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Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
Department of Administration
370 Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155
(651) 296-4018 voice
(877) 348-0505 toll free
(651) 297-7200 fax
Minnesota Relay Service: (800) 627-3529 OR 711
Email: admin.dd@state.mn.us
Or visit our website: <http://mn.gov/mnddc/>

**MINNESOTA PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING®
LONGITUDINAL STUDY**

**YEARS XXIV THROUGH XXVII
(CLASSES 28 – 31)**

PREPARED BY

**NANCY MILLER
METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY
February 22, 2016**

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 28 February 22, 2016
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 28 – total 30 participants: 5 responses (17%)

Class 28 – 30 participants

Mailing 1: January 10, 2016 (email and USPS)

28 emails; 3 responses

2 USPS; 0 responses

Mailing 2: January 22 (email), January 30 (USPS) 2016

28 emails; 0 responses

2 USPS; 0 responses

Mailing 3: February 11, 2016 (email only)

28 emails: 2 responses

- The return rate for the 2016 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 29%
- The return rate for the 2015 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 37%
- The return rate for the 2014 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 40%
- The return rate for the 2013 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 35%
- The return rate for the 2012 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 39%
- The return rate for the 2011 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 47%
- The return rate for the 2010 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 43%
- The return rate for the 2009 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 45%.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	4	80%
Yes, some of the time	0	0%
Seldom	1	20%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	5	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	2	40%
Good	3	60%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	5	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	4	80%
No	1	20%
Total	5	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive. *

Yes	3	60%
No	2	40%
Total	5	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	3	75%
No	1	25%
Total	4	100%

Skipped question: 1

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	4	80%
No	1	20%
Total	5	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	3	60%
Decreased	1	20%
About the same	1	20%
Total	5	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	2	40%
Agree	3	60%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	5	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	4	100%
No	0	100%
Total	4	100%

Skipped question = 1

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	3	60%
No	2	40%
Total	5	100%

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Yes	4	80%
No	1	20%
Total	5	100%

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. Following a serious illness and a 2-year recovery, my daughter needed to begin her transition from school to work all over again. I knew there were resources and was confident in seeking them out.

Skipped question = 4

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Talking to Gov't officials
2. The exposure in class to a wide variety of disabilities has made me more aware of the need for options because is surely isn't a one size fits all situation. I think overall confidence was a good skill that I still use today.

Skipped question = 3

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. I think more advocacy examples of life in the rural communities would be helpful. The resources for everyone are different in rural areas such as transportation, educational opportunities, social activities to name a few.

Skipped question = 4

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 29 February 22, 2016
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 29 – total 28 participants: 3 responses (11%)

Class 29 – 28 participants

Mailing 1: January 10, 2016 (email and USPS)

26 emails; 1 response

2 USPS; 0 responses

Mailing 2: January 22 (email), January 30 (USPS) 2016

2 USPS; 0 responses

Mailing 3: February 11, 2016 (email only)

26 emails; 2 responses

- The return rate for the 2016 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 29%
- The return rate for the 2015 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 37%
- The return rate for the 2014 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 40%
- The return rate for the 2013 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 35%
- The return rate for the 2012 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 39%
- The return rate for the 2011 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 47%
- The return rate for the 2010 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 43%
- The return rate for the 2009 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 45%.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	3	100%
Yes, some of the time	0	0%
Seldom	0	0%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	3	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	3	100%
Good	0	0%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	3	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	3	100%
No	0	0%
Total	3	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	3	100%
No	0	0%
Total	3	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	3	100%
No	0	0%
Total	3	100%

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	3	100%
No	0	0%
Total	3	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	2	67%
Decreased	1	33%
About the same	0	0%
Total	3	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	3	100%
Agree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	3	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	3	100%
No	0	0%
Total	3	100%

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	3	100%
No	0	0%
Total	3	100%

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Yes	3	100%
No	0	0%
Total	3	100%

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. School for my daughter is difficult, however, we are able to gather the right people at the table to make important decisions, rather than just allow the school to dictate decisions. Numerous networking opportunities have led to an opportunity to meet, mentor, and help other people with their own challenges with systems.
2. Daughter graduation from HS and is finding joy in life.
3. I ran for school board.

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. The ability to share my story, listen to others, not alone in any situations. Advocacy at the local and state levels.
2. Advocacy and never back down.
3. Talking to elected officials.

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. Continuous education opportunities.
2. More continuing education and access to other states if moved.

Skipped question = 1

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 30 February 22, 2016
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 30 – total 28 participants: 14 responses (50%)

Class 30 – 28 participants

Mailing 1: January 10, 2016 (email and USPS)

27 emails; 5 responses

1 USPS; 0 responses

Mailing 2: January 22 (email), January 30 (USPS) 2016

27 emails; 8 responses

1 USPS; 1 response

Mailing 3: February 11, 2016 (email only)

- The return rate for the 2016 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 29%
- The return rate for the 2015 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 37%
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- The return rate for the 2011 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 47%
- The return rate for the 2010 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 43%
- The return rate for the 2009 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 45%.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	11	79%
Yes, some of the time	3	21%
Seldom	0	0%
No, not at all	0	0%
Total	14	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	9	64%
Good	5	36%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	14	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	14	100%
No	0	0%
Total	14	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	11	92%
No	1	8%
Total	12	100%

Skipped question: 2

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	12	86%
No	2	14%
Total	14	100%

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	11	79%
No	3	21%
Total	14	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	4	29%
Decreased	1	7%
About the same	9	64%
Total	14	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	9	64%
Agree	5	36%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	14	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	13	100%
No	0	0%
Total	13	100%

Skipped question = 1

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	11	92%
No	1	8%
Total	12	100%

Skipped question = 2

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Yes	9	69%
No	4	31%
Total	13	100%

Skipped question = 1

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. The feeling of being more empowered when issues come up at school or in the community. I have joined our district's SEAC.
2. My daughter is only 11 so as far as living independently it's not applicable to her. But we have been bolder and confident in advocating for her to be included in different activities events, etc.
3. My daughter is still pretty young, but I encourage her to be more involved, I now know that she has a future with college and/or employment so I have changed my own attitude and now direct her more towards that end whereas before, I might not have been so positive and encouraging.
4. As our daughter is nearing high school graduation, we have decided not to pursue the sheltered workshop option. We are arranging meaningful volunteer work for her, within her interests.
5. Olivia (my daughter) is seeing more inclusion into her gen ed class and her IEP considers me an equal member of the team which makes getting her what she needs much easier.
6. I have been able to better negotiate with my daughter's education team when crafting her IEP. I have become more confident, bold and knowledgeable in advocating for others specially for people with disabilities.
7. better knowledge of sources to use to assist those with disabilities.
8. The ability to know more about the history of people with disabilities. Its helped me become a better advocate for other people with disabilities and its helped me become more proactive with reaching out when I need help via services for my disability.
9. I was able to get a new job, where I am able to use my abilities and skills to a greater degree. I am involved in many disability groups and projects. Overall, it has connected me to great opportunities.
10. I made the decision to continue living in Buffalo.
11. Have been selected to sit on the Department of Education Special Education Case Load and SEAP.
12. I started college in fall of 2013, which is helping me grow a lot, and I got my first job ever last summer. It was seasonal, but it was competitive employment.

Skipped question = 2

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Advocacy, knowledge of historical issues, current issues regarding disability rights, meeting and forming friendships with self-advocates and to learn their personal experiences.
2. Advocacy, research, organizing groups.
3. Communication (!!) and knowing that I have a voice.
4. "My advocacy skills continue to improve. From P.P., I have learned where to take my ideas that will actually make a change."
5. Understanding how levels of government work, so I understand how/where to advocate for my family. Learning the history really was critical in understanding where we are now, taking my skills and using them to connect with other programs. people in our community. The list of

what I learned and what I use daily is unlimited.

6. Advocacy, research, using data to back up my claims, demands, etc. also organizing a group, helping others to advocate for themselves.... be an advocate for all kids to be included especially in the school setting.
7. "How to contact the right people to help you and how to be precise with your advocacy."
8. The biggest skill I learned is compassion towards politicians. I now understand what they go through on a much deeper level thanks to retired politicians talking about what it's like to be them during sessions. Its taught me to talk through things rather than assume they don't care and try to reach the best possible results through diplomacy. I also have more self-confidence as well and can navigate advocating for people with disabilities better. Another extremely valuable skill I learned was how to lobby officials.
9. I use all of the skills I learned from the program. Especially speaking up for myself and trying to get what I need. Another thing is I feel better in connecting with people, talking to groups, and speaking public officials.
10. Self-advocacy.
11. Advocacy and how to work with elected officials
12. Bring up issues in a calm way.

Skipped question = 2

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. Maybe to add a follow-up session (or two) over time to help refresh and re-energize graduates. Even one (1 or 2 day) session every 3-5 years would be helpful.
2. I think partners is very well organized and efficient and I am very thankful to be a part of it.
3. I really cannot think of anything. It's a well-oiled machine and I enjoyed everything and appreciated every opportunity that was provided to me, even if I didn't utilize it (such as travel pay).
4. This was an EXCELLENT program: organized, thorough, great opportunities to develop relationships, relevant, very respectful. The part that was difficult for me, were the political terms and the purpose of the different branches. It may have been a benefit for me to have a quick user-friendly guide to the vocabulary in the fall. I had most of it figured out by the end of the year, but I may have missed information while I was thinking about the definitions. It was like a new language.
5. There can be a connection gap between those that stay onsite the entire weekend vs the class members that commute in each day. Some regular social time other than meals would be great. It took longer for those of us that commuted daily to feel connected to those that were onsite as they had time to really converse about everything in the session.
6. I think the Partners program is very organized, efficient and relevant. All the speakers were competent and knew what they were talking about. I think maybe more training or more time to talk with elected officials and lawmakers. Also, more time or help with paperwork or help with coming up with a plan for an issue that we are advocating for or trying to address with lawmakers or officials.
7. I would like to see a once or twice a year "continuing education" for all Partners Graduates so they can keep up with new laws, procedures, and refresh on any areas they need help in. Disability laws are changing; needs are changing...we need to have these sessions to keep our skills sharp.

8. One thing I would recommend is letting participants that live closer that normally take a long time to get ready and get to the hotel stay overnight. I never needed it but there were participants that had trouble getting there and it made it extremely inconvenient. If I were to choose I'd say, make it available to everyone either through a stipend or grant. This would make the program open to more people to participate.
9. I think it's great!
10. Add more history.
11. Offer a follow up program for those that are active in advocacy and getting things done.

Skipped question = 3

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Class 31 February 22, 2016
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 31 – total 25 participants: 10 responses (40%)

Class 31 – 25 Participants

Mailing 1: January 10, 2016 (email and USPS)

21 emails; 7 responses

4 USPS; 0 responses

Mailing 2: January 22 (email), January 30 (USPS) 2016

21 emails; 3 responses

4 USPS; 0 responses

Mailing 3: February 11, 2016 (email only)

21 emails; 0 responses

- The return rate for the 2016 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 29%
- The return rate for the 2015 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 37%
- The return rate for the 2014 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 40%
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- The return rate for the 2012 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 39%
- The return rate for the 2011 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 47%
- The return rate for the 2010 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 43%
- The return rate for the 2009 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 45%.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	5	50%
Yes, some of the time	3	30%
Seldom	1	10%
No, not at all	1	10%
Total	10	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	6	60%
Good	4	40%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	10	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	7	70%
No	3	30%
Total	10	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	3	30%
No	7	70%
Total	10	100%

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	7	70%
No	3	30%
Total	10	100%

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	4	40%
No	6	60%
Total	10	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	2	20%
Decreased	1	10%
About the same	7	70%
Total	10	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	6	60%
Agree	3	30%
Disagree	1	10%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	10	100%
No	0	0%
Total	10	100%

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	7	78%
No	2	22%
Total	9	100%

Skipped question = 1

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Yes	7	70%
No	3	30%
Total	10	100%

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. No significant changes have occurred
2. Housing employment friendships case management.
3. I went back to work for a while. Although the job turned out to be too much for me, I was skilled about informing my manager of my disability and advocating for things I could and could not do at the job site. It worked well! I left employment on very good terms and told I would be welcomed back when I feel ready.
4. Friendship.
5. Being more involved in programs that will effect and impact my child with a disability.
6. Better programming and inclusion at school while getting his needs met. I now have the self-confidence and knowledge to write to my government officials for change.
7. Having a person centered planning meeting. continue to advocate for appropriate housing solution. Increase in county funding for services.
8. I have learned how to more effectively advocate for my son. I have also become a support planner so I help others with disabilities that have the CDCS option on their waivers budget and what is out there that can help them.
9. Just keeping up the fight for my children in school so that they can get what they need.

Skipped question = 1

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Public funding if necessary
2. I learned how to speak to legislators and create new Bills check out SF 1344 And HF 1389 Dustin Luke Shields Act.
3. Understanding how government works and what rights people have in Minnesota to certain services. Although I have not needed to use these skills much for myself, I know a lot of other people with disabilities, and my knowledge has allowed me to give them advice about who to call and what to do.
4. Friendship.
5. How to talk to a crowd, how to be a better advocate, connecting myself and my son to the

6. Advocacy, knowledge about my son's rights.
7. Advocating, dealing with the school district and how different people communicate. Also planning for my son's future and how to make the best one for him.
8. Helping others in my community get the services that they need that they didn't know about before.
9. Speaking up for change.

Skipped question = 1

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. I think the program is a well-rounded program. I think it offer valuable information that can sometimes feel daunting for families to navigate.
2. That they speak more on getting to know your legislators.
3. None - I learned a ton and loved the program!
4. Have review sessions.
5. More chances for continuing education. Also it would be nice to have a way to reconnect with our class members and other graduates.
6. Be paired with a mentor (past graduate) so when it gets to the hard spot & you think you can't go on that you have someone who has been there before to keep encouraging you.

Skipped question = 4

Minnesota Partners in Policymaking®
Final Report: Long-Term Follow-Up Survey
Combined Classes 28, 29, 30 and 31
February 22, 2016
Submitted by Nancy Miller, MS, LPC, HS-BCP
Associate Professor, Metropolitan State University

Class 28 – 30 participants; total responses Class 28 = 5 responses (17%)

Class 29 – 28 participants; total responses Class 29 = 3 responses (11%)

Class 30 – 28 participants; total responses Class 30 = 14 responses (50%)

Class 31 – 25 Participants; total responses Class 31 = 10 responses (40%)

- The return rate for the 2016 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 29%
- The return rate for the 2015 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 37%
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- The return rate for the 2011 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 47%
- The return rate for the 2010 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 43%
- The return rate for the 2009 Long-Term Survey for all classes combined was 45%.

1. Did the skills you learned during the Partners program continue to be helpful in securing appropriate services today for you or a family member?

Yes, most of the time	23	72%
Yes, some of the time	6	19%
Seldom	2	6%
No, not at all	1	3%
Total	32	100%

2. Overall, how would you rate your current advocacy skills?

Excellent	20	63%
Good	12	37%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	32	100%

3. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) have become more independent* at work, home or school.

Yes	28	88%
No	4	12%
Total	32	100%

**Independence* means the extent to which individuals exert control and choice over their own lives.

4. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with a disability) am (is) more productive.*

Yes	20	67%
No	10	33%
Total	30	100%

Skipped question: 2

**Productivity* means starting employment or a positive change in one's employment situation (better wages, hours, benefits, improved status, or job advancement).

5. Since graduating from the Partners program, my self-determination (or the self-determination of a family member with a disability) has increased.

Yes	25	81%
No	6	19%
Total	31	100%

Skipped question: 1

**Self-determination* means the freedom to choose where and with whom to live or taking personal responsibility for personal decisions about needed supports and services.

6. Since graduating from the Partners in Policymaking program, I (or a family member with disability) have experienced more community integration and inclusion.*

Yes	23	72%
No	9	28%
Total	32	100%

**Integration and inclusion* means using the same community resources that are available to other citizens or fully participating in community activities.

7. Since graduation, have you increased or decreased your use of government funded services?

Increased	11	34%
Decreased	4	13%
About the same	17	53%
Total	32	100%

8. My (or my family's) quality of life is better because of my participation in the Partners program.

Strongly Agree	20	63%
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Agree	11	34%
Disagree	1	3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	32	100%

9. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am/is more knowledgeable about my rights.

Yes	30	100%
No	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Skipped question = 2

10. As a result of the Partners program, I (or a member of my family with a disability) am more aware of safety issues and can better protect myself (or a family member).

Yes	24	83%
No	5	17%
Total	29	100%

Skipped question = 3

11. As a result of the Partners program, I have contacted and worked with public officials about employment issues, and needed services/supports or improvements in the quality of employment services.

Yes	23	74%
No	8	26%
Total	31	100%

Skipped question = 1

12. What significant changes have occurred in your life (e.g., housing, education, employment, family support, case management, technology, health care, friendships, etc.) or the life of a family member with a disability which you attribute to your Partners program experience?

1. Following a serious illness and a 2-year recovery, my daughter needed to begin her transition from school to work all over again. I knew there were resources and was confident in seeking them out.
2. School for my daughter is difficult, however, we are able to gather the right people at the table to make important decisions, rather than just allow the school to dictate decisions. Numerous networking opportunities have led to an opportunity to meet, mentor, and help other people with their own challenges with systems.
3. Daughter graduation from HS and is finding joy in life.
4. I ran for school board.
5. The feeling of being more empowered when issues come up at school or in the community. I have joined our district's SEAC.
6. My daughter is only 11 so as far as living independently it's not applicable to her. But we have been bolder and confident in advocating for her to be included in different activities events, etc.
7. My daughter is still pretty young, but I encourage her to be more involved, I now know that she has a future with college and/or employment so I have changed my own attitude and now direct her more towards that end whereas before, I might not have been so positive and encouraging.
8. As our daughter is nearing high school graduation, we have decided not to pursue the sheltered workshop option. We are arranging meaningful volunteer work for her, within her interests.
9. Olivia (my daughter) is seeing more inclusion into her gen ed class and her IEP considers me an equal member of the team which makes getting her what she needs much easier.
10. I have been able to better negotiate with my daughter's education team when crafting her IEP. I have become more confident, bold and knowledgeable in advocating for others specially for people with disabilities.
Better knowledge of sources to use to assist those with disabilities.
11. The ability to know more about the history of people with disabilities. Its helped me become a better advocate for other people with disabilities and its helped me become more proactive with reaching out when I need help via services for my disability.
12. I was able to get a new job, where I am able to use my abilities and skills to a greater degree. I am involved in many disability groups and projects. Overall, it has connected me to great opportunities.
13. I made the decision to continue living in Buffalo.
14. Have been selected to sit on the Department of Education Special Education Case Load and SEAP.
15. I started college in fall of 2013, which is helping me grow a lot, and I got my first job ever last summer. It was seasonal, but it was competitive employment.
16. No significant changes have occurred
17. Housing employment friendships case management.
18. I went back to work for a while. Although the job turned out to be too much for me, I was skilled about informing my manager of my disability and advocating for things I could and could not do at the job site. It worked well! I left employment on very good terms and told I would be welcomed back when I feel ready.
19. Friendship.
20. Being more involved in programs that will effect and impact my child with a disability.
21. Better programming and inclusion at school while getting his needs met. I now have the self-confidence and knowledge to write to my government officials for change.
22. Having a person centered planning meeting. continue to advocate for appropriate housing solution. Increase in county funding for services.

23. I have learned how to more effectively advocate for my son. I have also become a support planner so I help others with disabilities that have the CDCS option on their waivers budget and what is out there that can help them.
24. Just keeping up the fight for my children in school so that they can get what they need.

Skipped question = 8

13. What skills did you learn in the program that you still use today?

1. Talking to Gov't officials
2. The exposure in class to a wide variety of disabilities has made me more aware of the need for options because is surely isn't a one size fits all situation. I think overall confidence was a good skill that I still use today.
3. The ability to share my story, listen to others, not alone in any situations. Advocacy at the local and state levels.
4. Advocacy and never back down.
5. Talking to elected officials.
6. Advocacy, knowledge of historical issues, current issues regarding disability rights, meeting and forming friendships with self-advocates and to learn their personal experiences.
7. Advocacy, research, organizing groups.
8. Communication (!!) and knowing that I have a voice.
9. "My advocacy skills continue to improve. From P.P., I have learned where to take my ideas that will actually make a change."
10. Understanding how levels of government work, so I understand how/where to advocate for my family. Learning the history really was critical in understanding where we are now, taking my skills and using them to connect with other programs, people in our community. The list of what I learned and what I use daily is unlimited.
11. Advocacy, research, using data to back up my claims, demands, etc. also organizing a group, helping others to advocate for themselves.... be an advocate for all kids to be included especially in the school setting.
12. "How to contact the right people to help you and how to be precise with your advocacy."
13. The biggest skill I learned is compassion towards politicians. I now understand what they go through on a much deeper level thanks to retired politicians talking about what it's like to be them during sessions. Its taught me to talk through things rather than assume they don't care and try to reach the best possible results through diplomacy. I also have more self-confidence as well and can navigate advocating for people with disabilities better. Another extremely valuable skill I learned was how to lobby officials.
14. I use all of the skills I learned from the program. Especially speaking up for myself and trying to get what I need. Another thing is I feel better in connecting with people, talking to groups, and speaking public officials.
15. Self-advocacy.
16. Advocacy and how to work with elected officials
17. Bring up issues in a calm way.
18. Public funding if necessary.
19. I learned how to speak to legislators and create new Bills check out SF 1344 And HF 1389 Dustin Luke Shields Act.
20. Understanding how government works and what rights people have in Minnesota to certain services. Although I have not needed to use these skills much for myself, I know a lot of other people with disabilities, and my knowledge has allowed me to give them advice about who to

21. Friendship.
22. How to talk to a crowd, how to be a better advocate, connecting myself and my son to the community, and how to find out about my representatives.
23. Advocacy, knowledge about my son's rights.
24. Advocating, dealing with the school district and how different people communicate. Also planning for my son's future and how to make the best one for him.
25. Helping others in my community get the services that they need that they didn't know about before.
26. Speaking up for change.

Skipped question = 6

14. Looking back at your experience with the Partners program, what recommendations would you make to improve the program?

1. I think more advocacy examples of life in the rural communities would be helpful. The resources for everyone are different in rural areas such as transportation, educational opportunities, social activities to name a few.
2. Continuous education opportunities.
3. More continuing education and access to other states if moved.
4. Maybe to add a follow-up session (or two) over time to help refresh and re-energize graduates. Even one (1 or 2 day) session every 3-5 years would be helpful.
5. I think partners is very well organized and efficient and I am very thankful to be a part of it.
6. I really cannot think of anything. It's a well-oiled machine and I enjoyed everything and appreciated every opportunity that was provided to me, even if I didn't utilize it (such as travel pay).
7. This was an EXCELLENT program: organized, thorough, great opportunities to develop relationships, relevant, very respectful. The part that was difficult for me, were the political terms and the purpose of the different branches. It may have been a benefit for me to have a quick user-friendly guide to the vocabulary in the fall. I had most of it figured out by the end of the year, but I may have missed information while I was thinking about the definitions. It was like a new language.
8. There can be a connection gap between those that stay onsite the entire weekend vs the class members that commute in each day. Some regular social time other than meals would be great. It took longer for those of us that commuted daily to feel connected to those that were onsite as they had time to really converse about everything in the session.
9. I think the Partners program is very organized, efficient and relevant. All the speakers were competent and knew what they were talking about. I think maybe more training or more time to talk with elected officials and lawmakers. Also, more time or help with paperwork or help with coming up with a plan for an issue that we are advocating for or trying to address with lawmakers or officials.
10. I would like to see a once or twice a year "continuing education" for all Partners Graduates so they can keep up with new laws, procedures, and refresh on any areas they need help in. Disability laws are changing; needs are changing...we need to have these sessions to keep our skills sharp.
11. One thing I would recommend is letting participants that live closer that normally take a long time to get ready and get to the hotel stay overnight. I never needed it but there were participants that had trouble getting there and it made it extremely inconvenient. If I were to choose I'd say, make it available to everyone either through a stipend or grant. This would

make the program open to more people to participate.

12. I think it's great!

13. Add more history.

14. Offer a follow up program for those that are active in advocacy and getting things done.

15. I think the program is a well-rounded program. I think it offer valuable information that can sometimes feel daunting for families to navigate.

16. That they speak more on getting to know your legislators.

17. None - I learned a ton and loved the program!

18. Have review sessions.

19. More chances for continuing education. Also it would be nice to have a way to reconnect with our class members and other graduates.

20. Be paired with a mentor (past graduate) so when it gets to the hard spot & you think you can't go on that you have someone who has been there before to keep encouraging you.

Skipped question = 12

Questions 12, 13, 14 responses by class

Question	#12	#13	#14
Class 28	1	2	1
Class 29	3	3	2
Class 30	12	12	11
Class 31	9	9	6
Totals	25	26	20