

# **South Dakota**

## ***Partners in Policymaking***

Partners in Policymaking is an innovative leadership and advocacy training opportunity designed to involve and empower people with developmental disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and other family members. It requires a serious commitment by each participant during the course of the training, as well as after graduation. The expectation is that each Partner will commit to actively use the skills learned to encourage positive changes in the areas of community awareness, sensitivity, accessibility, and inclusion for people with disabilities.

### ***Objectives of the Program***

- Provide state-of-the-art information on disability issues and services to participants;
- Build competencies so participants may become advocates who effectively influence public officials and other policymakers;
- Develop understanding of policymaking and legislative processes at the local, state and federal levels;
- Foster productive partnerships between policymakers and people needing and using services.

### ***Who is Eligible?***

People with developmental disabilities and parents of children with developmental disabilities are the primary target groups of the Partners in Policymaking program. Representation from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds, different geographic regions of the state, and various developmental disabilities are sought. Persons who are not actively involved in existing advocacy efforts are ideal candidates.

### ***South Dakota Advocacy Services is part of South Dakota's Developmental Disabilities Network***

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from the South Dakota Council  
on Developmental Disabilities,  
Children's Care Hospital & School,  
Center for Disabilities at Sanford School  
of Medicine at USD, &  
SD Parent Connection*

### ***Program Specifics***

A typical Partners class consists of 20-25 participants who are selected through an application/selection process. Partners attend six two-day training sessions from November through April, typically on Friday and Saturday. At each session, experts in disability and advocacy fields present information and interact with participants. Partners have the opportunity to work on communication skills, assertiveness, decision-making skills, legislative testimonial presentation skills and group activities. Partners must complete homework assignments every month. Attendance at all sessions is mandatory and all participants must sign a letter of agreement to those requirements.

### ***Sample Session Topics***

- History of the parent & disability movement
  - Advocacy strategies
  - Special education/inclusion
    - Legislative process
- Entitlement programs/Community services
  - City, County, Tribal Government
    - Assistive Technology
    - Employment opportunities
- Effective meetings/Parliamentary procedure
  - Individual and family support
  - Abuse and neglect awareness

### ***Expenses***

Participant lodging and meals will be paid for while at the training session. Participants will be reimbursed for mileage and meals to and from the sessions. Respite care and personal assistance services will also be reimbursed to the participants.

### ***Selection Process***

A selection committee of past graduates will review applications. The deadline is printed on the application. Selection will be made in September. For more information and applications, please write or call:

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