

ACT Center for Disability Leadership Launches Self-Advocacy Academy

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities now have a training program to empower their self-advocacy: the Self-Advocacy Academy

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, January 26, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ACT Center's Self-Advocacy Academy is off to robust start

For many people, speaking for yourself, making decisions that affect your quality of life, and connecting with your community are life skills that come naturally to them.

Often times for folks with developmental or intellectual disabilities, these life skills don't come easily to them. Not having these skills creates difficult barriers to success in their lives, making it increasingly hard for people with disabilities to live the life they want to live.

Life skills for people with disabilities is the core of a new learning platform from a 40-year-old disability rights organization. St. Paul-based Advocating Change Together/ACT Center for Disability Leadership launched its Self-Advocacy Academy the first week in January 2022 with three cohorts — Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

“

This program wants people to know their rights, that they have dignity, and can live the way they want.”

ACT Center trainer Cynthia Gayles

Sessions are currently online but will shift to in-person when the pandemic eases.

The Academy is an ongoing program — organized in three trimesters a year — that brings together people with disabilities to learn about their rights, practice making choices and building a support network that enables them to thrive.

Attention Self-Advocates

ACT CENTER for DISABILITY LEADERSHIP SELF-ADVOCACY ACADEMY

- The Self-Advocacy Academy is a weekly program of sessions and activities to support you in discovering what you want in life and thinking through what you can do to get it.

ACT CENTER for DISABILITY LEADERSHIP on intellectual and developmental disabilities

As Minnesota's only stand-alone self-advocacy organization, ACT Center creates leaders through proven methods that lead to self-determination and community inclusion. We create and deliver curriculum, workshops, services and other resources designed to help people build personal power, connect with disability rights and build stronger and more inclusive communities.

Join the Self-Advocacy Academy to:

- Get better at speaking up for yourself and being in charge of your own life.
- Learn about your rights, including laws and policies that support your choices and your dreams.
- Get supports to help you get out there and enjoy life—doing the things you want with the people you choose.
- Make friends, learn about yourself, and develop advocacy skills through art, games, stories and laughter.
- Take the next step in becoming a disability rights leader.

If you're interested in any of these things, The Self-Advocacy Academy may be for you. Call the ACT Center and we can work with you to obtain approval to use your waiver, SILS or CDCS funding to join the Academy.



v. 10/13/21-3

info@selfadvocacy.org; (651) 641-0297; selfadvocacy.org

Fact Sheet for Prospective Participants
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"This program wants people to know their rights, that they have dignity, and can live the way they want," says ACT Center trainer Cynthia Gayles. As a person with a disability herself, Cynthia uses her life experiences to help others find their own power.

Each trimester course consists of 13 two-hour weekly sessions, either in person or online.

Classes are facilitated by trained leaders and self-advocate co-leader like Cynthia. Online classes are limited to eight students and in-person classes to 12. In addition to the classes all participants will have individual meetings with leaders between sessions to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of everyone.

Trainer Cynthia goes on to say "This program is a hands-on program. They don't just talk, talk, talk. We do skits, we do art, we do games and music and field trips. It built my self-esteem and now I have the courage to speak up for myself. Now I ask questions and want to know about certain rights. We all must understand that we control the way we want to live."

The Self-Advocacy Academy has been approved by the Minnesota Department of Human Services for funding by Medicaid through the state's waived services. That means persons with disabilities who qualify for waived service funds may use them to support their participation in the Academy.

"ACT programs teach us about everyday disability rights. It's an excellent program. It's not just me saying it — if you don't believe me, I'll show you the National Human Rights Educators Award we got last December. I'm very proud of the award and proud to be part of ACT," says Cynthia.

The ACT Center is currently enrolling students for courses beginning in April. Contact Adam Ruff for details: ruff@selfadvocacy.org or (651) 641-0297.

[LINK: Self-Advocacy Academy fact sheet](#)

Contact: Mary Kay Kennedy, Executive Director, Advocating Change Together/ACT Center for Disability Leadership

ACT CENTER for DISABILITY LEADERSHIP
SELF-ADVOCACY ACADEMY

Here's what happens at the Academy:

- ACT Center works with you and your people to arrange the supports you need to attend the Academy.
- You choose the day of week you want to attend the Self-Advocacy Academy: either Tuesdays OR Fridays—10 am to 12 pm. Sessions run Jan. 4 or 7–April 1; April 19 or 22–July 15; Sept. 13 or 16–Dec. 16.
- You choose in-person or distance learning options.
- You attend three trimesters of classes each year. Each trimester is 13 weeks long. There are breaks between each trimester. You have a summer break and a winter break.
- You make a commitment to attending the entire year-long Academy. If you miss a class, you talk to the advisor about making it up. (It's not a drop-in, come-as-you-can program).
- You meet with your advisor regularly to plan for upcoming trimesters to make sure the learning experience is meeting your needs and making a difference in your life.
- You meet with your Academy advisor each week for a quick check-in to review materials, apply new ideas, ask questions or solve problems.

What are the classes like?

The class size is between 8 and 12 students.

There are two advisors for each class.

Your support allies participate with you and support you in any way you need.

The classes include music, art, games, stories, and laughter. The classes are fun, interactive, and meaningful.

By being part of the Academy, you are joining the self-advocacy community! It's a community of people who build friendships as we support each other and work together to make the world a better place for everyone.

contact us at info@selfadvocacy.org
call (651) 641-0297
visit the web site at selfadvocacy.org

The Self-Advocacy Academy and other projects of the ACT Center for Disability Leadership are sponsored, in part, by contracts with the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This sponsorship does not imply endorsement of products or services developed under these contracts.

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