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**is for  
INDIVIDUAL**

**Be Active  
Take Action  
Be Responsible**

**My  
Individual Support Plan**

**A Guide for Self Advocates**

**Written by: Susan Harrington, Nate Trull and Holly Linn Palmer,  
with assistance from Colleen E. Ryan, Ricardo DaCruz, and  
Neil R. Lazzara**

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of this booklet is to help me participate in developing my Individual Support Plan. Why do I need this booklet? The Department of Developmental Services, known as DDS, has always had a process with individuals who receive DDS services to identify the needs and supports that are important to us. The ISP booklet is our effort to make the ISP a more Person Centered process. Changes are being made to the ISP process to provide more opportunities for me and other individuals to be actively involved in our planning process.

It is now recognized how important it is that we should have control over how supports and services are used to improve our lives. With all of the changes that are happening to the ISP, it is a perfect time to have a booklet to help me and other Self Advocates play a stronger role in our ISP process.

This ISP booklet is intended to be used by me and the people who help me to better understand the process for developing my ISP. The ISP booklet explains how the development of the ISP happens and what I can do to be better prepared and involved. This way my ISP truly addresses what is important to me. I can use the ISP booklet as a guide by myself, or with people I know and trust to help me.

*You are welcome to copy the ISP booklet as long as you do not change it and do not charge money for it.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Susan Harrington** is a 46 year old woman with disabilities and is “darn proud of it”. She has worked as a receptionist at the DDS Southeast Regional Office since 1990. She has been involved in “How’s Your News” and recently attended both political conventions. Susan sings in a church choir. She would like to dedicate this work to her friend Ronnie Simons, a fellow “How’s Your News” reporter.

**Holly Linn Palmer** has been involved in self advocacy projects with the DDS Southeast Learning and Development office. Her involvement as a self advocate on various projects, *Making a Contribution* workbook and as a presenter at the Massasoit Community College Direct Support Certificate Program, has led to her current ISP Booklet project. She gets her encouragement to help others by thinking about all those, especially Senator Ted Kennedy, who have done so much for people with disabilities.

**Nate Trull** through the years has grown as chairperson of Powerhouse, a self advocacy group, and now is a self advocacy worker for people with disabilities in Massachusetts. He is still growing in his field, learning how to help people with disabilities in “person centered thinking”. He is a consultant to the E.K. Shriver Center, University of Massachusetts Medical School. He trains people with developmental and other disabilities about getting ready for emergencies and disasters. He advises the E.K. Shriver Center on emergency preparedness and response projects. He is also on the Citizens Advisory Board as well as other boards.

**Colleen E. Ryan** has worked in support of self advocates for many years by developing and providing learning opportunities which empower people to speak up and speak out as both learners and teachers. Her contributions include leadership development, public speaking, making a contribution, and personal development. Currently Colleen is the Director of Learning & Development for the Massachusetts DDS Southeast Region. She dedicates this work in memory of her dear friends Theophile LaCoste and Paulette M. Anjorin.

**Ricardo DaCruz** is a current Case Manager at the SAIL, Supporting Adults for Inclusive Living, agency in downtown New Bedford. Ricardo assists individuals with issues and concerns relating to residential, community and employment. Ricardo is a 2001 graduate from UMASS Dartmouth and majored in English/Creative Drama. Ricardo would like to dedicate this ISP booklet to Katelyn "Katie" Brienzo, former secretary of the Economic Development Commission and Commission on Disabilities in the greater Fairhaven area.

**Neil R. Lazzara** is a former advisor to the Open Door Club, Northampton MA and former advisor to M.A.S.S.. He works for the Department of Developmental Services. He would like to dedicate this ISP booklet to John Patrick, one of the first Self Advocates he met in Western Massachusetts.

**We would all like to dedicate this work to Craig Smith.**

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This ISP Booklet was developed by Self Advocates in collaboration with the  
Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services and Mass Advocates Standing  
Strong (M.A.S.S.) - November 2012



## WHAT IS MY ISP?

- The ISP stands for Individual Support Plan
  - ≈ INDIVIDUAL means “ME”
  - ≈ SUPPORT means what people and resources I need to help me do the things I need and want
  - ≈ PLAN means it is my roadmap to where I want to go in my life
  
- Why do I need an ISP?
  - ≈ When I receive services from the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) it is required by regulation
  - ≈ My ISP is an opportunity for me to learn how to do things that will help me live, work, be with people, be healthy and have fun
  - ≈ My ISP helps my support staff give me the help I need
  - ≈ My ISP helps everyone who supports me follow my vision, goals, objectives and strategies
  - ≈ My ISP helps my support staff in guiding me to learn new things or remember the things I already know



## WHAT DOES MY ISP INCLUDE?

- ≈ My Vision
- ≈ Assessments about My Skills and Abilities
- ≈ My Meeting
- ≈ My Goals and Objectives
- ≈ My Strategies



My Notes to help me to develop my ISP:



## MY ISP PRINCIPLES

- What is written in my ISP must:
  - ≈ be respectful
  - ≈ meet my needs
  - ≈ include my choices
  - ≈ provide me with opportunities
  - ≈ help me do things other people do
  
- My ISP should always have:
  - ≈ a team of active and respectful people
  - ≈ an opportunity to discover myself
  - ≈ a commitment to help me achieve my dreams and goals
  - ≈ an opportunity for me to make decisions
  - ≈ an opportunity for me to take risks and learn from my mistakes
  - ≈ people I know well and trust to help me

**EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO  
THE BEST ISP POSSIBLE!**



## BEFORE MY ISP MEETING

WHO SHOULD I TALK WITH TO HELP ME PLAN?

≈ My Service Coordinator

- is my connection to DDS
- can be a great advocate with and for me

≈ Allies: these are people I trust and can help me plan

- Who are my Allies?
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Staff
  - People I know and trust from the community
  - Associations: groups of people I know who may help me; like my church, my doctor, my self advocacy group
  - These people can be my support network

When I talk with my Service Coordinator, I need to make sure he or she knows who I want to come to my meeting.

My Allies are:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

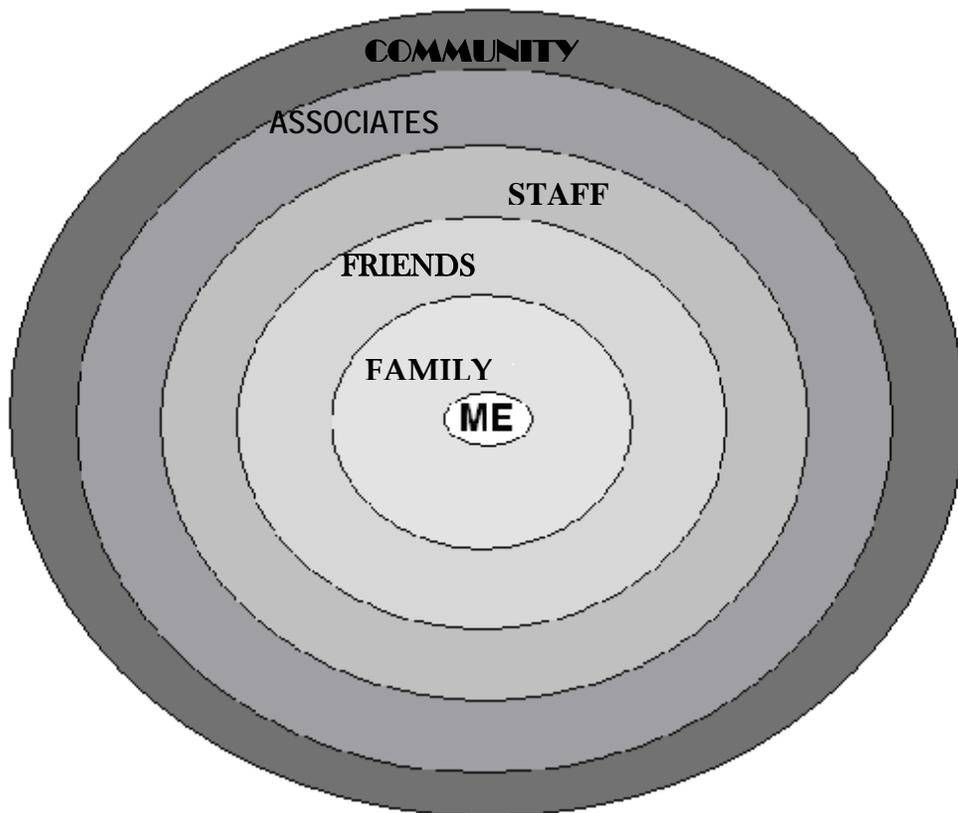
## MY NETWORK

Sometimes my network is called my “Circle of Support”. My network includes people who care about me and can support and assist me to achieve my Vision, goals and objectives.

Who do I identify as people in my “Circle of Support”?

- ≈ People closest to me who I share important things with
- ≈ Friends I do things with and see regularly
- ≈ People I know through clubs and organizations
- ≈ People I pay to help me
- ≈ People I rely on to teach me things
- ≈ People I have lost touch with

**My network changes as relationships in my life change.** I may want some of these people to help me with my ISP. I must remember to ask for help from people I trust.



# WHAT SHOULD I TALK ABOUT BEFORE MY ISP MEETING?



## MY VISION

My ISP starts with what is important to me. This is called “VISION” which means MY **IDEAS**, MY **DREAMS** and MY **THOUGHTS** on:

- ≈ how I would like to live my life
- ≈ what I would like to do for work
- ≈ what is important to me to do during the day
- ≈ how I want to be involved in my community, like volunteering
- ≈ what I like to do to have fun and be social
- ≈ how I can be healthy
- ≈ how I can be active

There are four areas that DDS requires me to talk about with my Service Coordinator to create my “Vision”.

These are the questions that are the first part of my ISP:

1. What do I identify as important activities and relationships for me to continue to be involved in? What other things would I like to explore?
2. What do I think someone needs to know in order to provide effective supports to me?
3. What do I think are my strengths and my abilities? What are the things I do well?
4. What would I like to see happen in my life over the next two years?



Here are the questions in my ISP and some tips to think about:

**1. What do I identify as important activities and relationships for me to continue to be involved in? What other things would I like to explore?**

Tips:

- ≈ What activities and jobs do I enjoy and are important to me?
- ≈ How do I like to spend my spare time?
- ≈ Who are the people I like to spend time with?
- ≈ Where do I feel safe?
- ≈ What makes me feel safe?
- ≈ Where are places I used to go to and now miss?

**2. What do I think my staff need to know in order to provide effective supports? Effective support means help that works for me.**

Tips:

- ≈ What can I do on my own?
- ≈ What do I value? People and things that are important to me
- ≈ How do I want people to talk with me?
- ≈ What do I want support with?
- ≈ What can I do myself?
- ≈ What is my routine?
- ≈ What are my fears, frustrations and dislikes?

### **3. What do I think are my strengths and abilities? Strengths and abilities are things I am good at doing.**

Tips:

- ≈ What do I like about myself?
- ≈ What are my accomplishments?
- ≈ What can I do on my own at home, in the community, and at work?
- ≈ What am I most proud of?
- ≈ What brings out the best in me?

### **4. What would I like to see happen in my life over the next two years?**

Tips:

- ≈ What has happened in the past year that I would like to do again?
- ≈ What new things can I work on at home?
- ≈ Are there things and places I would like to do and places I would like to go in the community?
- ≈ Are there people I would like to see and spend time with?
- ≈ Is there a vacation I would like to take?
- ≈ Is there a job that I would like to learn about?
- ≈ Are there people I would like to meet and get to know?



My Vision is a very important part of my ISP. It is my ideas, hopes and dreams about how I would like to live, work and have fun. My Service Coordinator will help me think about my Vision. I can have other people help me who know me well and I trust.

# WHAT ARE THINGS I NEED TO LOOK AT BEFORE MY ISP MEETING?



## ASSESSMENTS

The next part of my ISP talks about the support I get through DDS, my providers and other agencies. Assessments are required by DDS and are done as part of my ISP. Assessments help me figure out how to accomplish my Vision.

An Assessment is a tool to help point out what I know how to do and what my skills and abilities are. An assessment can also include how I learn best, how I communicate, or what does not work for me.

My providers usually write assessments about the services they provide me. However, sometimes someone I may not know well may be asked to write an assessment. This is because someone other than my staff may know more about what I want to learn and what can help me. For example: people like work counselors, psychiatrists or physical therapists may be asked to write assessments.



**I need to remember to look at my assessments and ask questions if I do not understand them.** It is okay to say something needs to be changed because it is not right.

DDS requires assessments in six areas.

1. What I do at home and in the community?
2. What I do during the day? This could be a job, or some other activity I do during the day like volunteering or going to a day program
3. My health assessment includes going to the doctor and dentist and staying physically fit
4. Special equipment I may use, such as a wheelchair or a hearing aid or an i-Pad
5. My clinical assessment could include seeing a psychologist or psychiatrist or a speech therapist
6. How safe I am in my home and whether I know what to do in an emergency



My Notes



## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

My **goals, objectives** and **strategies** are steps in my ISP to get to where I want to go in my life. For example, when I am taking a trip I need a roadmap I can follow so I will not get lost. Writing goals, objectives and strategies also makes sure people who help me know what I need to reach my Vision. I need to work with my staff and bring my goals, objectives and strategies to my ISP meeting.

### **My goal:**

- ≈ My goal comes from my Vision. It is what I want to accomplish over the next two years to have a full and productive life

### **My objectives:**

- ≈ Objectives are what I want to learn in the coming year to accomplish my goal
- ≈ I want my objectives written so I know when I am successful

### **My Learning Environment:**

- ≈ tells me and my staff where and how I learn best
- ≈ states how I can best be supported to learn new skills
- ≈ is where I am comfortable learning new skills

- ≈ my learning environment could include:
  - a quiet space
  - working with a group of people
  - working alone with an instructor
  - reading things on my own
  - learning skills in typical places
- ≈ I think about my learning environment as a place that brings out the best in me when I am learning new things

**Person or Agency responsible for implementation of my goals and objectives:**

- ≈ who helps me learn my objectives:
  - Support staff in my home
  - Support staff at work
  - People I work with
  - People in clubs I belong to

**My Strategy:**

- ≈ My plan to learn lets support staff know how we can work on meeting my objectives
- ≈ My strategy is for my staff to follow so they can help me learn my objective
- ≈ My strategy could include:
  - Who do I want to help me learn new skills
  - How often do I need to practice the skills I want to learn
  - What equipment do I need to learn my objective
  - What are the steps needed to help me learn my objective
  - What kind of hints or prompts should staff give me to learn my objective and
  - How staff can help me learn my objective on my own



## MY ISP MEETING

My ISP meeting is very important to me. It is also important to DDS. It is very important that I am an active participant at my ISP meeting

- ≈ It is important to me because it makes sure things are done to help me live a better life
- ≈ By being an active participant I have more control over the support I want and need
- ≈ It is important to DDS because it shows how money is used to help me

### **What can I do to help my ISP meeting work for me?**

There are things I need to do before my meeting:

- ≈ learn as much as I can about what is going to happen at my meeting
- ≈ talk with my Service Coordinator before the meeting. It is also helpful to talk on a regular basis with my Service Coordinator throughout the year
- ≈ make sure I talk with my Service Coordinator about who should come to my meeting
- ≈ decide when and where my meeting will take place
- ≈ decide what I want to talk about
- ≈ decide what I do not want to talk about with the whole ISP Team
- ≈ If I am not sure what I want to talk about, I need to talk with people I know and trust who can help me
- ≈ decide if I want to run my meeting and talk with my Service Coordinator about how to do this

If I run my own meeting, here are some tips for me on how to prepare for my meeting:

- ≈ Talk to people who believe in my Vision
- ≈ Decide who to invite
- ≈ Create an agenda
- ≈ Make sure I know who is coming to my meeting.
- ≈ Decide what will be discussed at my meeting with my Service Coordinator
- ≈ Ask questions if I do not understand

Here are some tips for me to do at my meeting:

- ≈ Follow the agenda I created
- ≈ Have everyone introduce themselves and say why they are at my meeting
- ≈ Participate actively in the discussion with the ISP Team
- ≈ Have someone takes notes
- ≈ Listen to what people are saying
- ≈ Ask questions if I do not understand
- ≈ Add information if I think things need to be changed
- ≈ Ask more questions



My plan should be what I want to learn and do to create success in learning new things and having a great life.

## AFTER MY MEETING

When my meeting is over, my Service Coordinator needs to take the notes from the meeting and write up my ISP. DDS has a form that is required to be used.

Here is what happens:

- ≈ My Service Coordinator writes up my ISP based on what happened at my meeting
- ≈ My Service Coordinator sends my ISP to the DDS Area Director to approve
- ≈ My ISP is sent to me and my guardian to approve
- ≈ Before I approve, I need to ask my Service Coordinator to meet with me and explain my ISP document
- ≈ If I understand and agree with my ISP, I sign the ISP Response Sheet and return it to my Service Coordinator
- ≈ If I do not think the ISP is what we talked about, I can write to the DDS Regional Director and ask for a review. This is called an Appeal
- ≈ If there is not an Appeal, which means I or my guardian agree with what is in my ISP, support staff can work with me on my ISP objectives



My Notes:



## APPEALS

**What do I do if I disagree with my ISP?**

**What do I do if something is not included in my ISP?**

Sometimes I, my guardian, or my family, do not agree about what is in my ISP. The only people that can ask for an Appeal of the ISP are me, my guardian or, if I do not object, my family

I can Appeal my ISP if:

- ≈ the ISP has been sent to me for approval and I disagree with what is written

I can Appeal my ISP by:

- ≈ writing to the DDS Regional Director within 30 days from when I get my ISP document
- ≈ The Regional Director will contact me to meet to talk about what I think should change. This is called an “informal conference” and must happen within 30 days of my asking for an Appeal
- ≈ If I still disagree with the Regional Director, I can ask for a fair hearing by an independent person outside of DDS. This person is a Hearing Officer. This meeting happens within 60 days of asking for the fair hearing
- ≈ If I still disagree with the decision, I have the right to appeal to the Superior Court
- ≈ I can always ask someone I trust and know well to help me in the Appeal Process, like my Service Coordinator, my family, or a friend

## **What can I Appeal?\***

**If any of these statements describe something that did not happen during my ISP, then I can Appeal the ISP.**

≈ **The ISP Assessments were sufficient**

This means the Assessments used as part of the ISP were accurate and had enough information to help develop objectives and strategies.

≈ **The goals developed are consistent with what I want to accomplish as an outcome from my plan.**

This means the goals developed help me reach my vision and my goals.

≈ **My supports are the least restrictive supports possible**

This means any rules for participation in supports are only what are really needed for my health and well-being.

≈ **Any behavior modification plans, procedures, medications and limitations on movement have been reviewed properly.**

This means any program that uses those things must have been reviewed and I was given a chance to appeal their use.

≈ **Any decisions about my ability to make my own decisions have been reviewed properly.**

This means that my team and I discussed any support I need in making decisions.

≈ **Generally, my ISP followed the rules when it was development.**

In other words, did the ISP Team follow the rules? Remember, I am part of the ISP Team, so I also should follow the rules and PARTICIPATE.

**\*This is not the exact wording from the regulations, but if you want to read them, they are at [www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dds/](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dds/) and click on Regulations and Policies**



## **MODIFICATION**

Modification of my ISP means I want to change my ISP before the next ISP meeting. I want to change my Vision, my goals, my objectives or my strategies.

Example: A person has been working on his GED. Half way through his ISP year, he accomplished his objective and received his GED. He now wants to modify his ISP to set another objective to further his education. His ISP now includes new courses to continue his education.

Example: A person had an objective to change her DDS Area of Tie, that means the Area Office she gets services from. Once that happened, she is now interested in changing her ISP to work on getting a new home in her new Area.

Example: A person has lost a lot of weight with the help of support staff, better nutrition and Weight Watchers and now wants to modify the ISP to include increased daily exercise and physical activities.

### **How do I modify my ISP?**

- ≈ I talk with my Service Coordinator about the change I want to make
- ≈ I talk with the people I trust who can help me with the change I want to make

I must speak up and take responsibility for my life. There are things I can do:

- ≈ Decide if I want someone I trust help me talk about changes to my ISP with others
- ≈ Find people I trust and I can talk with

- ≈ Talk to people that listen to me and are honest with me and will tell me if they think my ideas can help me

Another thing I can do is BE PREPARED to talk about what changes I want to my ISP:

- ≈ think about what I want to change and why I want it changed
- ≈ practice talking about what I want changed so I am sure other ISP Team members will understand what I want
- ≈ ask questions so I am clear about what others say or are concerned about
- ≈ Make suggestions about what I want changed in my ISP



It is my right to ask for changes to my ISP. I need to be clear and calm about what needs to be changed. I need to treat other ISP Team members like I want to be treated.



It is important that I have people I know and trust to help me when I want to try something that others may not want me to try.



I need to stay positive even though it takes time to make changes happen.

# My ISP Timeline

START

Two months before my meeting

Talk to my Service Coordinator about my Vision, Goal, Objectives

One month before my meeting

Meeting invitations go out

15 to 7 days before my meeting

Service Coordinator gets Assessments I can ask to see

**MY ISP MEETING**

45 days after my meeting

ISP is sent to me and my guardian to approve

10 days after I get my ISP

Ask my Service Coordinator to explain my ISP

No more than 1 month after I receive a Copy of my ISP

If I disagree with my ISP I need to Appeal by writing to the Regional Director about why I disagree with my ISP

6 months after my ISP Meeting

My support providers report on progress toward meeting my objectives

Each year I have an ISP meeting with my ISP team to update or change my ISP. Each year I need to participate in my ISP.

## IMPORTANT WORDS

**ALLIES:** People I know and trust

**ASSESSMENT:** a tool that is used to identify my abilities, strengths, and interests. It also identifies my learning style, learning environment, types of supports needed, and areas in need of learning. This information assists me and other team members to establish goals, objectives, and strategies

**DDS:** The Department of Developmental Services is the Massachusetts state agency that supports people with intellectual disabilities

**GOALS:** Statement I have identified in my Vision that I would like to work towards

**ISP: Individual Support Plan-** A written plan of services and supports for me

**NETWORKS:** People or groups I know or who know me and can provide assistance in specific areas of learning

**OBJECTIVES:** written statement of a specific skill that I want to learn

**PROVIDER/SUPPORT STAFF:** person or agency responsible for my day-to-day services or supports

**STRATEGIES:** A plan of action to meet my objectives

**SUPPORTS:** Resources that promote my interests and help me have access to support and information that result in enhanced independence, productivity, integration and satisfaction with my life

**VISION:** My ideas, my dreams and my thoughts on how I would like to live, what I would like to do for work, what is important for me to do during the day, and what I like to do to have fun and be social

## WHAT I CAN READ AND SEARCH TO LEARN MORE

Department of Developmental Services ISP Regulations:  
115 CMR 6.23 at <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/departments/dds/>

Person Centered Thinking at [www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/pcp](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/pcp) - a Person Centered Planning Education site at Cornell University

Mass Advocates Standing Strong - the Massachusetts statewide self advocacy organization at [www.mass-advocates.org](http://www.mass-advocates.org)

Making a Contribution Workbook - Available through the Department of Developmental Services Learning and Development Offices  
Southeast Region at [colleen.e.ryan@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:colleen.e.ryan@massmail.state.ma.us)  
Central/West Region at [candace.cassin@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:candace.cassin@massmail.state.ma.us)  
Northeast Region at [pat.cronin@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:pat.cronin@massmail.state.ma.us)  
Metro Region at [maureen.delaney@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:maureen.delaney@massmail.state.ma.us)

[www.ExplorePrepareAct.org](http://www.ExplorePrepareAct.org) - a website sponsored by the Institute for Community Inclusion on helping to get a job

Massachusetts Building Blocks for Person Centered Planning; My Person Centered Plan, a Person centered Planning Tool - Available through DDS Central Office Learning and Development Office [jannet.stevens@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:jannet.stevens@massmail.state.ma.us)

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) at [www.sabeusa.org](http://www.sabeusa.org) the self advocacy organization of the United States, working toward full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in the community

