### **Individual and Group Advocacy**

Jacqueline Cuevas Self-Advocates of Michigan Chair



# Individual and Group Advocacy

with
Jacqueline Cuevas

Self-Advocates of Michigan Chair



Who is SAM



# What's Different and Why??



Michigan's previous model was group focused

Whole groups signed up at once and their members became members

•That was sometimes problematic



Groups were not just being facilitated by organizations but their agendas were being dictated by them



Now it's individual self-advocacy

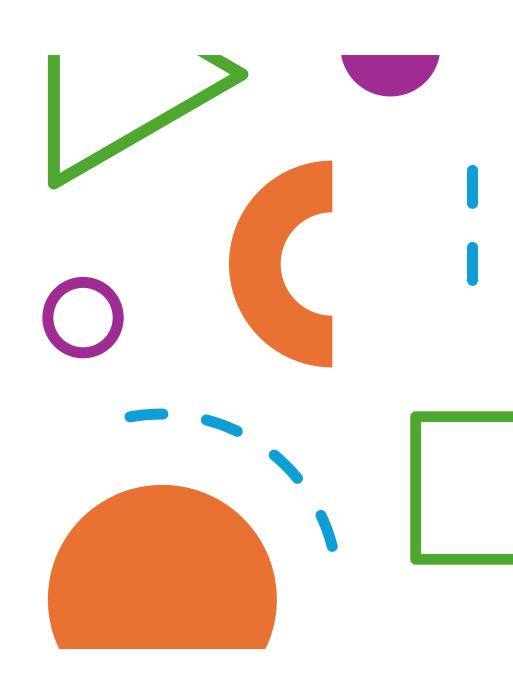
# Benefits of Individual Advocacy

 Autonomy: It allows individuals to express their unique perspectives and experiences without needing to compromise.
 SAM encourages different perspectives and different viewpoints from members.



Personal Focus: The focus is on addressing individual concerns and goals, which can be beneficial for issues that are highly personal

•Flexibility: in terms of decision-making and action



# CHALLENGES- TIME TO GET CREATIVE

certain systemic issues might require a collective effort to address effectively



#### Balance:

- SAM Group and Committee initiatives
- Work of the individuals
- Work in Local Communities
- Partnerships with ally orgs
- Learning styles and needs of the individuals

## SAM Structure

**Board of Directors** 

General Statewide Group

Reginal Groups

Local Chapters



#### **Board of Directors**

- Currently advocates that have self-nominated as wanting to be in leadership positions
- Eventually this will grow to 25. 2 members from each of the prosperity regions and 4 at large positions and 1 Council liaison



#### General Statewide Group

- No obligation or commitment
- As much or as little engagement as they like
- Member of SABE (Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered)
- Access to member only events and activities
- Ability to attend committees



 Vary depending on the spacemight be one city, part of a city, multiple cities or multiple counties.

 As membership increases we might see these groups morph and change over time so flexibility will be key

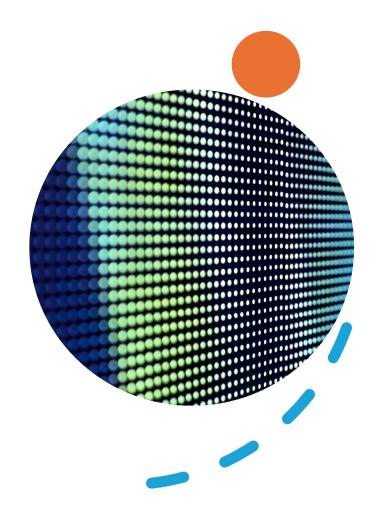
### Local Chapters

- Meaningful self-advocacy happens in the communities where people with developmental disabilities live, work, and play. Advocacy on this level is important to impact systems change.
- Local chapters will engage in their communities with allies, organizations, and politicians to advocate for the things that are important to them. This work will help to facilitate selfsufficiency, self-determination, inclusion, and acceptance for people with developmental disabilities.

#### **Local Chapters**

Every local chapter is different and unique with their own passions, style, and focus issues. Selfadvocates in Michigan come from all backgrounds. The diversity of the people who live in Michigan reflects the diversity of people in SAM at all levels.

All of the local chapters have in common the mission, vision, and values of SAM and the core idea of "Nothing About Us Without Us". Each Local chapter has its own Board and sets its own meeting schedule and agenda, regularly reporting back to the main SAM Board.





#### **Local Chapters**

Share the mission, vision and values of the SAM.

• Elect at least 3 chapter officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary) and send their names, offices held, and contact information to the state SAM Board. (additional officers may be elected should the chapter choose)

• Agree to keep minutes of chapter meetings and send copies to the state SAM Board.

#### Committees

The main purpose of SAM's committees is to place a greater amount of time and focus on a particular area of SAM business.
 Committees have dedicated time to thoroughly research and vet an issue before making recommendations to the full board. SAM has a unique committee structure in that committees are open to the general membership and not just to those on the Board.

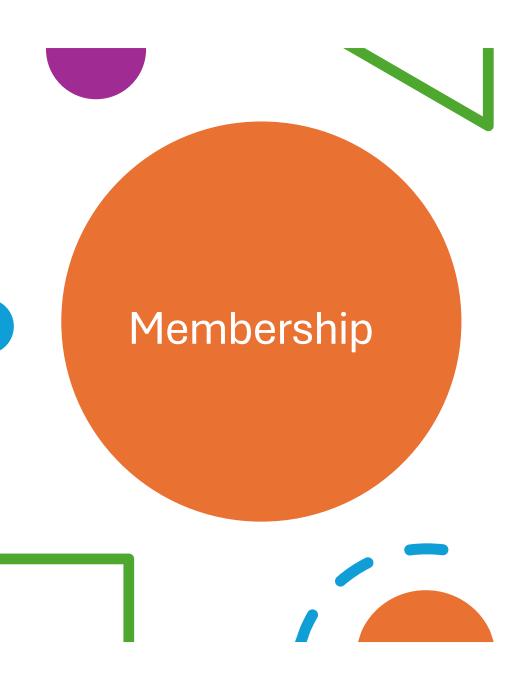


### Committees



**MEMBERSHIP** 

PUBLIC RELATIONS PUBLIC POLICY



• The Membership
Committee recruits SAM
members – adults with
disabilities and local selfadvocacy groups and also
recruits individuals to serve
on the SAM Board of
Directors. The Membership
Committee is also involved
in Board member
onboarding and creation



- The Public Relations
   Committee runs SAM's
   social media including its
   website and Facebook page.
   This Committee handles the
   marketing for all SAM events
   and trainings.
- They publish a monthly newsletter called **Our Voice**



The Public Policy
 Committee works on state and federal legislation and public policy proposals that are important to SAM and would impact the lives of people with disabilities

# BUILDING CAPACITY FOR THE INDIVIDUAL ADVOCATE

## Advisor Connection

- Welcome email at time of sign up-
- Meeting with me for intro
- Offer for mentor
- Discussion of what's important and what are their goals
- Continued connections- my only job
- 1:1 with Board members

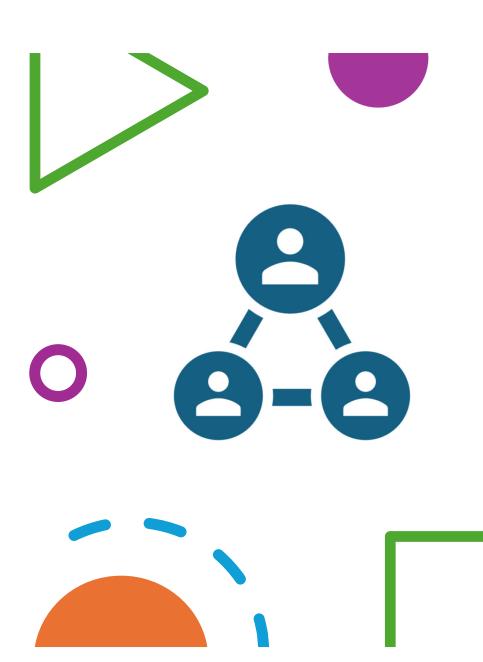
#### **Education and Training:**

 Provide self-advocates with relevant training and workshop opportunities to enhance their knowledge about their rights, the issues they care about, and effective advocacy strategies.
 Sessions and resources on public speaking, communication skills, and policy understanding.



## Leadership Development:

 Leadership development programs to help self-advocates build leadership skills, selfconfidence, and the ability to take on leadership roles within the organization and the broader community.



Peer Support and Mentoring:

 Facilitate peer support groups and mentorship opportunities where experienced selfadvocates can guide and support those who are new to advocacy.

## Public Speaking and Communication

 Organize public speaking events or workshops to help selfadvocates articulate their stories, concerns, and aspirations confidently and effectively.

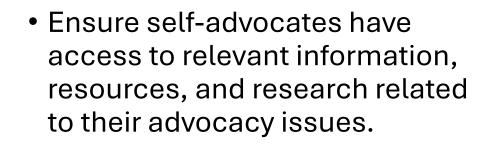


## Policy and Legislative Advocacy

Show self-advocates on how policies and legislation impact their lives and teach them how to engage in effective advocacy to influence decision-makers.









# Inclusive Decision-Making:

 Include self-advocates in decision-making processes within the organization and involve them in planning and implementing advocacy initiatives.



## Advocacy Campaign Support:

Provide support and guidance for self-advocates in planning and running their advocacy campaigns, including assistance with creating strategies and materials.

### Cultural Competency and Inclusivity:

 Promote cultural competency and inclusivity in all capacitybuilding efforts to ensure that self-advocates from diverse backgrounds feel welcomed and respected.



# Recognition and Celebration:

 Recognize and celebrate the achievements of self-advocates to reinforce their value and contribution to the organization and the community.



## Collaboration and Partnerships:

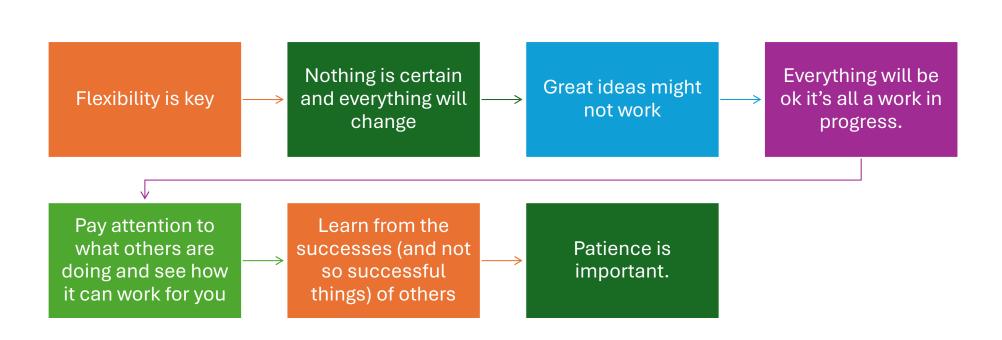
 Encourage self-advocates to collaborate with other organizations and advocacy groups to leverage collective strength and work towards common goals.



## Continuous Feedback and Evaluation:

Regularly seek feedback from selfadvocates to understand their needs and experiences within the capacitybuilding programs. Use this feedback to improve and adapt the initiatives.

#### What We know



#### Contact

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#### Michigan Alliance for Families



Michigan Alliance for Families is an IDEA Grant Funded Initiative of the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education (MDE-OSE); the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP); and Michigan's Federal Parent-Training and Information Center (PTIC) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs(OSEP).

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