

# Twenty-Five Years of the Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute:

## A Longitudinal Survey of Tennessee Alumni

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### Background

- Partners in Policymaking™ (PIP) is a leadership institute and advocacy training program for adults with disabilities and family members of persons with disabilities<sup>1</sup>.
- PIP was founded in Minnesota in 1987<sup>1</sup>.
- PIP graduates go on to advocate for themselves, their family members and the disability community at large. Many graduates are influencing policy on the local, state and national level.



- The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities began implementing PIP curriculum in Tennessee in 1993.
- Approximately 30 Tennesseans complete PIP annually by meeting in-person over seven weekend sessions.
- Since 1993, 574 Tennesseans with disabilities and family members have completed the PIP leadership institute.

**500+ TENNESSEANS**  
**25 YEARS**

### Purpose

- Our aim was to measure the impact of PIP in Tennessee.

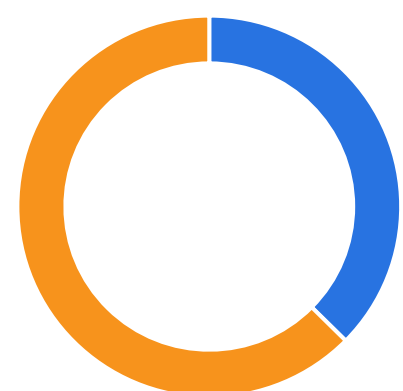
### Methods

- In January 2018, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the University of Tennessee Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities co-developed a 27-item survey.
- The survey items measure PIP graduate:
  - demographics
  - advocacy activities
  - community involvement
  - accomplishments
  - and overall satisfaction with PIP
- The 27-item survey was distributed to PIP graduates via email, in person in paper form, and via post mail.
- Responses were analyzed through use of SurveyMonkey and Microsoft Excel.

### Results

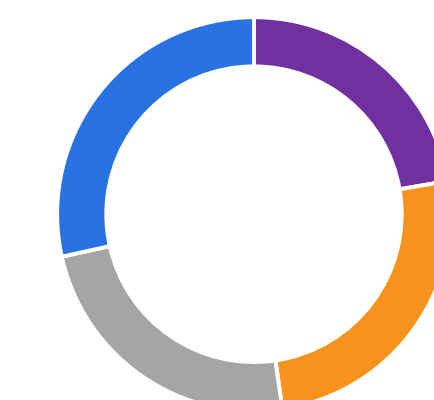
- As of October 2018, 133 responses (23.2% of living graduates) were received from graduates of the PIP program in Tennessee.
- Respondent demographics obtained are shown below.

#### Participant Self-Identification



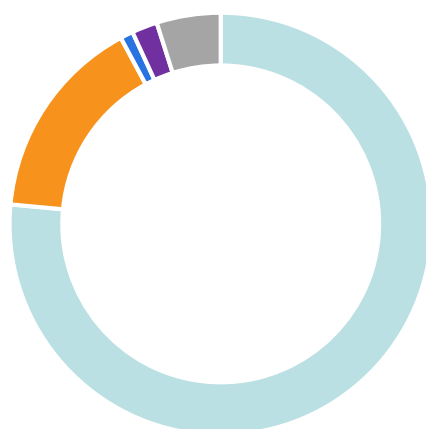
■ Individual with disability  
■ Family member

#### Primary Disability



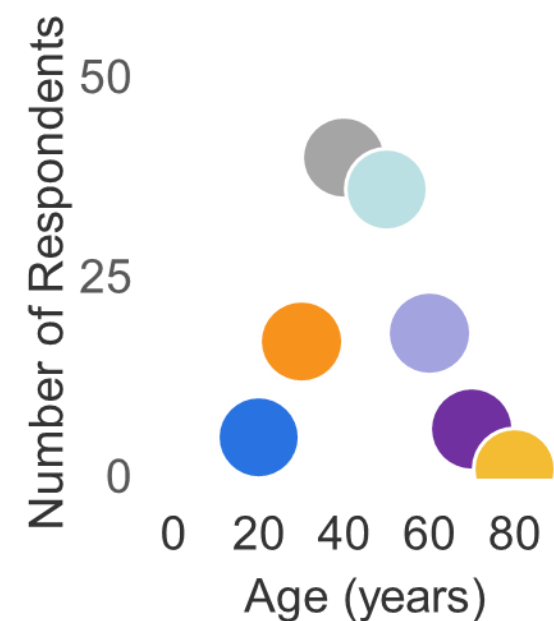
■ Intellectual ■ Physical  
■ Autism ■ Other

#### Race/Ethnicity\*

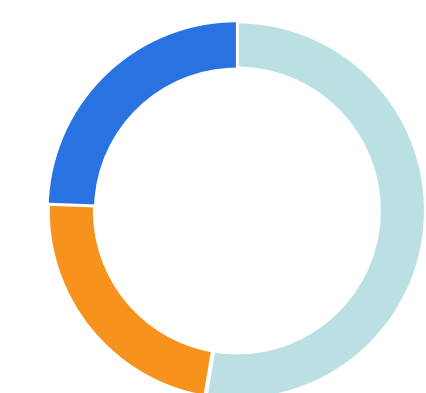


■ Caucasian  
■ African-American  
■ American Indian  
■ Hispanic  
■ More than one race

#### Current Age

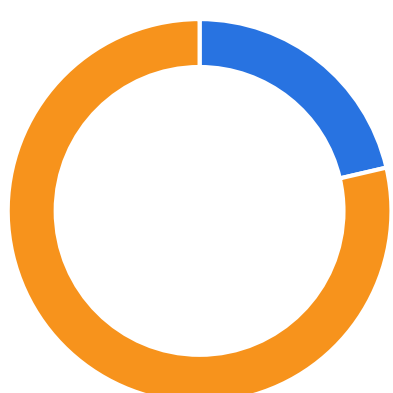


#### Years Elapsed Since PIP Completion



■ 0 to 5 ■ 6 to 10 ■ >10

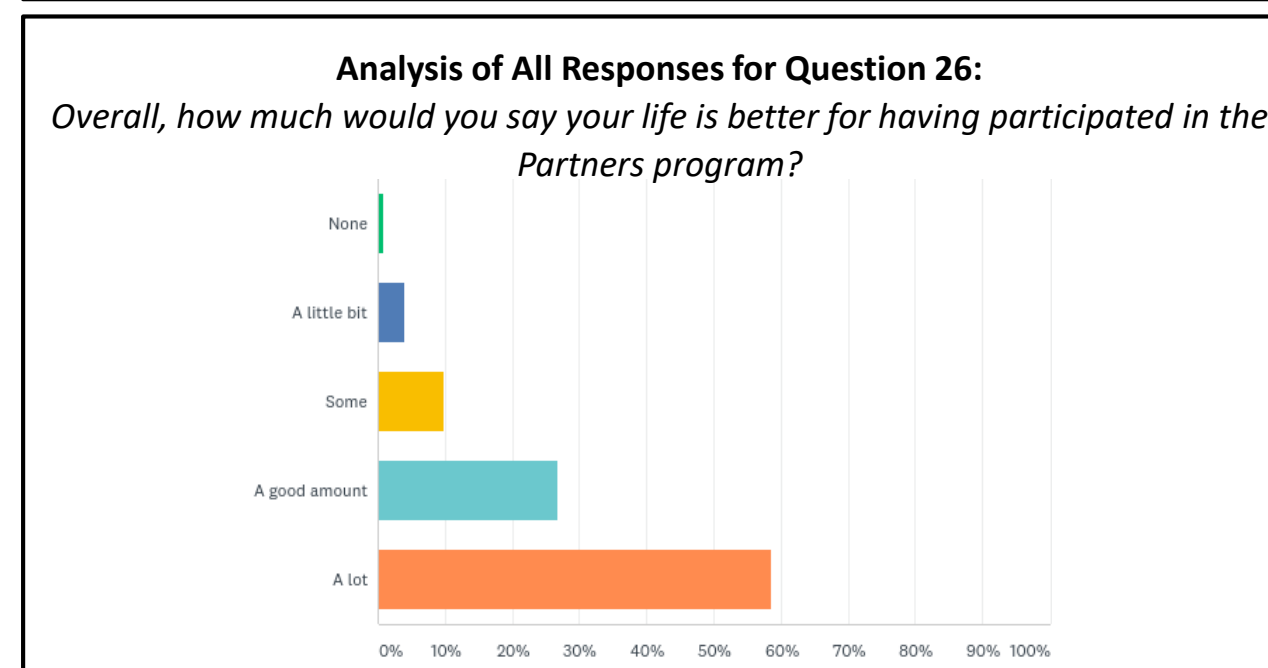
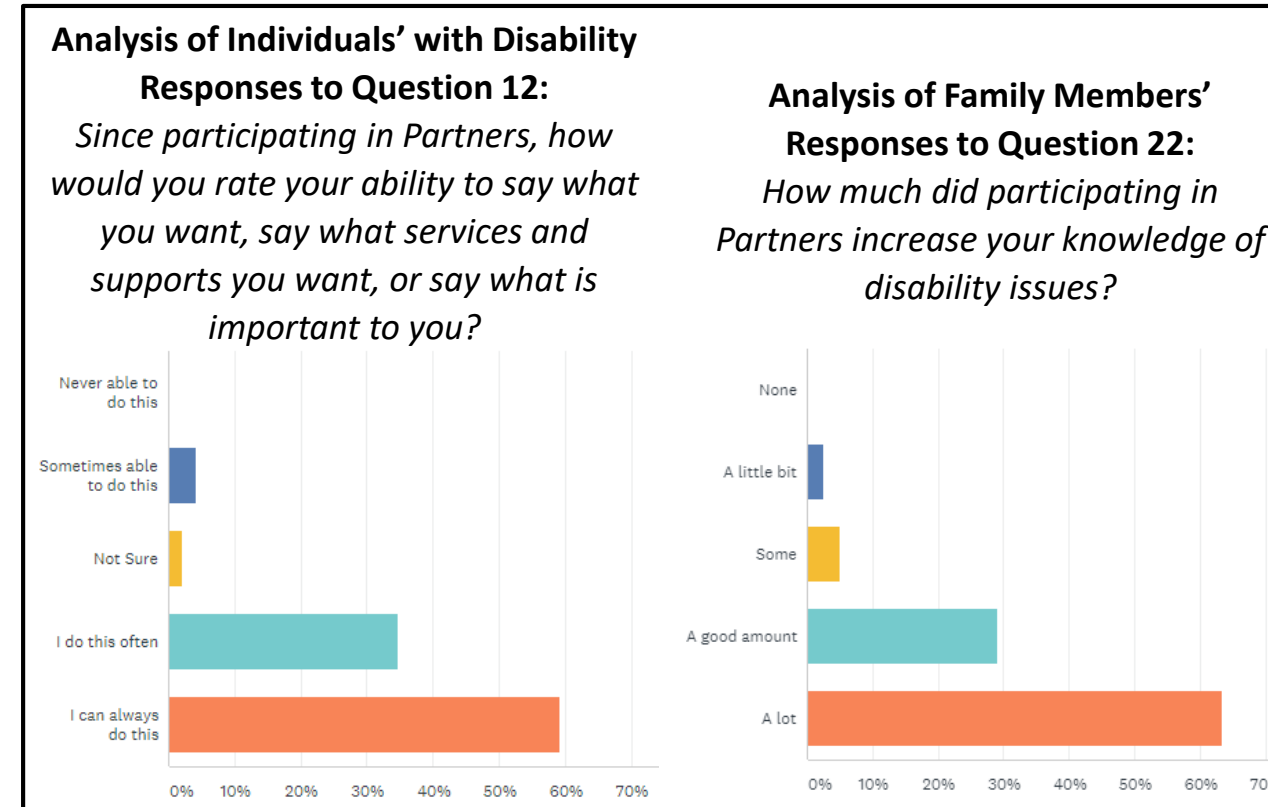
#### Gender



■ Male ■ Female

\*Race and ethnicity of respondents are consistent with state demographics in Tennessee<sup>2</sup>.

- Most survey items used a Likert scale of 1-5 which represented from “None” to “A lot” and “Never able to do this” to “I can do this always” when asking respondents about PIP’s effectiveness.
- Two survey items were open-ended. Respondents wrote of success stories attributable to PIP and were asked to provide comments on their PIP experiences.
- Respondents reported high levels of community involvement, knowledge of community resources for people with disabilities, sense of connectedness to others with similar life experiences, and ability to access community resources for people with disabilities.
- Family members** reported highest satisfaction with gained knowledge of disability issues, increased quality of life, and increased advocacy skills.
- Individuals with disabilities** reported highest satisfaction with increased advocacy skills, comfort in joining and being involved in advocacy groups, and increased quality of life.
- Ninety-nine percent of respondents reported that the program has made their life better, with eighty-six percent reporting “a good amount” or “a lot” of improvement in quality of life.



### Conclusion

- Considering that no statistically significant difference existed between the Likert-scaled responses of individuals with disabilities and family members, it appears that the PIP program in Tennessee is providing meaningful content for both groups.
- PIP is improving knowledge of disability issues, leadership skills, ability and involvement in advocacy, sense of empowerment, connectedness to others as well as connectedness to community resources, and quality of life for graduates in Tennessee.
- This data suggest that PIP is making a significant, positive impact in the lives of people connected by the experience of disability in Tennessee.
- The data support continuation of this program in the state of Tennessee, and encourage the use of the PIP program in other states.
- In their own words, here are what PIP graduates had to say when asked about their PIP experiences:

“...I have been an advocate my entire life, but Partners has made me a better advocate for even more marginalized populations.”  
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“I no longer feel alone in my fight for inclusion and to end discrimination.”  
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“The program is worth its weight in gold!”  
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“Partners is an essential program in our State...it's good to have a program that teaches you how to grab those bootstraps...”  
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“...This is an amazing program and I am truly thankful to have participated. My life and my family's have been forever changed. Thank you!!”

### References

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