

Promising Practice Brief



Promising Practice Briefs are produced by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities through the UCEDD Resource Center (URC) in conjunction with its network members.

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Supported Leadership Facilitation Project

The Supported Leadership Facilitation Project promotes the full participation of individuals with intellectual disabilities as members of boards and committees throughout the community. The project has at its foundation a strategic goal of the Institute on Disabilities to improve the effectiveness of individuals with intellectual disabilities in voicing their opinions and having an impact on decision-making bodies by providing support for their participation on the boards of organizations in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

This is accomplished by providing ongoing support and skill development to individuals in order to strengthen and develop their leadership style. This ongoing support gives individuals the resources, knowledge and confidence to fully participate in policymaking forums. Individuals in collaboration with a supported leadership facilitator determine the type and amount of support necessary for them to optimally participate at meetings. Individuals continually direct their own supports, and are offered formal training opportunities, such as Speak Up! Speak Out! a two-day training session developed by the Institute on Disabilities to sharpen their presentation skills and assist individuals in managing their support staff.

Supported leadership facilitators provide individualized supports to board and committee members before, during and after meetings. This facilitation can be a resource to the board by assisting in guiding board processes that best include all members. The facilitators are contracted with and trained by the Institute on Disabilities and join a part-time coordinator and part-time assistant in forming the project team. Participants are identified by the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs and Developmental Disabilities Council, core contractual funders for the project. The project is also being implemented in a few community-based organizations and the Institute on Disabilities has developed a training to assist organizations in educating self-advocates as to the importance of being an active member of a governing board. The project's leadership envisions continued growth in this area through a targeted outreach initiative using both informational materials and training sessions.

The Institute on Disabilities evaluates this program by surveying participants and peer board members alike in order to assess the influence of self-advocates on policy decisions. Peer board members are surveyed as to the effectiveness of supports to individuals and are asked to suggest ways in which both the structure of meetings and delivery of supports can be

enhanced for optimal participation by self-advocates. This input serves to guide continual program quality improvement and valuable insight for structuring board processes to best include the meaningful participation of self-advocates. The participants' evaluative feedback is sought about their experience and the importance of self-advocate participation on committees and boards, barriers to meaningful participation, and suggestions for accommodations that could more effectively empower self-advocates.

Why is the Supported Leadership Facilitation Project a Promising Practice?

The Supported Leadership Facilitation Project was identified as promising in the MTARS evaluation for its innovative approach to fostering leadership development in individuals with intellectual disabilities, a strategic goal of the Institute on Disabilities. This project provides both a specialized function by supporting the participation of people with intellectual disabilities as members of community boards and an awareness raising effort in the broader community by supporting the visible and meaningful leadership in the community. The project is regularly evaluated for continual quality improvement and respectfully addresses the aspirations of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Suggestions for Replicability

- Review of the Institute on Disabilities Facilitators Guidelines.
- Review of the Institute on Disabilities "It's My Life, Hear my Voice" and "Speak Up! Speak Out!" training presentations.
- Review of the Supported Leadership Facilitation Evaluation results.
- Technical Assistance from the Supported Leadership Facilitation Project Staff.

For More Information

Please contact Kathleen McNamara Miller, below, to receive these materials or to discuss technical assistance or other aspects of the Supported Leadership Facilitation Project.

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