Welcome

CONVENTION
FROM YOUR COUCH
ADVOCACY TRAINING BOOT CAMP
Advocacy from Your Couch: You Can Do It!

Heather Sachs, NDSC Policy & Advocacy Director

Valerie C. Williams, NDSC Board of Directors & National Association of State Directors of Special Education Director of Government Relations & External Affairs
Who We Are

*Heather Sachs*
- Parent
- NDSC Policy & Advocacy Director

*Valerie Williams*
- Parent
- NDSC Board Member & Co-Chair of NDSC Policy Council
- Director of Gov’t Relations for NASDSE
How did we become advocates?

*Heather’s Story:*

- Turning emotions into advocacy
- Venturing outside of comfort zone
- Finding teachers and mentors
- Jumping into advocacy on local, state and national levels
How did we become advocates?

Valerie’s Story

• Embrace the unexpected

• Advocacy is everything
What is "ADVOCACY?

• The act or cause of supporting a proposal (Merriam-Webster dictionary)
• Advocate: a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy
Types of Advocacy

**Self-Advocacy:** learning how to speak up for yourself and control your own life

**Legislative Advocacy:** making your voice heard on policies and laws.

Critical to all types: TELLING YOUR STORY
• **Direct advocacy:** providing information and education to elected officials about issues, problems, concerns in attempt to influence change

• **Grassroots advocacy:** collective action at the local level by ordinary citizens to effect change
Advocacy Myths/Excuses

- I am not a lawyer or policy expert
- I don’t have enough time
- I am intimidated and scared
- I am shy and don’t like public speaking
- My one voice won’t make a difference
- Other advocates in the room don’t look like me
- I didn’t vote for my Rep and don’t agree with him/her on most issues
- I’m not able to visit DC or my state capitol
- I work for a non-profit organization, which means I can’t lobby
Advocacy Truths

• You do NOT need to be an expert on policy or politics
• Your one voice DOES make a difference
• EVERYONE must have seat at the table – if you don’t show up, who will?
• Constituents have power, regardless of political party or preference
• Self-advocates are the most powerful advocates
• You can do advocacy from your couch but it’s a continuum.
Legislative Advocacy Gets Results

“If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies have on his/her decision?”

94% In-person issue visits from constituents
92% Individualized emails
88% Individualized postal
87% Local editorial referencing an issue pending
84% Phone calls
56% Form email messages

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How to Become an Advocate

STAY INFORMED

INFORM OTHERS

TAKE ACTION
Stay Informed

- Subscribe to e-newsletters
- Keyword Google alerts
- Social media – like/follow disability organizations, join Facebook advocacy groups
- Disability-specific publications (e.g., Disability Scoop)
- Trainings, conferences, workshops, webinars
• Who is in your circles?
• How can you connect with them?
• Become a conduit for information
• Social media is powerful (but also dangerous)
• Blogs
• Traditional media
• SHARE YOUR PERSONAL STORY
• Respond to NDSC Action Alerts
  – Register here: https://ndsccenter.salsalabs.org/actionalerts/index.html

• Meet and build relationships with elected officials and their staff
  – Keep in touch
  – Engage with them on social media

• Show up and lead
  – Testify
  – Serve on org. boards, local politics, committees, school board
  – Attend board and council meetings and hearings
• NDSC Policy & Advocacy Team
• Coalition work with other disability, human and civil rights groups
• Action Alerts
• Grassroots advocacy around the country through National Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition (NDAC)
• Started Fall 2017, nationwide grassroots advocacy training & engagement program
• FREE to join as an individual member – just need to become an NDSC Member (also free!)
• ALL levels of advocacy experience welcome
• Self-advocates welcome and encouraged to join
NDAC Goals and Resources

• **Goal:** to educate individuals with DS, family members and other allies about policy issues, provide advocacy tools and join together to make our voices heard.

• Quarterly policy update webinars

• Active closed Facebook group for NDAC Members

• Meet up and special events at NDSC Convention

• Advocacy assistance and advice from Policy Team
By the Numbers

- NDAC Members: 424

States where we need representatives: Alaska, Wyoming


- NDAC Group Members: 45
  - Global/National/Statewide/Local Groups and Organizations
Some NDAC Group Members who are already working with us on outreach, messaging and sharing policy information with the families who they serve.
Sign up to stay up-to-date with NDSC Policy communications!

- NDSC Policy & Advocacy Newsline emails
- Action Alerts
  - https://www.ndscccenter.org/political-advocacy/take-action-stay-informed/
- Facebook – NDSC Policy & Advocacy page
  - https://www.facebook.com/dsadvocates/
- Twitter
  - @NDSCPolicy
Contact Information

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Why Advocate?
“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not.”
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax
Untangling the Legislative Process: Basic Government Processes

Stephanie Smith Lee, NDSC Senior Policy Advisor, & Ricki Sabia, NDSC Senior Policy Advisor – Education
Agenda

• Branches of government
• The legislative branch
• Leadership & Committees
• Budget & Appropriations
• How a bill becomes a law
• State & local governments
The U.S. Congress

- **Bicameral** – 2 chambers
- Senate
  - 100 members
  - 2 per state
  - 6 year term
- House
  - 435
  - 2 year term
  - Tied to population of state
Congressional Duties

- Make the laws
- Represent their constituents
- Powers set out in constitution. Also enforce civil rights amendments.
Congressional Leadership - House, 116th Congress

Majority (Democrat)

• Speaker – Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
• Majority Leader – Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

Minority (Republican)

• Minority Leader – Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)
Congressional Leadership - Senate

Majority (Republican)

• Majority Leader – Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY)

Minority (Democrat)

• Minority Leader – Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY)
Who are these leaders and why are they important?

- Elected by members of their party at the beginning of each Congress
- Most senior and powerful party members/spokespeople
- Set the agenda (put items on and keep off agenda)
- Make committee assignments

ARE YOU A CONSTITUENT OF ANY LEADERS???
Key Committees - Senate

- Appropriations – funding for gov’t programs
- Budget
- Finance – taxation, debt, Social Security (Medicaid, SSI, SSDI)
- Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP)
Key Committees - House

• Appropriations
• Budget
• Education & Labor (“Ed & Workforce”)
• Energy & Commerce (“E&C”) – health, Medicare & Medicaid
• Ways & Means – tax-writing, ABLE
• Rules – sets rules for bills that come to the floor
Federal Budget & Appropriations

- Budget = plan for saving and spending money
- Appropriations = how the money will be spent (laws may authorize a certain amount of funding, but it still must be appropriated)
- Federal gov’t makes a budget for every year (called “fiscal year”)
  - Fiscal year starts in October and ends in September (different from regular calendar year)

See toolkit for self-advocates developed by Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
Follow the Money: The U.S. Budget and You
https://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/budget/
How a Bill Becomes a Law

Schoolhouse Rock video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nKyihoV9z8
Step 1: Introduction

• An idea is “drafted” (written) as a bill – can come from constituents.

• The bill must be **introduced by a Senator or House Member**.

• Every bill is given a title and number when it is introduced – **H.R.1** or **S.1**
Step 2: Committee

- After it is introduced, each “bill” sent to committee.
- Committees and subcommittees research, revise and debate bills.
  - Hearings, briefings
- Choices:
  - Reject it immediately
  - Sit on it
  - Approve it (with or without changes)
Step 3: Floor Debate

- Bill approved by committee goes to the “floor” to be voted on by the **full House of Representatives** or the **full Senate**.
- Members of Congress debate pros and cons
- Add amendments, riders (a completely unrelated item to the bill- Senate only)
- Filibuster (Senate only) – Senator ties to “talk a bill to death”
Step 4: Vote

- A simple *majority vote* is all that is needed to pass a bill.

- If either chamber refuses to pass it, the bill dies.

- Bills passed in each chamber must be identical.

- If different versions are passed in each chamber, the bill goes to a “conference committee” which results in a compromise bill.
Step 6: Presidential Action

• Approval:
  – Sign bill into law
  – Do nothing: approval after 10 days if Congress in session

• Rejection:
  – Veto
  – Do nothing: “Pocket veto” after 10 days if Congress out of session

• Note: 2/3 of Congress can override a veto!
State Governments

- Governors are the chief executive officers of the states.
- Key state agencies are responsible for:
  - Education
  - Public health
  - Medicaid and disability services
  - Other
State Legislatures

- Most states are bicameral (2 chambers)
- Mostly part-time; session length varies (30 days – 12 months – 2 years)
- Most meet annually; some meet every other year
- Process varies by state but generally similar to federal process
Local Governments

- Public administration of towns, cities, counties & districts
- Get their authority from the state constitution
- Local governments have some or all of the following decision-making positions:
  - Elected executive: mayor, village president
  - Elected council or commission: city council, school board, county board.
  - Appointed manager: city manager, school superintendent.
Thank you!
Stephanie Smith Lee – stephanie@ndssccenter.org

Ricki Sabia – ricki@ndssccenter.org
Getting to Know and Trust Each Other: Engaging with Elected Officials

Jawanda Mast, Parent & Founder
#321Advocate

Rachel Mast, Self-Advocate & Missouri State University Bear POWER Student
Rachel Mast

• Hostess at the Olive Garden
• College girl, Missouri State University Bear POWER program
• Loves to tell people about her life, her hopes and her dreams.
• Proud voice for others with Down syndrome and different abilities.
• Helped to pass the federal ABLE Act
• Opened 1st ABLE Savings Account in Kansas
• Testified Kansas Legislature, Kansas ABLE Savings Bill
• Senator Roberts says she is his top advisor
• Senator Moran says she is the best lobbyist in DC.
Jawanda Barnett Mast

- Federal ABLE Act
- KS ABLE Act
- KS Emergency Safety Intervention (ESI) (Seclusion & Restraint) Legislation
- KS Organ Transplant Non-Discrimination Legislation
- KS ABLE Improvement Bills
- KS ESI Legislative Task Force
- KS Transition Bill of Rights Legislative Working Committee
- Olathe Public Schools Special Education Site Council
- Successfully advocated for school inclusion and daughter received diploma
- Founded #321Advocate online advocacy group
- Host www.thesassysoutherngal.com
- Mom to Rachel
Engaging with Elected Officials

• The Power of Self-Advocates
• Where do I start?
  • Constituents are key
• Be Informed. Stay Informed.
• Your elected officials
• Take Action
  • Calls
  • Emails
  • Meetings
    • Tell Your Story
  • Staff
• Social Media Engagement
• Partnerships and Follow-up
• Thank you
Power of Self-Advocates

Self-advocates are THE MOST EFFECTIVE advocates

- Engage in all aspects of advocacy
- Can bring one-pager about themselves to meetings
- Effective on social media
- Provide necessary tools and trainings so they can meaningfully participate
- Public speaking workshops
- Participation in advocacy trainings, conferences, Hill Days

“Nothing about us without us.”
James Charlton, Disability Rights Advocate
Where Do I Start?

Constituents are key

- Some offices require your address to confirm you are a constituent before engaging
- National organizations depend on constituents to set up meetings related to key issues
Be Informed
Stay Informed

• Check out disability policy-related websites, policy statements and issue briefs (find list on NDSC website)
  – Webinars (live or archived)
• E-newsletters from various disability organizations (NDSC, NDSS, Global Down Syndrome Foundation, The Arc – federal & state, AUCD, National Disability Rights)
• Sign up for NDSC Action Alerts( https://www.ndsccenter.org/political-advocacy/take-action-stay-informed/) and alerts from other organizations
• “Like” and “Follow” NDSC and other disability policy organizations on social media
• News sources (Disability Scoop, The Hill, Politico, major newspapers)
• Google alerts on keywords

Complete list including websites can be found on the NDSC Website
Finding Your Elected Officials

Finding and Contacting Elected Officials

- How to contact elected officials (comprehensive) [https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials)
- US Senate [https://www.senate.gov/](https://www.senate.gov/)
- [https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/](https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/)

You will need your zip code to find your elected officials. You will also find links to their websites.

Tracking Federal Bills (sign up for alerts)

- [https://www.congress.gov/](https://www.congress.gov/)
- [https://www.govtrack.us/](https://www.govtrack.us/)

State Legislature and bills

- [https://legiscan.com/](https://legiscan.com/)
Knowing Your Elected Officials

What does your Member of Congress work on?

• Committees and Leadership
  – Visit your Member’s website to find out what committees she/he serves on and if they serve in leadership

• Other ways to learn what they are working on and care about:
  – Sign up for their newsletters
  – Follow them on social media
  – Google them!
Take Action: Send an Email

- Generic form from office – not overly effective
- Adapt script from Action Alert and add personal touches
- Email is more effective once relationship is established
- Email communication will probably be with staff
- Consider attaching a one-pager, links or pictures, but not too much
Take Action:
Call and call again

- Elected officials want to hear from constituents
- No need to be an expert (calls take 2-3 minutes each)
- Staff keep tallies of total calls for & against a certain issue
- Use script from Action Alerts and add a personal touch
- Watch for “Call-In Days” – need critical mass of calls on a particular issue
Take Action: Meetings

• Meet with your elected official and/or staff in D.C. or local office
  • Call the office and request to speak to the staffer in charge of the issue you want to discuss or tell them what you want to discuss and have them direct you
  • Some offices have schedulers
  • Schedule a meeting

• Always invite a self-advocate and let them do much of the talking (if possible)
• Always take a one-pager or a letter with an ask
• If possible, take a one-two page brief or synopsis about issues
Take Action: Meetings (cont.)

• Request a business card for everyone you interact with. This will help you communicate directly with a person moving forward.
• Keep in touch
  – Holiday cards, thank you note from child, send photos with news of your child’s accomplishments, etc.
  – Social media – Like, Re-tweet, publicly thank elected official and post pictures of your meeting
• Take a picture and express thanks on social media and by email/letter
The Importance of In-Person Meetings

Congressional Management Foundation: “In three surveys of congressional staff over a 10-year span, ‘in-person visits from constituents’ was the biggest factor for influencing a member’s decision on policy.”
Tell Your Story

- Your most powerful tool is your story!
- A **one-page leave** behind can be used in many situations (examples can be found on NDSC website)
- Include:
  - Contact information including street address (constituents have power), phone, email, twitter handle, etc.
  - Photo – action or otherwise
  - A few sentences about yourself (where you work, go to school, your interests)
- The Ask and why you are asking
- Thank you

Rachel with Congressman Yoder at the Step Up for Down Syndrome walk in Kansas City.

Sometimes we all can become cynical about the legislative process and the ability for real people to be heard in the halls of Congress. On this bipartisan vote, we ensured that Rachel's voice and millions of other families' voices were heard.
Dear Representative Davids,

I hope to see you again soon. I will be working some shifts at the Olive Garden during my Christmas break. Maybe you can come eat there.

I am in my second year in the Missouri State University Bear POWER program. I am studying acting and hospitality. I have an internship in the Service-Learning Office. We help provide healthy foods to food trucks for disadvantaged neighborhoods. I hope I get to be an intern at the Springfield Little Theatre next semester. I was elected as a Student Senator for the Student Government Association. I attend the Life Church and The Vine, an on-campus student ministry.

I live in a suite with three girls. I love it. My mentor Grace is an ADPI. They are trying to make it so I can be in a sorority. I really want to be an ADPI.

I worked as a hostess at the Olive Garden in the summer. I saved some of my money in my ABLE Account. I saved some of the money to spend at college. Maybe you can come and see me at the Olive Garden sometime.

Thank you for sponsoring the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act (H.R. 873). It will help people like me get a job working with their friends.

Would you please sponsor the ABLE Age Adjustment Act (H.R. 1814) so more of my friends can open an account? It would move the age of onset of disability for 26 to 46 for opening ABLE Accounts. I am proud I have an ABLE Account.

I am living my dream. Thank you for supporting people with Down syndrome and other disabilities. I have Down syndrome, but I am not Down syndrome. I am Rachel, and I really love my life.

Thank you.

Your friend,
Rachel Mast

| Home: |
| College: |
I worked with Congressman Yoder for 8 years. Now, I have a new Representative. Her name is Sharice Davids. My parents and I met with her and her staff. I tell them my hopes and dreams and how Congresswoman Davids can help. I have known her less that two years but these are some results:

- Cosponsored the Transformation to Competitive Employment Bill
- Cosponsored ABLE Age Adjustment Act
- Staff reached out to our family about constituent disability issues
- Serves on the Small Business Committee and in her remarks mentioned meeting me and my family and learning from us

Her staff started the process to have Rep. Davids work a shift with me at the Olive Garden, then COVID-19 hit. She and her staff have had several conference calls with us, the NDSC Policy Director, and other disability groups during COVID-19.

She loves to dance.
Staff Relationships

- Make efforts to get to know staff
- Visit staff in person at local office and DC Office, if possible
- Invite them to events or to visit your school or non-profits
- Staffers may move to other offices, but your relationship may remain intact
- Treat staffers with the utmost respect
From the Mouth of a Staff Member

• If possible, always start the meeting by thanking them for past support on issues. People come in always wanting things, and it’s great when constituents acknowledge past votes or leadership

• Stick to a couple main points. It’s hard with so many issues and groups for staff to remember more than 1 or 2 key items

• Recommend coming in with just one or two main asks – include a letter or leave behind and ask them to sign on to a bill.

• Recommend a thank you note to the Member and/or staff – an email or handwritten. It’s appreciated and makes a difference.

— Molly Haase, 17 years experience as a Congressional Staff Member
Effectively Using Social Media

- Who in the US is using social media?
  - 69% of adults; 88% of those aged 18-29
  - Almost every member of Congress
    - Twitter: House: 100%; Senate: 99%
    - Facebook: House: 98%; Senate: 88%
    - Instagram: House: 80%; Senate: 73%
    - YouTube: House: 80%; Senate: 92%
Engage on Social Media

• Use real life relationships to build relationships on social media
• “Like”, “Follow” & “Friend”, Tag your elected officials so that you can interact with them
  • *Sometimes this means following or liking an elected official with opposing viewpoints*
• Twitter is most common way to interact with staff and urge them to act – use @handles and #hashtags
• Video clips effective way to share message
• **Staff usually manage accounts**
• Private social media exchanges rare but there are exceptions.
• In general, self-advocates effectively use social media to engage
Social Media—How?

• Find and follow your legislators on social media
  – www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative
    • Enter your zip code
    • Click on your US Representative’s name
      – Click on the social media icons on his/her page
  – www.senate.gov/senators/contact
    • Select your state in the drop-down menu
    • Click on the name of your US Senators.
      – Click on the social media icons on their pages

• Plan your message
• Commit to posting regularly
• Like AND share/retweet others’ tweets and posts
Social Media Tips from Rachelspinkhouse

• Make a video of yourself
  – I always have a script on a dry erase board
• Post it on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
• Tag your elected official
• Be nice
• Say please and thank you
• Use a good hashtag (ask for help if needed)
• Follow up
Stay Informed through Social Media

#321Advocate Group & Other Facebook Groups

State Coalitions/Facebook Groups

- California Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
  [https://cdacblog.wordpress.com/](https://cdacblog.wordpress.com/)
- Pennsylvania Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
- Down Syndrome Policy Network of Tennessee (DSPNT)
- Massachusetts Government Affairs Committee
  [http://www.mdsc.org/programs/LegislativeAdvocacyTaskForce.cfm](http://www.mdsc.org/programs/LegislativeAdvocacyTaskForce.cfm)

This is not a complete list. Some other states have Facebook Advocacy Groups. Look for your state on Facebook or consider starting a state group.
Partnerships and Follow-up

• Partnerships
  • Look for organizations and/or people with similar issues
  • This doesn’t mean you have to agree on all topics
• Online groups
  • Consider starting a Facebook group for your state
• Don’t stay in Down syndrome bubble
• Follow-up
  • With a thank you
  • With information you promised
  • With others who may have information you need
  • As you come across applicable stories, send them along
Thank you

• Say thank you when you
  • Call
  • Email/Write
  • Visit in person
• Say thank you again
  • On social media – all kinds
• Say thank you-
  • Even when they do not do what you want

“My new representative won’t support anything that costs taxpayer’s money, but I was positive and thanked him for meeting with me.” ~ David Chaplin, Self-Advocate
Advocacy Reminders

• *Respect* – always keep conversations and public discussions respectful, even if you disagree
  – “No permanent friends, no permanent enemies”

• *Recognition* – elected officials like to be publicly thanked, recognized on social media and in newsletters

• *Realize the power of staff* – staff can be even more important than the elected officials themselves
Thank you & Contact Information

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Spotlight: Local Advocacy for Policy Change

*How To Be A Change In Your Community*

Maggie Reardon Gaines, Parent Advocate
The Gaines Family
The Reason I advocate
My Advocacy Journey

Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

This week, I met with members of the Pennsylvania Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition.

We had a meaningful conversation about promoting and expanding job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. We also discussed the importance of the ABLE Act, which established tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. I supported the legislation creating ABLE accounts in 2014 and am pleased with how they are benefitting persons living with disabilities.
Local involvement

PARENT SUPPORT FORUM
Tredyffrin/Easttown
Parents of Children with Learning Differences

BUILD
Better Understanding of Individuals with Learning Differences

Right to Education
Chester County Right to Education Task Force
@righttoed.org
Engaging my community
EXCLUSIVE: Mother Says School District Called Police After 6-Year-Old Daughter With Down Syndrome Pretended To Shoot Teacher With Finger
A school called police after a kindergartner with Down syndrome pointed a finger gun at her teacher. The girl's mom says they went too far

By Scottie Andrew, CNN

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

A 6-year-old pointed a finger gun at her teacher and said 'I shoot you.' Her school called the cops.

by Maddie Hanna, Updated: February 11, 2020
The School Board
How I did it

- Consulted the experts
- Connected with my local network
- Got the word out on social media
- Developed policy suggestions
- Went to school board with my “ask”
- Talked to media and stayed on message
Power in numbers: Network, network, network

- Find your people/group
- Get active in school community, i.e. PTO
- Join district/county/state task forces and disability advocacy groups
- Connect with other parents and advocates on local Facebook groups
- Attend events, panels, speaker series to get information and start meeting people locally.
- Attend school board meetings
- Get to know your school board members
- Get to know administrators in your district
- VOTE in local and state elections
Tips for using the media

- Make sure you have a story
- Make sure you want to tell your story
- Making the pitch
  - Do your homework: Know who you’re pitching
  - Cut to the chase
  - Make their job easier
  - Keep the relationship going
- Use social media
- Ride the media wave
- Stay on message
Contact Information

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Spotlight: State Coalitions and Partners

Kelly Kulzer Reyes, Parent Advocate & Co-Chair California Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
Forming CDAC

- Founded (again) in 2015
- Cathleen Small, Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area (SF East Bay area)
- Kelly Kulzer-Reyes and Club 21 Learning and Resource Center; Kern Down Syndrome Network (Pasadena and Bakersfield)
- Connections from giants in the advocacy world – San Diego, Sacramento, Fresno, and more.
- California has 53 congressional districts. The goal is to have an advocate in each district.
Maintaining CDAC

- Facebook group – California Down Syndrome Advocacy Workgroup
- Email list
- Interested advocates: each chooses an area for leadership (education, CalABLE, Self Determination implementation, healthcare, and more)
- Comfort with ebbs and flows of advocacy
- First two years: Regular meetings
- Then: more social media group discussion
Success stories

- CalABLE – testimony
- California Prenatal Screening Program presentation
- Conference attendance and presentations
- Cross-disability collaboration (ie. Disability Voices United, Autism Society LA, ICC)
- Spanish language presentations on Person-centered Planning
- Self Determination rollout
- Meetings with California state senators and assembly members
five minutes
NDAC ACTION ALERTS

five minutes
SHARE NDAC ACTION ALERTS EVERYWHERE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Advocacy:
TAKES AS LONG AS YOU HAVE

ten minutes

one hour
SEND INTRODUCTION EMAILS TO EVERY REPRESENTATIVE CURRENTLY WORKING FOR YOU.

one lifetime
BUILD A NETWORK OF LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE AND MAKE THE WORLD A LITTLE BIT BETTER FOR AN AMAZING COMMUNITY.

five hours
COMPILE EMAILS FROM YOUR REPRESENTATIVES' STAFF.

thirty minutes
FIND YOUR STATE'S DISABILITY RELATED ORGANIZATIONS AND REACH OUT.
In advocacy, like in politics,

"THERE ARE NO PERMANENT FRIENDS AND NO PERMANENT ENEMIES. ONLY PERMANENT INTERESTS"  
LORD PALMERSTON (JOHN HENRY TEMPLE)

"NO PERMANENT FRIENDS; NO PERMANENT ENEMIES"  
MY MANTRA
Building alliances with cross-disability organizations

- Family Resource Centers
- Integrated Community Collaborative
- Self Determination Advisory Committees and resources
- Disability Voices United
- Disability Policy Webinar
- The Arc California UCP Policy Conference
- California Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
- California Bill File
- National Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
Building local and statewide connections

- Who is your US Congress representative?
- Who are your US Senators?
- Who is their disability staffer? (They all have one.)
- What is happening in your state? How do you find out?
- Who are your local representatives?

REMEMBER: Party affiliation is irrelevant. If you voted for them is irrelevant. They still work for you. You are their constituent.
Contact information:
Kelly Kulzer-Reyes
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kellykulzer@gmail.com
cdacblog.wordpress.com
Spotlight: Centering Self-Advocates in Advocacy Efforts

Jessie Smart, Self-Advocate, NDSC Self-Advocate Council & Former NDSC Board Member
Jessie Smart

• 31 years old – Lives in Olive Branch MS
• Graduated from Lewisburg HS with an occupational diploma
• Attended 2 semesters NW MS Jr college
• Communications Assistant at DSAM
• DSAM Board of Directors 2010-2016
• NDSC Board of Directors 2015-2018
• Member of NDSC Self-Advocate Council
Exhibit Hours
Thursday, July 20 . . . 4 – 9 pm
Friday, July 21 . . . . 9 am – 5 pm
Saturday, July 22 . . . 9 am – 5 pm
Sunday, July 23 . . . no exhibit hours

Lunch Concessions
Exhibit Hall C
Friday . . . 11:30 am – –
Saturday . . . 12:30 – –
JESSIE’S HOUSE
Personal Advocacy

I served on our local DSAM Board of Directors for 6 terms. We have two self-advocates on our board. I think it is important to have self-advocates who can be active members of the Board. Who can go out into the community to meet business owners, to speak at educational seminars, and who can represent our organization and meet with our local and state representatives.

We, as self advocates, need to speak about issues that are important to us, and serving on the Board of Directors in your organization is the best place to begin.
Advocating for Community Opportunities

Making a presentation at a Civitan Meeting

Interview by local tv station at our annual Step Up Walk
Educational Advocacy

I spoke at the teacher training seminars on inclusion in the classroom.

Speaking at the new parent brunch.
Legislative Advocacy

Met with MS Senator Roger Wicker in Washington, DC to advocate for the ABLE Act
Legislative Advocacy

Mississippi LT Governor Tate Reeves has been a supporter of the ABLE Act

Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant signs the ABLE Act April 2017
Dear Representative/Senator Name,

My name is Jessica Smart. I am 30 years old and live in Olive Branch, MS. I work two days a week as a paid self-advocate at our local Down Syndrome Assn of Memphis & the Mid-South. I am the Communications Assistant. I answer the phones, make mobile deposits, help with the reading program and many other tasks. I advocate in the community by speaking at teacher trainings, represent DSAM on radio & TV interviews, speak at Civitan meetings, just to name a few. I worked with a group of local and state representatives from Mississippi to rewrite the language for the ABLE Act bill, and was with Mississippi Governor Bryant as he signed the bill. I have served on the Board of Directors for DSAM, NDSC, and I am presently on the board for the ARC of NW Mississippi.

I would like to ask you to please co-sponsor the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act (S.260.HR 873). This bill is a positive step toward phasing our Section 14 © subminimum wage over a six-year period. It also provides the funding, supports, and training necessary to change the infrastructure of outdated business models. This is a responsible approach to ending the discriminatory payment of subminimum wage while helping businesses transform to competitive integrated employment settings. Competitive Integrated Employment is when people with disabilities work in mainstream jobs alongside, and are paid comparable wages to, co-workers without disabilities.

In order for me to work and live independently, it is important that I be paid comparable wages to co-workers without disabilities. I take pride in doing a good job and being a responsible employee and think I deserve to earn comparable wages.

Thank you,
Jessica Smart
Address
Phone
Advocacy Toolkit for Self-Advocates

- The Advocacy Toolkit for Self-Advocates was developed by Self-Advocate Christopher Bennet with support from the NDSC Staff.

Purpose of toolkit

• Provide tools and advice to self-advocates
• To assist those interested in becoming more involved in legislative advocacy work (policies and laws)
• Made for self-advocates, it is helpful to anyone
Contents of toolkit

• What is Advocacy?
• Getting Started with Legislative Advocacy
• Advice from Other Self-Advocates
• Building Relationships with Your Elected Officials
• Voting
What is advocacy and how to get started

• Learn the basics of the legislative process
• Stay connected and informed
  – NDSC alerts and Newsline
• Seek out training opportunities
  – NDSC- NDAC and Speakers Bureau
Other Tips in Toolkit

• Advice from other self-advocates
• Building relationships with elected officials
Register to Vote and VOTE!

One of the most important ways to make systems change is to vote! When you turn 18, make sure that you are registered to vote in your state. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with disabilities are entitled to a full and equal opportunity to vote.
*EDUCATE *ADVOCATE *EMPOWER *INSPIRE

Jessie Smart

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Find Jessie on Facebook as Jessica Smart
Questions?
Thank You!

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All materials from today’s presentation can be found on the NDSC website at: https://www.ndsccenter.org/political-advocacy/advocacytrainings/