

# Partners in Policymaking: A Life Changing Experience

By: Steven Nguyen

Are you an individual with a developmental disability (self-advocate) or a parent/guardian of a child with a developmental disability? Do you have a keen interest in improving the lives for yourself, loved ones and the community around you? Consider enrolling in Partners in Policymaking Louisiana!

Partners in Policymaking is a nationally recognized program geared toward leadership development and advocacy, that was started in Minneapolis, MN back in 1987 and has expanded to include many different states and countries. The goal of Partners in Policymaking is to achieve productive partnerships between people needing and using services and those making public policy law. It is designed to provide knowledge and skills building so that participants may work to obtain state of the art services for themselves and others.

Here in Louisiana, it's a 6 month (one weekend of each month) program. From January to June. Each month focuses on a different topic and takes place in Baton Rouge, LA.

Those topics include, but aren't limited to:

- ◆ History
- ◆ Philosophy & Values
- ◆ Assistive Technology
- ◆ Inclusive Education

- ◆ The Legislative Process
- ◆ Supported Employment
- ◆ Supported Living
- ◆ Community Building
- ◆ Community Organizing
- ◆ Systems Change Advocacy

As a class of 2015 graduate, I can say this was one of the greatest experiences of my life. Besides the opportunity to learn from the experts in their respective fields and build better relationships with your elected officials, you have the opportunity to network with other self-advocates and parents, from around Louisiana, and build life-long friendships and shared experiences.

The program is completely free for participants; lodging and food are provided, mileage/travel is reimbursed, and families can apply for a stipend to cover the cost of personal care attendant services for your loved one at home. (Must not currently be receiving waiver services) For more information on this great opportunity, visit <http://www.laddc.org/Initiatives.cfm?aid=8&id=8> or by emailing Liz Gary, Partners in Policymaking Coordinator, at [partners\\_coordinator@charter.net](mailto:partners_coordinator@charter.net). Deadline for applications is September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and will not be extended.



Changing Lives. Every Day.