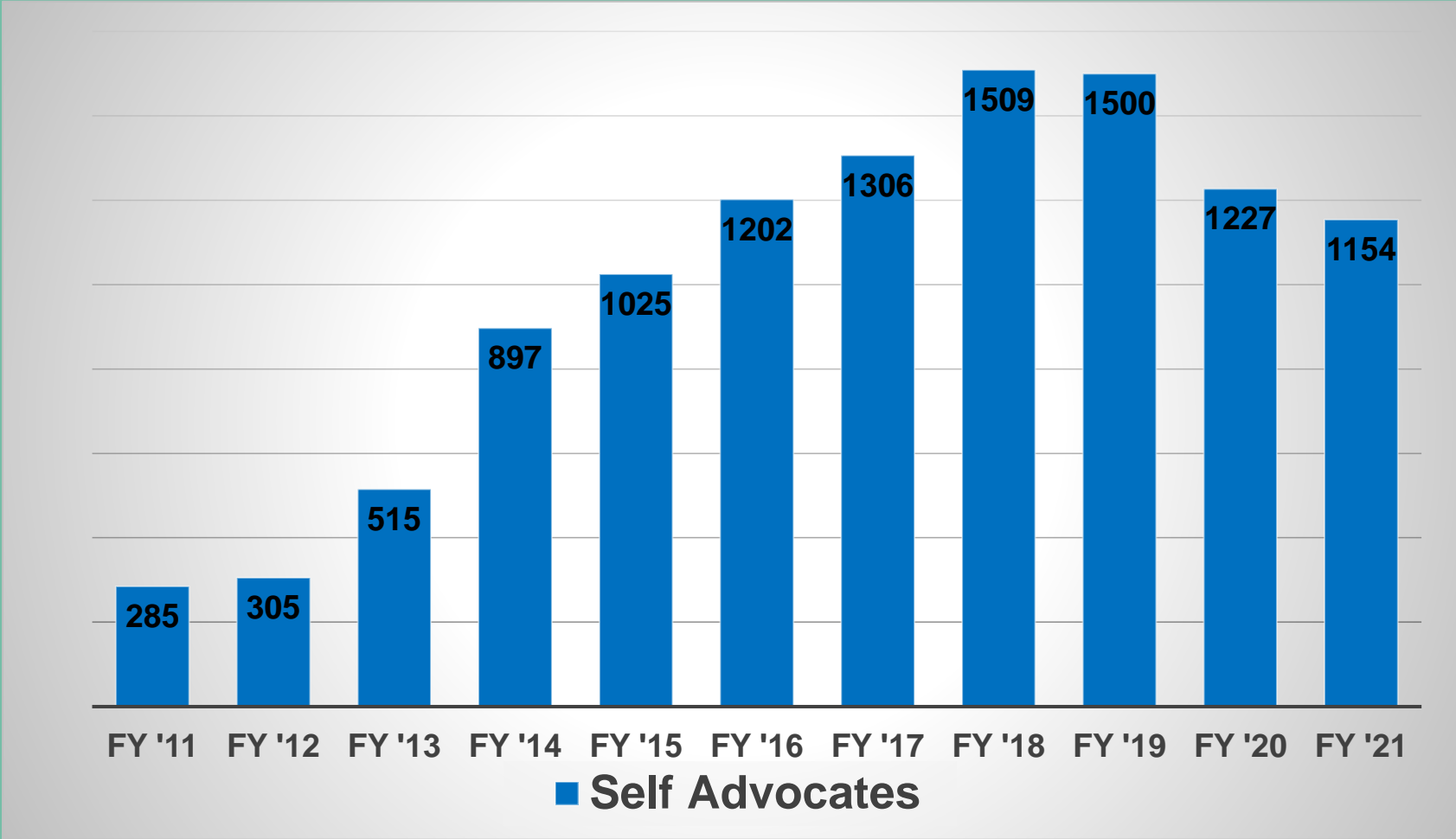
**Challenge –
How to
Continually
Connect
during a
Global
Pandemic?**

- Explore the Latest in Technology
- Use social media to decrease isolation & anxiety, & increase connections

- Create Virtual Gatherings
- Learn what is important **TO** & **FOR** people and finding the balance to support each other.

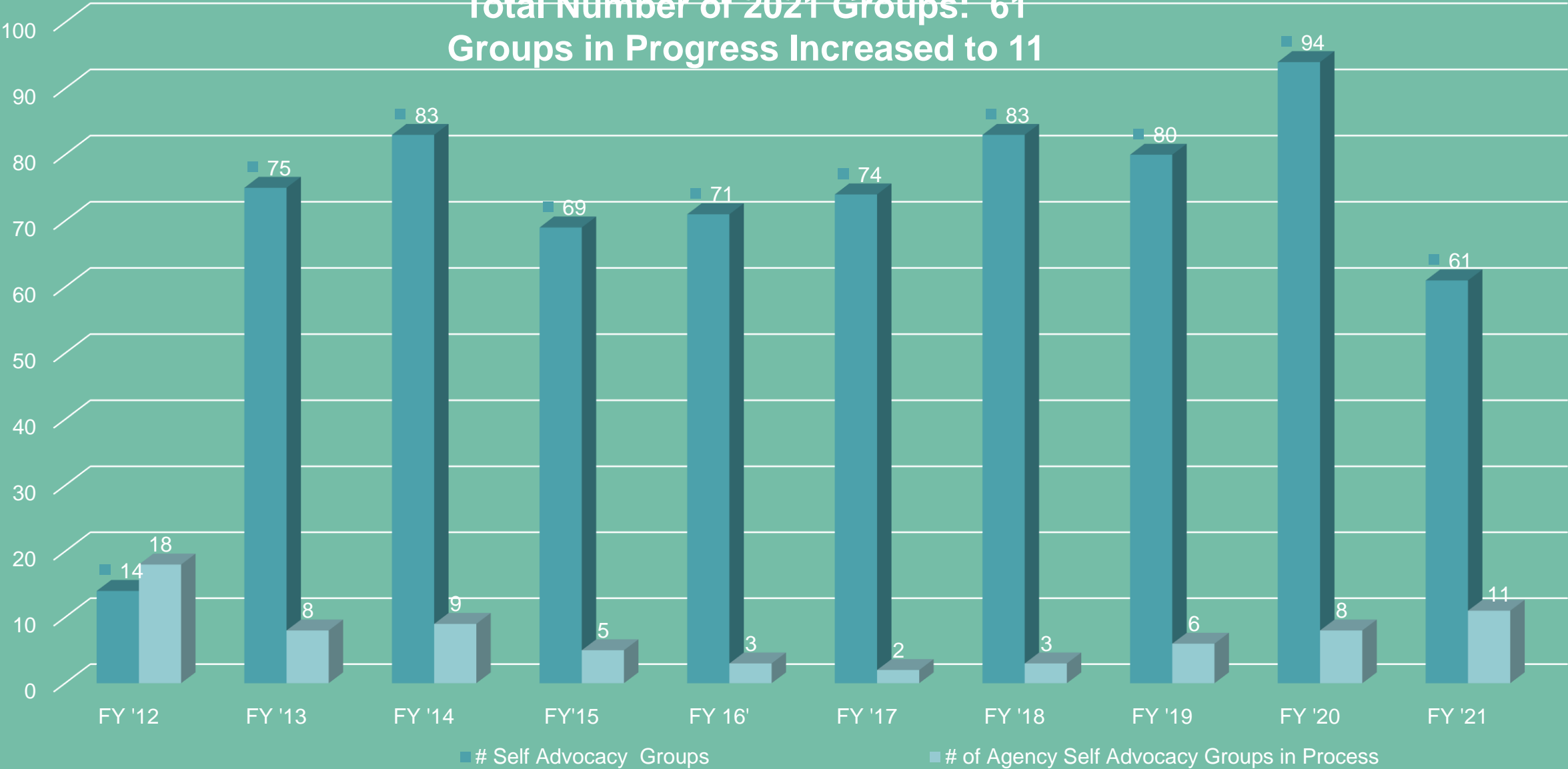


Total Number of Participants in Advocacy Groups: 1,154



Statewide Self-Advocacy Groups

Total Number of 2021 Groups: 61
Groups in Progress Increased to 11



COVID 19 – Virtual Connections!

Technology has dramatically increased our outreach!!!

Outreach to Stakeholders: Contacts increased from 6,070 last year to 120,371 this year!



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



Self-Advocate Coordinators 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

Job Development Leadership Network

**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**

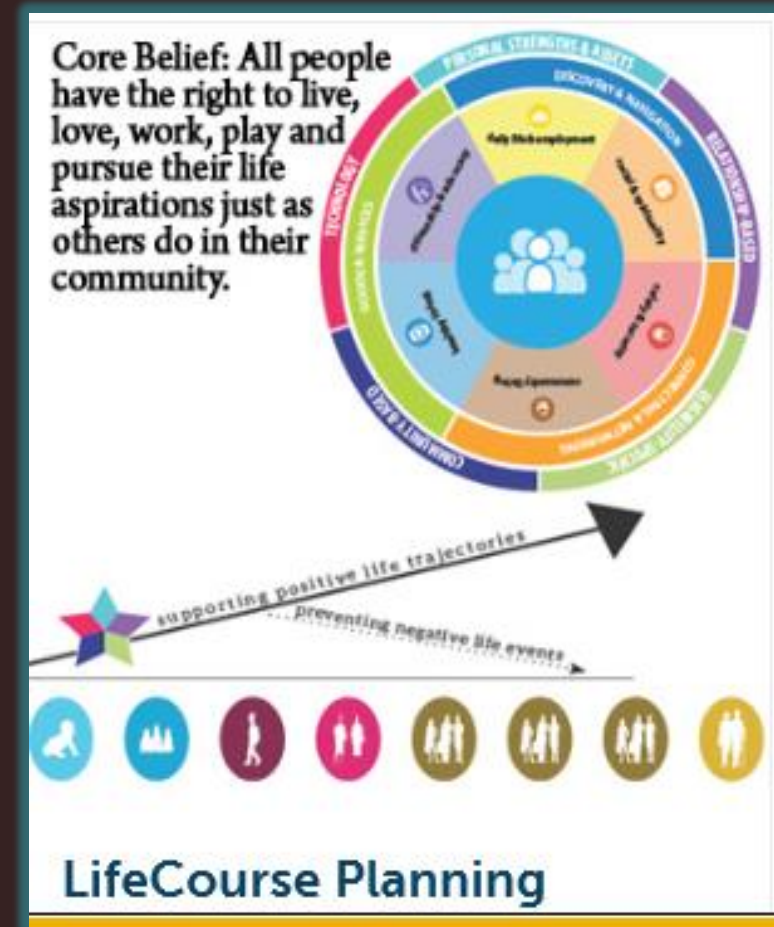


Leadership



Statewide and Regional Conferences, Trainings, and 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
- Presenters at the CT Secondary Transition Symposium
- Membership with Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance Committee
- Membership with Sexual Abuse Prevention and Awareness Task Force
- Membership with JDLN



Promote Awareness of Abuse and Neglect

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

- Sexual Abuse Prevention and Awareness Task Force –
- Promotion of a month in April of 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



CT_DDS
@CT_DDS

Sexual Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month. Carol Grabbe (Self-Advocate Coordinator – South Region) proudly displays her ribbon as the campaign concludes but don't stop spreading the word keep it going beyond April. #itsnotokCT #itsnotok



Promote Self-Advocacy Spread the Word!

Knowledge is Power!

BE AN
ADVOCATE



- All SACs have a Focus Area
- Regular meetings are held with DDS Administration to discuss issues that are important to everyone who receives services from DDS
- Explore FAB Topics on the website to share with all our stakeholders!

F=FUN
A=ADVOCACY
B=BRIANPOWER



SAC Focus Areas

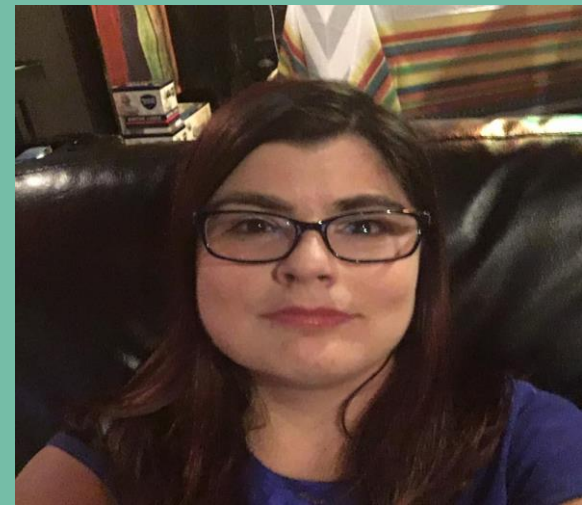
Each of the SACs support all of the Focus Areas and are responsible for “Spreading the Word” with all the topics. They each coordinate the following Focus Areas:

- Self-Determination/Self-Direction
- Self-Advocacy
- Special Olympics & Healthy Living
- Transportation
- ADA/Assistive Technology
- Aging
- Employment
- Living Options – Housing
- Healthy Relationships
- Public Safety/Internet Safety





Together We Are One!



Self-Determination & Self-Direction

- SACs promote success stories for the “Advocates' Corner” promoting Self-Determination and Self-Direction.
- SACs promoted the DDS roll out of Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system.
- SACs as Employers of Record (EOR) participated in the training with Partnership with PPL.
- Presently there are 1,510 Self-Directing people this year statewide.
- SACs continue to empower people to understand that everyone can lead a self-determined live through self-direction.



Self Determination - Self-Direction

- "We established daily tranquility meetings" to overcome technological obstacles by collaborating. Learning from and teaching each other.
- We continued to create PowerPoint & presentations educating advocates across the State
- We currently have 1,154 people participating in Advocacy Groups



Self-Determination/Self-Direction



We said Farewell to....

Beth Aura Miller, Self-Determination Director retired March 31, 2021.



Beth Aura came back as a temporary retiree on April 9, 2021.



And Hello to....

In June 2021, the Self-Determination Division hired Dory Michael-Martusis as the new Director of Services Development & Support – Self-Determination

In July 2020, the Self-Determination Division hired Lisa Fioravanti as Secretary.

In November 2020, the Self-Determination Division hired Corrine H. Jackson as Rehabilitation Therapy Assistant II.



Self-Advocacy

- FAB Topic information is shared monthly with providers and individuals across the state.
- Presentations about Self-Advocacy were done over the past Fiscal year by the state SACs including in partnership with CTFSN.
- New Employee/On Board Training SACs shared understanding of Self-Determination, Self-Advocacy and spread the word to take the pledge virtually and the pledge given to all during these trainings
- SACs participated in the pilot virtual YLF and taught Self-Advocacy and introduced the Life Course materials to the students that participated.



Self-Advocacy

- **Self-Advocates have been busy sharing articles and links with fellow SACs and resources with all providers.**
- **The SACs are sending out advocacy information reaching 10,030 individuals per month.**
- **Advocates attended Cross Disability Alliance meetings.**
- **Through Self-Advocacy people information was shared about COVID 19 and vaccinations.**



Self-Advocacy

Spreading The Word!

Self-Advocacy within DDS: Promoting to individuals and all supporting staff the importance of self-advocacy and how it empowers people to “Make their Life Happen”!

Public Speaking

- State Conferences – Aging Matters
- Employment First Trainings, Transition Symposium Regional, and State Presentations
- Promote Employment
- Disability Awareness Month
- Promote DDS Mission and Vision
- Disability Summit
- NCI interviewers
- Virtual Bulletin Boards and Virtual Flyers
- New Provider Orientation material to promote self-direction, self-determination, self-advocacy, and employment!



Control speak self voice
determined leadership
Respect learn Responsibilities
empower self determination
dignity life language
advocacy independence groups
relationships choice
people mission living
rights dignity MyVoice
self advocacy community

Employment



Employment for ALL!

- Promoting employment goals in IP. Reach for the stars!
- Employment is much more than a job! Think about what your dream job would be!
- SACs on APSE Board – Association of People Supporting Employment First.
- SACs are members of JDLN -Job Development Leadership Networks.
- Customized Employment Conference virtually.
- Promote Employment in Self-Advocacy groups.
- Participating in Virtual Self-Advocacy groups.
- Promoted employment on Virtual Bulletin Boards on the Advocates' Corner.

REAL WORK FOR REAL PAY!



Special Olympics and Healthy Living



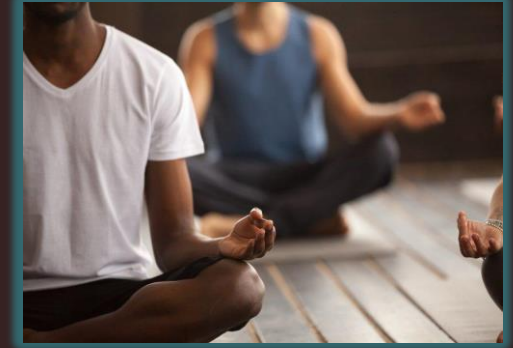
Special Olympics



- The SACs collaborated with Special Olympics and have been promoting the FIT 5 which helps remind individuals to drink 5 glasses of water, do 5 workouts, and eat 5 fruits/vegetables.
- The SACs are promoting a collaboration between DDS & SO with our Fit 5 groups.
- SACs promoted the virtual Fall, Winter, and Summer Special Olympic games. The SACs typically have a booth but due to the pandemic, they did not this year.



The SACS Promote Healthy Living



- Promoting having a safe person.
- Working virtually during the Pandemic.
- Presenting on the DDS website in the Advocate's Corner FAB topics healthy food options, ways to exercise, and healthy recipes.



- Sharing Virtual Bulletin Boards and FAB Topic information the SACS have created on the Advocates' Corner.
- Advocate's Corner shares a Recreation Calendar to remain connected and active.
- Teaching Healthy Relationship classes with Planned Parenthood.
- Participating and practicing Tranquility exercise.



Transportation

- SACs continue promote/support use of public transit as well as public transportation
- Due to the pandemic transportation made changes and accommodations to keep everyone safe like rear door boarding and suspension of bus fares that ended this year.
- Masking on public transit is still required. Masking is also still required on Uber/Lyft.
- New payment options for Hartford Line and Shoreline East trains—CT Rail e Tix now accepts Apple Pay and Google Pay.
- SACs attended Virtual Transit Summit



Assistive Technology

Providing people with the opportunity to be as independent as possible

SACs promote:

- * **Visiting** the lending library at UCP to utilize their assistive technology option to borrow equipment. This option enables people to live their lives more independently.
- * **Accessing** the Connecticut Tech Act Project which offers access to assistive technology and services.
- * **Offering** various resources for assistive technology, training, support and exploration of assistive technology to promote independence through **Midstate Arc**.
 - * **Offering** extensive technology assistance with transportation, home, employment and independent living through NEAT Marketplace.

SACs offer virtual self-advocacy groups, Fab topic information, and virtual recreational opportunities all focusing on equity, diversity and inclusion.

SACs are members of the DDS Assistive Technology Steering Committee.

All DDS Respite Centers have been equipped with Assistive Technology.

SACs advocate how assistive technologies support the



AGING: We are ALL Getting Older

SAC took part in the annual planning committee for Conference on "Aging Matters"

SACs attended and promoted September 2020 as healthy aging month. This year's conference presented tips on a variety of topics relevant to aging. Their focus was on wellbeing and happiness.

SACs share information from the "Aging Matters" May 2021 Conference on Aging that promoted tips and techniques as to how to get back to normal as the state lifts Covid-19 restrictions.

SACs promote/support use of Life Course materials for planning ahead to make sure we have the supports we need to remain in our homes where we can enjoy our family, friends, and activities we enjoy.



The SACs Promote Internet and Public Safety in Various Ways:

- **Sharing information online:**
 - Importance of getting vaccinated
 - Importance of wearing face masks
 - Avoidance of hand shaking and hugging
 - Stay at home and call your doctor if you feel sick
- **Virtual Bulletin Boards**
- **Self-Advocacy Groups**
- **One-to-one Self-Advocacy**
- **Sharing Healthy Relationships Series Virtually**
- **Speak Up and Speak Out—Your Voice is Powerful!**



Internet Safety

Online Safety Tips

- Keep a strong password for your device.
- Keep your personal information private.
- Pay attention to software updates.
- Don't trust public WiFi.
- Back up your data.
- Be aware of scams.
- Use Safe Dating Sites—Special Bridge.



Cyberbullying

- Promote Safe Person.
- Do not engage in sharing negative, harmful thoughts or mean content about somebody else.
- It can include sharing personal and/or private information about someone else, causing embarrassment or humiliation.
- Some cyberbullying crosses the line into criminal behavior.
- Speak Up and Speak Out if this is happening to you or someone you know!

Housing Options



- SACs promoted an array of housing options by presenting virtual Self-Advocacy Groups, creating and sharing Virtual Bulletin Boards and promoting the Advocates' Corner.
- We shared The Connecticut Department of Housing information. It offers material and knowledge regarding funding, flexible living options and training to assist individuals in finding their best housing options.
- Living Options:
 - Self Direct Your Own Supports
 - CCHs
 - Shared living
 - Independent living
 - Clustered living
 - Living with your family
 - Section 8





Healthy Relationships

Our DDS mission promotes all individuals to have safe, meaningful and empowering relationships!!!

The SACs continue to promote the Healthy Relationship Policy assuring all individuals have the right to enjoy a Healthy Relationship.

A safe person is very important for our individuals to ensure there is someone they can talk with and be heard.



The Healthy Relationship Series went virtual this fiscal year!



SACs and Planned Parenthood of Southern New England Educators Continue to Collaborate!

Co-teaching the Healthy Relationship Series

Three different sessions were offered statewide

Sessions were offered 2 times each in each region

15 people participated in 1 ½ hour online classes



Building Meaningful Relationships

Individuals learned about different types of relationships including romantic relationships. They learned ways to make friends, and how people begin dating, and ways to stay safe online.

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

Individuals learned what behaviors make a relationship healthy, unhealthy, or abusive. Having good communication is an essential part of a Healthy Relationship which was practiced especially resolving why relationships end and how to deal with conflict. Discussed coping skills when dealing with relationships ending.

Your Body Your Choice Consent Basics

Individuals learned about consent and boundaries as part of the necessary building blocks of healthy relationships and personal safety. They will learned the difference between public and private places, body parts, conversations, and behaviors. They practiced asking, giving, or not giving consent.

ALL OF THE SESSIONS WERE A GREAT SUCCESS!!!!





Salters, Varian

Hadad-Blazys, Ellen

Librandi, Paige

Grabbe, Carol

Katy Pergola

Cole, Natasha

Hartigan, Kellie

Butts, Kimberley

Blazawski, Amy M

Desjardins, Kathryn R

Miller, Beth Aura F

Geer, Sandi

Razumnaya, Yana

Jackson, Corinne

Powell, Jeremy M

Floravanti, Lisa

Paladino, Denise T

Cymbala, Patricia

Arce, Kevin

Virtual Advocacy is what we do!!!

SACS Share the latest on the Updated Advocates' Corner Website

Advocates' Corner

DDS State of Connecticut Advocates' Corner

CT.gov Home / Advocates' Corner

- About Us >
- 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

- Meet the DDS Self Advocates >
- Healthy Relationships >
- Peer to Peer >
- Living the Mission >
- SAC end of year report >
- Take the Pledge >
- COVID-19 Updates for DDS Individuals and Families >

New Website Feedback

DDS SELF-ADVOCATE COORDINATORS

SUCCESS STORIES

Control speak self voice
determined learn leadership
Respect empower Responsibilities
self determination
dignity life language
advocacy independence groups
relationships people choice
rights mission living
dignity MyVoice



Moving Forward!

Fiscal Year



- Promote Living a Self-Determined Life
- Promote advocates' voices by expanding and developing Self-Advocacy Groups
- Expand Virtual Connections
- Continue to promote Healthy Relationships
- Continue to promote various Living Options
- Promote Peer 2 Peer and Employment Opportunities as a Peer 2 Peer qualified provider
- 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 in the Department's Initiatives
- Youth Leadership Forum – participate, train, roll model and support the youth of CT to become great Self-Advocates
- Continue to promote REAL WORK for REAL PAY
- Support DDS's Five-Year Plan (Seeds of Change)

Leading the Way Through a Challenging Year!



**SPEAK UP &
SPEAK OUT!**

