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First-Ever National Resource Center for Self-Advocacy to Empower People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

ACL is excited to announce the first-ever effort to establish a National Resource Center for Self-Advocacy (NRCSA) to empower people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) for enhancing their voice on issues important to their well-being and daily life. Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) will lead the effort in partnership with several organizations.

"The Developmental Disabilities Act was designed to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other services of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life, through culturally-competent programs," said Aimee Hopwood, Commissioner for the Administration on Disabilities. "The National Resource Center for Self-Advocacy will support opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to strengthen their skills and voice for this important self-advocacy role."

The self-advocacy movement is a human rights movement, stemming from the civil rights movement of the 1960's, but led by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to ensure they have the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities as people without disabilities. Starting internationally more than 40 years ago, the movement has empowered individuals to make choices in their lives, provided opportunities to have a voice, and opened pathways for leadership development.

Following a series of regional Self-Advocacy Summits convened five years ago, the **Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**, which is now part of the Administration on Disabilities within the Administration for Community Living, funded six technical assistance projects to support self-advocacy and share information. This new national resource center continues the mission of developing self-advocacy resources across the U.S. and will work during the next five years to:

- Compile resources, best practices, training curriculum, and success stories for an online clearinghouse accessible to the public;
- Research the history of the self-advocacy and other civil rights movements to understand their evolution, leadership, and best practices to produce a report and webinar on the findings;
- Provide training and technical assistance to new entities in addition to the established more than 1,000 self-advocacy organizations across the nation for advising, building consensus, recruiting youth, supporting grant writing, developing leaders, and more; and
- Establish a fellowship through mini-grants to disability organizations to create disability fellowships that offer leadership development and employment opportunities for fellows.

The center will collaborate with a diverse range of organizations including self-advocacy organizations, disability-related nonprofits, universities, state government agencies, and others to achieve the grant goals.

"The people affected by policy should have the greatest voice in developing it," said Katherine Cargill-Willis, Program Specialist with AIDD. "With this grant, ACL aims to make this ideal more of a reality for people with disabilities."

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) will lead the effort as part of a \$2 million, five-year cooperative agreement funded by ACL under the **Administration on Disabilities** as an AIDD **Project of National Significance**. Partner organizations on the new resource center include:

- Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
- Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA)

- Heartland Self-Advocacy Resource Network (HSRN)
- North East Advocates Together (NEAT)
- Pacific Alliance
- Project Action!
- Our Communities Standing Strong (OCSS)
- Southwest Alliance
- Southwest Institute for Families and Children (SWI)
- TASH
- University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development (UCEDD) (UMKC-IHD)

This project is part of an ongoing effort by ACL to amplify voices that are often missing from intellectual and developmental disability conversations, including self-advocates and people with and without disabilities from diverse communities. To this purpose, AIDD has awarded grants to **University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Service (UCEDD)** for:

- Fellowships to support recruitment and retention of trainees with disabilities, and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Participants complete a capstone project for creating systemic change for community-based activities.
- Planning partnerships with institutions that serve minorities to co-design training experiences that promote interdisciplinary approaches to research, training, and services.
- Diversity training across the UCEDDs to guide and sustain cultural competence within programs that serve people with developmental disabilities.

For more information, please email [Katherine Cargill-Willis](mailto:katherine.cargill-willis@acl.gov).

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