



Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc. 2014 Legislative and Policy Platform Highlights

Reimagining our Future Reinvest in us and our families

The theme for our annual conference, this past year, was ***Reimagining our Future***. We thought a lot about this theme before choosing it. When we looked up the word reimagine in the dictionary, we found that it means to reinterpret imaginatively, to rethink. We know these are hard things to do in the middle of budget challenges and pressure from the Federal Government, but that is what we need to do. We believe we need a new vision for how we, and others with developmental and intellectual disabilities are supported. The vision that our organization has is one we have been talking about for many years.

OPWDD's current system must be transformed to a true ***people first system***, one that provides person-centered supports to all including the many people who need 24-hour support. Individual supports do not mean everyone lives by themselves, or spends all their days by themselves, it means that people have a choice of who they live with, where they live, how they spend their days and who supports them.

SANYS Legislative and Policy Highlights

Support for OPWDD's Transformation Plan

Transformation is about people, and it is about spending money in a people first way that evolves that system thoughtfully. We support OPWDD's transformation plan. However, we hope that CMS will recognize some progress in the next few years and acknowledge the challenge of quickly transforming a large system that has been developed over many years. OPWDD needs to stay focused on change but needs the time to support people to transform or reimagine their supports in a way that is meaningful to them and their families. We need a large array of choices in the communities where we want to live.

Funds for people in need of and waiting for services

As we transform the way we currently spend money, we must insure that there are enough funds for people who are waiting for services. **Our system saves money when people move from high cost services to lower cost services, and we must reinvest all those dollars in services for people who are in need.** We also have to make sure that funds are available for students with disabilities coming out of school to transition to employment and/or to do things that they find interesting in their communities.

Direct Support Professionals

We need well-trained, well-paid and caring staff to support us in our homes and our communities. Many of our staff have not had a pay increase in a number of years. Many of our direct support staff members work two jobs just to get by. We urge the Governor and the legislators to find a way to provide a cost of living adjustment for our dedicated staff. We need them!

Development Center Closure

SANYS supports the closure of developmental centers. Everyone has the right to live in their community with the supports they need, including people with challenging histories. This has been our belief since the founding of our organization in 1986.

Employment and other supports

We need to reimagine how our system supports us to work, contribute to our community as volunteers (community service is a pathway to employment for many), continue our education and job training, and pursue hobbies and other interests. It is these activities that help us get and stay connected to other members of our communities. **We oppose the Governor's plan to cut funds from Sheltered Workshops.** As stated above, we believe all funds saved through transformation efforts should be reinvested in supports.

Community First Choice and the Nurse Practice Act

We support the Governor's proposal to amend the Nurse Practice Act so that direct support professionals in OPWDD's system and staff who work in consumer directed services throughout NY can pass medications and perform some necessary medical supports in non-certified settings under the supervision of a nurse. This change is an important part of the development of individualized and self-directed supports. It also relates to an important opportunity that New York has to increase Federal Funds available to support people with disabilities to live in their communities with the supports they need, an important part of NY's Olmstead plan.

Some other bills we support

Workers with disabilities Tax Credit Program (A.8492-B/S.49646-D)

This bill provides tax incentives for businesses that hire people with disabilities.

Disability History Curriculum (a.2006-A)

Everyone needs to know the history of people with disabilities, our struggles and our victories.

The above statements represent views of the board of directors and many members of the Self-Advocacy Association of NY State. For more information, please contact: Steve Holmes, Administrative Director at seholmes@sanys.org or call 518-796-8769.