
the Social Work Department at the CUNY College of



Introductions



How We Came To Be

- The Willowbrook State School, which was once located on the grounds of the College of Staten Island, was a state-supported institution for people with developmental disabilities. People with developmental disabilities were abused, starved, and beaten. The institution did not have the capacity to take on as many residents as they did which led to overcrowded spaces, neglect, and overall horrific conditions.
- In 1972, Geraldo Rivera, a television journalist, used a key provided by a staff doctor, and an inside tip to go behind the walls of the Willowbrook State School. Geraldo Rivera exposed the horrendous conditions of the school which then led to the school officially closing in 1987.
- The significant institutionalization that took place in the Willowbrook State School has brought the developmental disabilities community close together to advocate and ensure that people with developmental disabilities are treated with dignity as human beings.



Who We Are and What We Do

- The Disability Action Advocates (DAA) formerly known as The Geraldo Rivera Fund for Social Work & Disabilities Studies, also referred to as the GRF, at the CUNY College of Staten Island was established in 2015.
- Within the DAA, we are committed to fostering equitable change efforts that supports the rights of people with developmental disabilities.
- The DAA planning team meets to plan hosted events and to utilize the resources from the fund, in collaboration with the College of Staten Island Social Work department, to have our Public Conversation Forums and other educational events.



How We Do It

The DAA organizes public conversations around disability related topics to increase the knowledge-sharing across all stakeholders. We aim to cultivate a group of diverse cross-stakeholder leaders that support person-centered, equitable policy, and services for people with disabilities.



Being a Planning Member



Planning Member Commitments

- We expect all planning members to be able to commit to attending our planning meetings. Planning meetings occur every other Tuesday from 11AM-12PM via Zoom.
- As a planning committee, we all share an equal amount of power in terms of planning. We encourage everyone to participate in all planning aspects this includes development of events and outreach to community members.



CHANGE
STARTS HERE.
CAN WE COUNT YOU IN?

Professionalism

- It is important to always maintain professionalism during the planning meetings as well as during the events that we host.
- What does it mean to be professional?
 - Being respectful to others
 - Asking questions when needed; communication is key!
 - Using time-management skills
 - Being open to feedback



Leadership Skills

Since all members are considered to be leaders on the planning team, it is important to focus on your individual skills as a leader, some important leadership skills include the following:

- Ensuring that the message you are delivering is accessible (i.e. using plain language)
- Being organized
- Being supportive
- Providing support to members of the planning team
- Showing appreciation to the group and community members
- Being open to diversity



Public Speaking

Review of Tips: [10 Public Speaking Tips: How to Relax, Focus, and Shine at Your Next Presentation](#)

Public Speaking for Beginners:

[Public Speaking For Beginners](#)



Understanding Self-Advocacy



What is a Self-Advocate?

At the GRF being a self-advocate means you are someone who identifies as having a disability - we focus primarily on intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Who feels comfortable to share their diagnosis story?



SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-advocacy is speaking up for what you need and taking control of your life.



Knowledge of Self

Individuals must know themselves and be able to tell others what they need.



Knowledge of Rights

Individuals must know their rights in their communities and workplaces so they can better advocate.

Communication Skills

Individuals must be able to effectively communicate their needs. They may have to use assertiveness and problem solving.



Leadership

Individuals can speak up for themselves and others by identifying barriers and taking action to remove them.



What is a Self-Advocate?



Knowing Ourselves Activity

- Do You Advocate for Yourself?
- What are barriers to advocating for yourself?
- Do You Advocate for Others?
- Is it easier to Advocate for Others than for Yourself? Why?
- Why is it important to Advocate for yourself?



Why be involved in advocacy?

**Advocating for your needs,
the needs of others, and
your rights!**





What do you want to speak up about?





How to be involved in advocacy?

- Join the Disability Action Advocates (DAA)!
- Get a group together to discuss advocacy
- Know/Learn the rights of the Group or Population you are Advocating for
- Speak up for Others when they can't speak up for themselves



Supporting Self-Advocates

- Speak up for self-advocates!
- Speak Out against injustices!
- Say what's Right and What's wrong!
- Understanding Political Influence on Disability rights
- **Understand what is going on in your community!!!**



Receiving Support as a Self-Advocate

Ask for Support !

Give support to others!

Understand what is going on in your community and advocate for change!!



How can you advocate?

What are some issues that you want to advocate for? How can we advocate for these issues?



2022 Plans

- We would like to host one large public conversation focusing on the areas which need the increase of advocacy (i.e., budget cuts). We would host a panel discussion of stakeholders including but not limited to self-advocates, caregivers, and providers. In addition, we would invite appointed officials as well as other important government personnel to support our efforts. Ideally, though it would be a public conversation the set up would be similar to a conference.
- Hosting this event outside - either outside CSI or snug harbor
- Looking for sponsorships for the larger event
- Spring 2022 - Date TBD



Thank you!

- If you have any questions, please drop them in the chat or unmute yourself!
- If you are interested in joining, please fill out the form in the chat!

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdDIZ9Qz6jfxSYcUdcvYVFVTNi76n0cd5pyd8rELE-lbrMTLQ/viewform>



Resources

- <https://catulpa.on.ca/self-advocacy/>
- <https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/>
- <https://www.heath.gwu.edu/self-advocacy>
- <https://sanys.org/>
- [CurriculumForSelfAdvocates_r7.pdf \(autismnow.org\)](#)

