OVERVIEW FOR VOLUNTEERS OF THE YOUTH & ADULTS CONFERENCE

NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME CONGRESS
45TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
JULY 20 – 23, 2017
SACRAMENTO CONVENTION CENTER

The NDSC Youth & Adults Conference is a program for self-advocates age 15 and older to participate in their own convention workshops and activities. This weekend is an opportunity for our self-advocates to reconnect with old friends, make new ones, celebrate one another’s accomplishments, and learn a thing or two. Volunteering your time to support self-advocates is a rewarding experience! Volunteers consistently report that they receive much more than they ever give. No one is expecting volunteers to be an instant expert on Down syndrome. Relax, use common sense, and have a great time. We want to create a memorable weekend for everyone!

What to Do When You Arrive at the Sacramento Convention Center
Make your way to the volunteer check-in, located on the first floor in the West Lobby of the Convention Center near the 13th Street entrance. Y&A volunteers will check-in at a separate table near the main Volunteer Check-In. This is also where Table Volunteers will receive their table assignment. You will then receive a brief orientation by the Y&A Support Team. Please check in at the Y&A volunteer table each day that you volunteer. Table Volunteers should then go to their assigned table and review the information in the Volunteer Table Folder which includes details about each self-advocate at that table, as well as the programming for each day.

Types of Y&A Volunteer Assignments

Table Volunteers: Table Volunteers are assigned to a table upon check in at the Y&A area. If you want to support a specific self-advocate, be sure to indicate this during volunteer registration or contact Janice Troy at janice@ndsccenter.org prior to the convention. Volunteers interact directly with self-advocates to ensure that they are engaged with each other and the planned activities. You may be assigned solo to an entire table of 8 very capable self-advocates or you may be partnered with one other volunteer to support 8 self-advocates who require more assistance. You will need to know the whereabouts of those at your table at all times.

Back of House Volunteers: The Back of House Volunteer’s job is to monitor the doors, emergency exits, stairs, and elevators to make sure self-advocates do not leave the room or building. They guide self-advocates to the restroom and assist in the movement of groups as they change programming locations. BOH Volunteers also check nametags as self-advocates adjourn, assuring that those with red dots wait for their families and do not leave on their own. They may also support self-advocates who choose to unwind in a less stimulating space outside of the conference room and assist talent show facilitators in getting "acts" on and off stage.

How We Determine Support Needs and Match Volunteers
People with Down syndrome are unique individuals with varying talents. Some attending our conference will have graduated from college, live independently in their own home, and drive their own car. Others may have no language, a co-occurring diagnosis, and may need support to use the restroom. We prepare for these diverse needs by asking self-advocates and their families in advance to evaluate their level of support need from one to five. One indicates little support needed and five requires one-to-one support for conference participation. Most those attending will need a support level of 2 or 3. Some information they provide could be medically related, such as a visual or hearing impairment or a medical condition such as diabetes. Information may also refer to behaviors; an example might be “becomes agitated with too much stimulation” or “is non-verbal, please ask only yes or no questions.” Some brief notes can be found on each self-advocate’s nametag, and more detail will be found in the Volunteer Table Folder. Some self-advocates will not have any additional information.

Safety Is Our First Concern; Fun Is Our Second
This is not school or work, but a celebration. We want everyone to feel important, valued, and have a great, safe time. No one leaves during the Y&A programmed events. The only exceptions are if a self-advocate is presenting at the General Convention or a parent picks up a self-advocate early. Y&A workshop presenters may leave early with their workshop support person to set up their workshop room.

Medical Emergencies
Notify one of the Y&A Support Team members. Several health care providers are on site. Family contact numbers and relevant medical information can be found on the self-advocate's nametag and in the table folders.

Explanation of Youth & Adults Conference Nametags
Self-advocates attending the conference have varying levels of support needs. The Y&A nametags are different from the general convention nametags as they provide important information to help support each attendee. Each self-advocate's nametag includes their table assignment, their rotation schedule, as well as a parent or guardian's cell phone number and any pertinent information related to medical issues or additional support needed. In addition, some self-advocates have a colored ribbon on their nametag indicating they are first time attendees, speakers, NDSC Board members, and/or Self-Advocate Council members.

In addition, the front and back of each nametag has a colored dot indicating whether the self-advocate is permitted to independently leave programming and if there are significant medical and/or support needs. The dots are an at-a-glance alert for volunteers and support people.

RED DOT (stop)
A red dot indicates that the self-advocate does not have signed permission to leave independently when the conference is adjourned. They must wait with their table volunteer for a family member.

GREEN DOT (pass)
A green dot means the self-advocate is able to leave the conference on his or her own at the end of the day. Be aware that a few people might try to remove their red dots. Everyone should have a dot. If not, please check the information in the table folder to be sure who has a signed release form to leave on their own and notify a Youth & Adults Support Team member to obtain a new dot.

YELLOW DOT (caution)
A yellow dot indicates the self-advocate has a medical condition such as seizures, hearing loss, diabetes, food allergies, etc. Information about the condition is on the nametag and in the table folder. Be alert to the needs of those with diabetes and gluten issues at your table.

BLUE DOT (extra support)
A blue dot means that a self-advocate needs additional support to be successful. There may or may not be support information written on the nametag. An example might be “John is non-verbal.” This helps the volunteer know to phrase all questions to John so that he might respond with a yes or no.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM
Self-advocates are assigned a table number which is their table for the entire weekend. They will begin and end programming at this table every day. All volunteers and self-advocates at a table have the same rotation schedule and will travel together to their workshops and other programming. Each table has a Volunteer Table Folder which includes a workshop rotation schedule and times for all program pieces.

FRIDAY
Friday’s Kick Off Party is a time for attendees to get to know their tablemates and volunteers while participating in various activities. Please help facilitate introductions among self-advocates at your table and continually encourage the self-advocates to be engaged in the programming.
Voting for the NDSC Board of Directors Self-Advocate position will take place. After nomination speeches are heard, table attendees vote by paper ballot. Volunteers help self-advocates place their vote and gather the ballots for collection.

SATURDAY
Saturday's programming consists of spotlight presentations and workshops presented by self-advocates. All volunteers and attendees will begin and end their day at their assigned table in Hall E, then rotate as a group through six sessions of workshops and spotlight presentations. It is a dynamic day in which self-advocates require the most support. Your active participation will keep things moving. There will be times when you will help facilitate discussion, prompt self-advocates to move to another location, and encourage them to be engaged.

Snack, Lunch, and Breaks – Encourage your table members to get up and stretch during breaks or engage in table activities provided in the table folders. Snacks and lunch will be provided for all volunteers and self-advocates. If a self-advocate needs to use the restroom or needs some down time, guide them to our Back of House Volunteers who will be available in the hallways to assist you.

SUNDAY
Talent Show – Sunday is all about the Talent Show! This is a wonderful event providing an opportunity for self-advocates to shine. Individuals must have pre-registered at the time of convention registration to perform. Each individual is assigned a time period to perform and this will be indicated on a color-coded card located on the table. They will be directed to line up near the stage as their time approaches. Please applaud like crazy and assist talent show volunteers as they get acts on and off the stage. The talent show is broken in two parts separated by a snack which will be served to all volunteers and self-advocates.

Workshop – During the convention registration process, some self-advocates will have chosen to participate in two workshops rather than the Talent Show. These self-advocates will be directed to the workshops at the appropriate time with guidance from the Back of House volunteers.

Evaluations – During snack time, please survey self-advocates at your table and complete workshop and session evaluations with their input.

DANCES
We host two dances during the convention weekend and you are welcome to join us! Though you will not be providing support for our self-advocates, you are guaranteed to have a great time!
Friday 8:00 pm – 321 Dance! East Lobby, 3rd Level
Saturday 8:00 pm – Saturday Night Dance! Hall A, 1st Level