

Partners for Youth with Disabilities

## Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative

An Easterseals project leveraging peer mentoring to improve transportation advocacy skills for youth with disabilities

# Peer Mentoring Implementation Guide



Funded by the Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Community Living through an agreement with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). May 2018

# Table of Contents

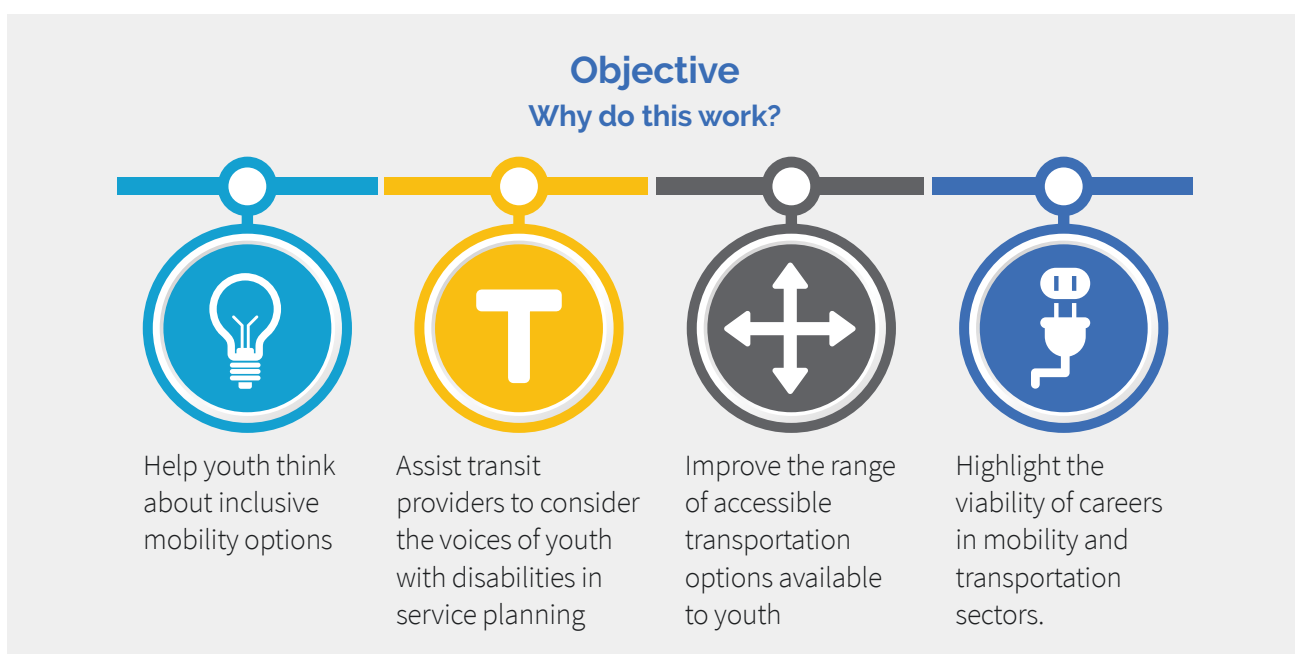
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Model Demonstration Overview.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Project Description.....	3
Results and the Keys to Project Success.....	3
<b>Implementation Plan .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Step 1: Define Goals and Objectives.....	5
Step 2: Identify Needed Resources .....	5
Project Staff .....	5
Advocates.....	6
Technology .....	6
Step 3: Leadership and Youth-Centered Requirements.....	7
Recommendations for Recruitment and Mentor Onboarding .....	7
Set Expectations for Program Participants.....	7
Match Support and Activities .....	7
Step 4: Engage Mobility and Transportation Sectors.....	7
Step 5: Implement Schedule of Activities.....	8
Step 6: Identify and Overcome Challenges.....	9
Step 7: Program Evaluation .....	10
<b>Peer Mentoring Training Program.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Introduction.....	11
Training Sessions.....	12
Session One: Introduction and Orientation .....	12
Session Two: Modes of Transportation .....	12
Session Three: Barriers to Transportation.....	12
Session Four: Self-Advocacy .....	13
Session Five: Work Session .....	13
Session Six: Presentations and Project Closure .....	13
<b>Program Evaluation .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Introduction.....	14
Evaluation Form .....	14
Youth Interviews .....	16
Massachusetts Advocates Perspectives .....	16
Michigan Program to Educate All Cyclists (PEAC) Advocates Perspective .....	18
<b>Best Practices In Peer Mentoring.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Other Resources.....</b>	<b>25</b>
National Center for Mobility Management.....	25
National Aging and Disability Transportation Center .....	25
Transitplanning4all.....	25
Partners for Youth with Disabilities.....	25
<b>Get Moving into Peer Mentoring .....</b>	<b>26</b>



# Introduction

The purpose of the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative (TAMI) was to pilot and record practices of a peer mentoring project that paired young adults with disabilities from Massachusetts with young advocates with disabilities in Michigan, who already had experience and success advocating for inclusive transportation options. Specifically, the initiative was a demonstration project to:

- Help youth think about inclusive mobility options;
- Assist transit providers to consider the voices of youth with disabilities in service planning;
- Improve the range of accessible transportation options available to youth; and,
- Highlight the viability of careers in mobility and transportation sectors.




Through a series of interactive mentoring and educational sessions, young adults from Massachusetts developed new skills and confidence to engage in their own advocacy project. Based on our findings, 100% of the youth experienced an increase in confidence, with all participants being able to now talk about both barriers and solutions for inclusive transportation. And, because 100% of the participants demonstrated, increased self-advocacy skills through specific activities, the experience between Massachusetts and Michigan-based peers can and should be replicated to change the accessibility challenges within transportation.

Based on the success of the model demonstration, I am pleased to provide this ***Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative Implementation Guide*** as a resource for transit and human service providers to assist in developing similar peer mentoring models that enhance youth transportation advocacy in new communities.

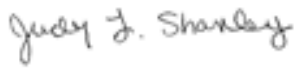
Importantly, the demonstration was funded by the Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Community Living, through an agreement between Easterseals and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Without their support we would not have enhanced youth advocacy in Massachusetts, or have this guide to aid in replication of peer mentoring in other communities.





Key collaborators on the project were Easterseals, Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) and Programs to Educate All Cyclists (PEAC) in Michigan. Moreover, we especially recognize the young adults with disabilities from Michigan and Massachusetts for their important role and contribution in the project and enhancing inclusive community engagement.

Thank you for your interest in our work and your assistance in advancing transportation advocacy through peer mentoring for youth with disabilities in your communities.



**Judy L. Shanley, Ph.D.**

Assistant Vice President, Education & Youth Transition, Easterseals  
Co-Director, FTA, National Center for Mobility Management

# Model Demonstration Overview

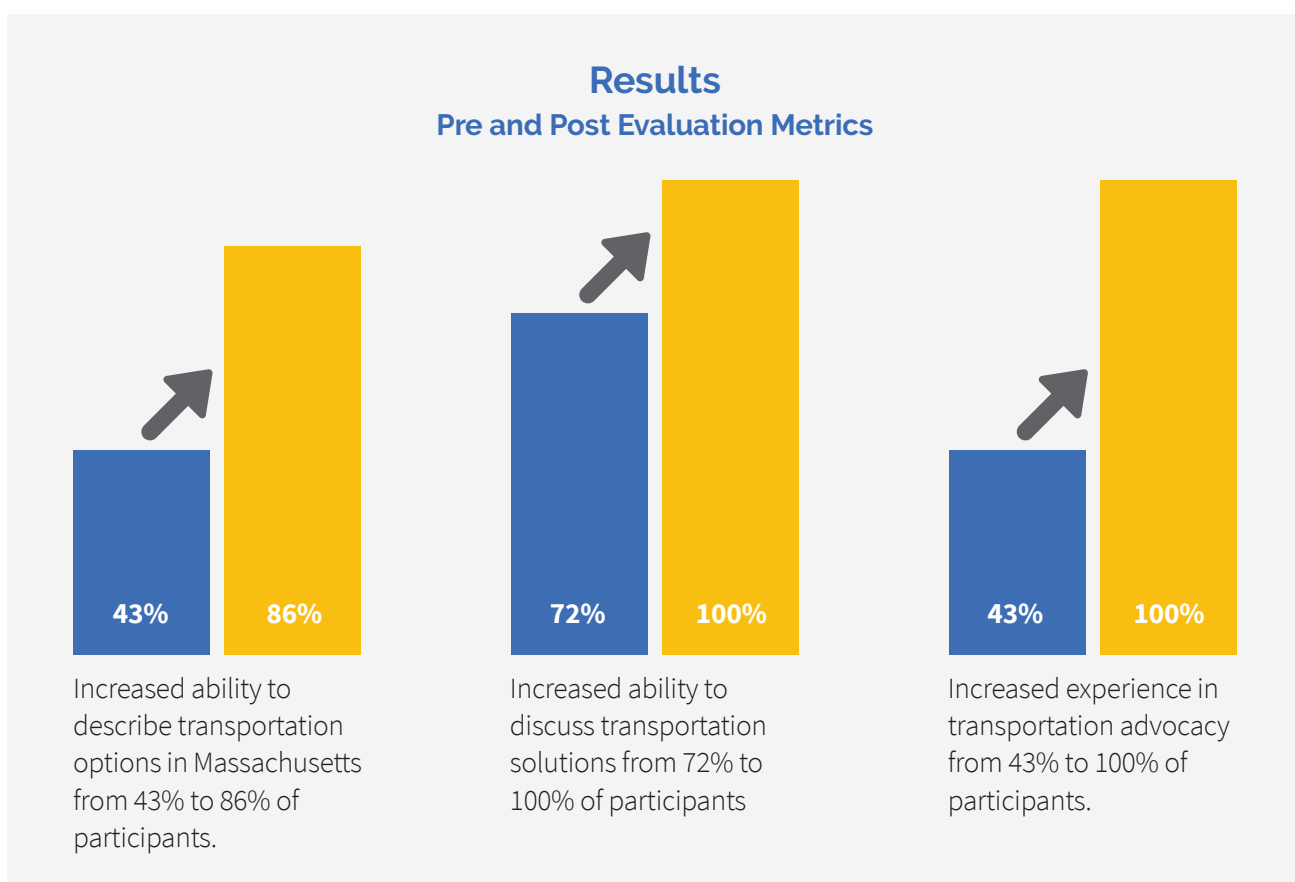
## Project Description

Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) partnered with Easterseals and the Transitplanning4all Project in establishing a peer mentoring project for youth with disabilities. The project focused on creating transportation advocates in Massachusetts through support from Michigan-based peer mentors. The project team developed a *Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative (TAMI) Implementation Plan*, fully described in the following section, to guide the work. The project was implemented, results gathered, and outcomes reported. The final piece of the project was to produce and share this Implementation Guide to enable other groups to implement similar transportation advocacy mentoring initiatives.

## Results and the Keys to Project Success

The evaluation captured results that demonstrated significant improvement in knowledge, confidence, and access to opportunities and skills. Post-evaluation data collected from the Massachusetts youth advocates (mentees) included:

- Increased ability to describe transportation options in Massachusetts, from 43% to 86% of participants.
- Increased ability to discuss transportation solutions, from 72% to 100% of participants.
- Increased experience in transportation advocacy, from 43% to 100% of participants.





The project team also identified the following keys to the success of the Transportation Accessibility Mentoring Initiative:

- Recruiting a diverse group of young adults with prior leadership training to serve as peer mentors.
- Providing training for both the peer mentors and peer advocates.
- Ensuring the process is driven by the peer advocates.
- Providing stipends to advocates (peer mentors) to create a professional-level commitment.
- Using clear and realistic metrics for evaluation.

However, there was one project objective, to enhance interest in transportation as a career option that did not improve at the same rate as the other objectives. This was partially because of the high interest in transportation careers by the advocates at the start.

Finally, the most significant result of the project was undoubtedly the advancement of advocacy skills for the peer advocates and leadership skills for the peer mentors. As an example, youth learned how to communicate transportation needs and to whom to direct these needs. Both are further explored in the Evaluation Section of this guide.

## Embedded Overview Video

The model demonstration concluded with a Webinar that enabled participants to share descriptions and perspectives. The full **recording** is available online.



# Implementation Plan

This section of the guide is designed to enable organizations, including schools, human services organizations, and transit agencies to develop similar transportation advocacy mentoring initiatives to enhance youth advocacy skills and impact community transportation planning. The Implementation Plan provides an effective structure that was successfully used in the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative during the August 2017-January 2018 time period.

## Step 1: Define Goals and Objectives

The TAMI described the following overarching goal for its team:

**Empower new transportation youth advocates with disabilities through trained peer mentors.**

Other objectives included providing a training webinar and implementation guide (this document) so others may replicate the lessons learned.

Questions to consider when establishing your initiative and its specific goals and objectives:

- What do you want to achieve?
- Why do you want to achieve it?
- Who do you want involved?
- Where (or how) will you conduct the activities?
- What resources do you have to contribute to the initiative?
- When do you want to implement, conduct and conclude the initiative?
- How will you know it is effective?
- How do you want to disseminate results?

## Step 2: Identify Needed Resources

The project will need to be resourced for success, including personnel, advocates (peer mentors and peer mentees), technology and other administrative tools. The following resources were used in the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative and should be considered when developing a similar project. Depending on the scope of your work, some of these positions may not be necessary.

### Project Staff

- **Coordinator:** This person is designated as the lead, responsible for the development of the project schedule, coordination of meetings, establishment of training content, and general execution of the project. The Coordinator is responsible for implementing the budget to reach project objectives. Another role is Session Facilitator. In this project, the Coordinator served as Session Facilitator, but others may choose to divide these roles.
- **Sponsor:** This person is responsible for providing the operating budget and serves as the ultimate decision authority. The Sponsor works closely with the Coordinator.



- **Technical Support:** The Technical Support team member assists in providing the technical platforms for connecting project team members. In most cases this will include accessible webinar and teleconference platforms for peer mentors and advocates to receive training and connect for their advocacy sessions. This person will oversee the technical training and practice for all participants. Technical Support is also desired when sharing the project overview and lessons learned during follow-on sessions.
- **Researcher:** The Researcher function provides input on the design and creation of the Pre- and Post-Evaluations. In the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative, the Sponsor and the Project Coordinator fulfilled the duties of Researcher.
- **Writer:** As one of the key deliverables of the TAMI was the Implementation Guide, a Writer was added to the team to capture and document the purpose, model, implementation plan, evaluation, impact and supporting resources. An organization replicating this initiative may want consider using a writer to produce informational and training materials, develop recruitment materials, and write about the project in diverse communication forums.
- **Graphic Designer:** To support the creation of the Implementation Guide, a Graphic Designer was added to the team. This team member also assists in the creation of the infographic to be used in social media and other forms of sharing. A graphic designer may also be useful to produce project materials using universal design for learning and accessibility principles.

## Advocates

- **Peer Mentors:** For a successful project, it is important to identify a group of experienced young adult advocates to serve as Peer Mentors. Although training is provided on peer mentoring, the young adults should have demonstrated advocacy experience and likely a coordinating organization that aided them in their previous advocacy work. In the case of the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative, Programs to Educate All Cyclists (PEAC) was a known trainer of transportation self-advocates.
- **Peer Mentees:** In order for the Peer Mentors to have successful advocate-partners, it is important to identify interested and prepared young adults who are ready to learn about transportation advocacy. While the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative application process was open to any eligible young adult, PYD targeted outreach to individuals who had attended the **Massachusetts Youth Leadership Forum**. By previously meeting the participants and knowing their interest in transportation and mobility management, the project was more likely to be successful with interested, prepared and engaged young adults as Advocates.

## Technology

- **Webinar Platform:** For the TAMI, the team members were in Michigan and Massachusetts. Working with the Technical Support staff, it is important to identify and utilize an accessible webinar platform in order to connect the peer mentors and mentees for successful and consistent communications. PYD used **Big Blue Button**, an accessible web conference system for online learning.





- **Teleconferences:** When working on a state-wide project, it is also helpful to include the ability for the advocates to convene planning meetings. In the TAMl, the peer mentees were from urban and rural locations across Massachusetts. At times, teleconference calls were used to connect peers and assist in their preparation for specific activities.

When developing your project staffing and resource plan, you may identify other needs. Again, the above are provided based on the implementation model that was used for this baseline project.

## Step 3: Leadership and Youth-Centered Requirements

As mentioned above in the staffing requirements, it is critical to place the youth – the peer mentors and mentees – at the center of the initiative. In order to help identify the youth participants and to optimize the investment in those participants, the below recommendations should be used in the selection and determination process.

### Recommendations for Recruitment and Mentor Onboarding

- Find mentors who are familiar with the transit system and mobility services
- Consult with other stakeholders across transportation sectors (i.e. mobility management programs, transit agencies)
- Foster relationships between peer mentors
- Encourage mentors to learn best practices from each other
- Use incentives! Have pizza or snacks to motivate attendance

### Set Expectations for Program Participants

- Set clear expectations for participation and attendance
- Send out expectations during application process
- Provide opportunities to make up missed sessions
- Connect stipends into meeting expectations. For example, this project required that advocates attend or make up 80% of meetings to be eligible for stipend

### Match Support and Activities

- Engage mentee and mentor in goal setting (SMART goals)
- Find a neutral place for them to meet if not a virtual platform
- Have advocates schedule check in times with program specialists
- Reach out to agencies working in transit to explore potential workshops or presentations (i.e. Mobility management networks, Highway or Public Works Depts., Dept. of Transportation)
- Use ice-breakers for relationship building

## Step 4: Engage Mobility and Transportation Sectors

To begin, it is important to identify community, state or regional organizations that have transportation advocacy functions to partner in your transportation peer mentoring advocacy initiative.

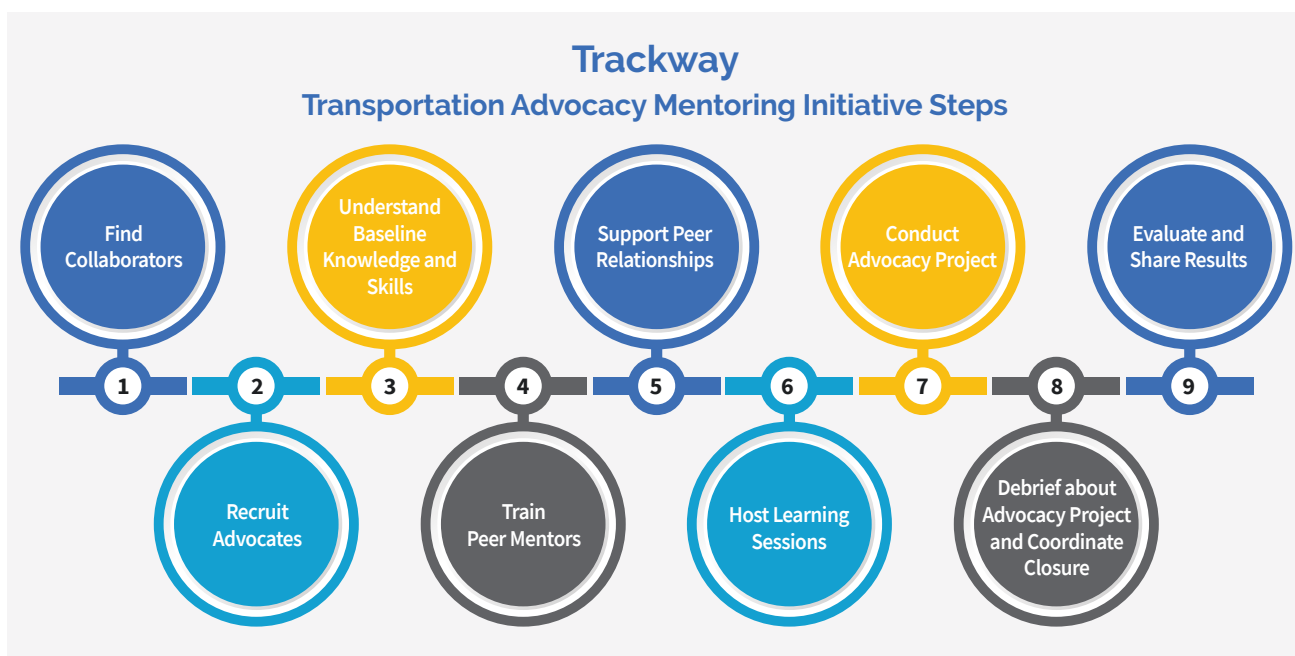


The peer mentors need to have demonstrated self-advocacy experience, guidance from an organization steeped in transportation and/or mobility management, and inclusion. Further, the peer mentors and their organization will need to be prepared to invest their time in receipt of peer mentoring training and in providing the peer mentoring itself to the identified advocates. This process is made possible by identifying an organization already conducting transportation advocacy and already holding inclusive mobility management dialogue(s) in communities.

Next, the peer mentors need to share with the advocates examples of identifying issues in their communities that they have addressed or continue to address. By doing this, the advocates will be able to bring their process to identify the focus of their advocacy project.

In all cases, coordinating organizational sponsors are critical for the initiative and organizational staff must be available to guide the project.

## Step 5: Implement Schedule of Activities



The PYD and Easterseals project team crafted the following activities as the core of the *Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative Implementation Plan*. Consider using these baseline activities and amend your plan to meet your organizational, funder and/or community needs.

- **Find Collaborators.** PYD, a youth mentoring program, identified PEAC as a key collaborator. PEAC had youth transportation advocates who were experienced and prepared to share their knowledge.
- **Recruit Advocates.** PYD recruited through the Massachusetts Youth Leadership Forum through an application process. Seven advocates were selected from both urban and rural settings, from a wide range of disabilities, racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

- **Understand Baseline Knowledge and Skills.** It is important to understand the level of knowledge, skills and general comprehension of transportation and advocacy of the participants. By gauging the levels of the collaborators and advocates, the model is able to be tailored at project initiation.
- **Train Peer Mentors.** PYD used the Big Blue Button web conferencing system to provide peer mentoring training. Details of the training program are provided in the Training Program section of this document.
- **Support Peer Relationships.** The peer mentors from Michigan and the youth advocates from Massachusetts met each other through a virtual meeting. The project staff identified and implemented ice breaker activities to help the peer mentors and advocates to get to know each other.
- **Host Learning Sessions.** PYD hosted learning sessions on the following topics:
  - Project orientation and introductions
  - Understanding different modes to transportation
  - Identifying barriers to transportation
  - Using your self-advocacy skills
- **Conduct Advocacy Project.** The Massachusetts advocates identified projects based on barriers they identified in their communities. The projects were conducted and feedback was provided by the Michigan peer mentors.
- **Coordinate Closure.** The Massachusetts and Michigan advocates, along with the project advisors, conducted a re-cap of activities and enabled for social-emotional closure for all participants. This session also identified how participants would be able to stay connected, including via **PYD's eMentoring Network**.
- **Evaluate and Share Results.** Pre and post tests were conducted that measured knowledge, opportunities and skills.

## Step 6: Identify and Overcome Challenges

Although the overall program was a success, issues did arise. A list is provided in order to aid other organizations in using these lessons learned to build enhancements into similar mentoring and advocacy initiatives.

- Technology preparation was key for the advocates and more time was required for training than anticipated.
- At times, peer mentors needed more than two weeks between lessons to ensure they were properly prepared and not rushed.
- Time was needed for participants to share ideas and express themselves. The project used the expression “Share the air” as a strategy to ensure the advocates would have the opportunity and encouragement to participate and communicate their ideas and thoughts.



- The peer mentors required training and assistance in learning how to ask questions of the advocates.
- The peer mentors desired a longer period of time to continue the process.

It is recommended that the schedule includes time to review challenges as they arise and ensure understanding and inclusion are achieved first and foremost. The practice of practicing was a great success of the project that increased the confidence of the participants at all levels!

## **Step 7: Program Evaluation**

Conduct the program evaluation. Details regarding this are in the section below.



# Peer Mentoring Training Program

## Introduction

A critical component to peer mentoring is *training*. The model demonstration project training program was developed around the **Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring** and adapted from PYD's "Mentoring 101: An Introductory Workshop for New Mentors" and "Best Practices for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities."



The training program emphasizes the following benefits of peer mentoring:

- Learning from someone who has been through similar experiences;
- Relating to someone their age;
- Gaining relevant information applicable to their current experiences;
- Expanding familiarity with peers in social situations;
- Enjoying a more realistic and less stringent relationship;
- Gaining skills;
- Learning to be advocates;
- Feeling comfortable and being part of a community; and,
- Gaining a sense of ownership that yields high results.

In order to ensure these benefits are realized, the team needs to put a significant investment into training of the peer mentors and mentees. The training offerings that were used are provided below in order to assist other organizations in recycling or repurposing the content for a similar initiative.

## Training Sessions

To begin, if your organization selects a webinar platform to use as was done by PYD in the demonstration project, prepare to invest initial training time in how to use the technical platform. This initial investment will be worthwhile so build in time for it on your schedule.

Once the peer mentors and mentees are trained on the tools that will be used, it is also important to allow plenty of time in sessions to reinforce their confidence with the tools.

The demonstration project training sessions are described in detail below and are accompanied by a link to the actual webinar recordings.

### Session One: Introduction and Orientation

For the first training session, it is important to focus on a few objectives. First, provide an *Ice Breaker*. For the demonstration project the mentors and advocates were asked the following questions:

- Where are you from?
- What are you hoping to learn?

This time allowed participants to get to know each other and to also increase their confidence with the technology platform.

After the ice breaker, a thorough review of the Project Schedule was provided. This also helped the participants gain an understanding of the Project Scope.

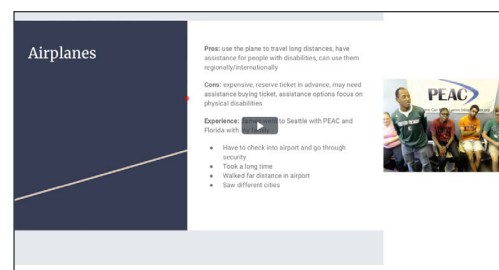
### Session Two: Modes of Transportation

In order for a common understanding of modes of transportation to exist, the second training session was focused on description of modes followed by discussion. This approach increased confidence in the subject matter while reinforcing the technology tools before entering into the discovery of barriers or self-advocacy training.

Access the **Modes of Transportation** (1 hour and 7 minutes) training session to discover how the model demonstration project covered this important topic.

### Session Three: Barriers to Transportation

The next two sessions, *Barriers to Transportation* and *Self-Advocacy*, were developed and facilitated by the Michigan-based peer mentors. The Massachusetts advocates were assigned homework at the end of each session and asked to present their research during the following session.





## Session Four: Self-Advocacy

The ***Self-Advocacy: Putting your Skills to Work*** training session is a keystone training session. The session is facilitated by the peer mentor champion, includes a variety of content and details provided by peer mentors, and included a discovery and brainstorming discussion between the peer mentors and advocates that uses the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time Limited) model to help identify advocacy projects for the Massachusetts-based advocates.

Highlights from the Putting Your Skills to Work session include:

- Identifying Barriers: Personal, Systemic, and Infrastructure;
- Sample Advocacy Activities: Meet with legislators, Committee testimony, Advisory committees;
- Peer Mentors Share Stories, Travel Training, Cycling Instruction;
- Peer Mentor Sample Actions: Training bus driver, Traveling with legislators, Calling city officials;
- Recommended Advocacy Actions; and,
- Advocates Brainstorming.

This session helped identify the advocacy project for the Massachusetts-based advocates.

## Session Five: Work Session

A fifth session was added to the project to extend the time the peer mentors and mentees had to work on the project. The project coordinator provided homework to the Massachusetts advocates to create a script that would be used in their advocacy work. This session includes a review of the scripts (one for Boston-based advocates and a second from the Western Massachusetts advocates) and getting feedback from the Michigan-based peer mentors.

## Session Six: Presentations and Project Closure

In the final session, the project work between the peer mentors and advocates concludes with presentations from the advocates. The session educates participants about the importance of framing advocacy efforts to continue engagement. The discussions also showcase how using personal stories to share real-life barriers to transportation and to frame why changes are needed. Peer mentors were able to aid the advocates in asking Massachusetts transportation officials for follow-on engagement and dialogue. In this manner, advocates get involved with creating change and building solutions for systems change.

Also, the project coordinator integrated project closure techniques into this final session, including a review of lessons learned, feedback from the coordinator, and time for processing from a social-emotional perspective.

# Program Evaluation

## Introduction

The Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative intentionally embedded pre- and post- evaluation participant surveys to measure the impact of the project on knowledge, opportunity and skills. The evaluations were conducted via an accessible online form at the start and end of the initiative.

## Evaluation Form

The form that is embedded below is the actual form used in Pre- and Post- Evaluations.

### Background Information

#### Hello Youth Council Member!

This survey is designed to measure what you learned as part of your participation in the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer each question based on what you think or how you feel today. Thank you!

### Contact Information

#### Youth Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Apt/Unit: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Transportation Survey

**I can name and describe at least 6 modes of transportation.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ No

**I can name and explain several barriers to transportation access.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ No



**I can describe transportation options in Massachusetts.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ No

**I feel comfortable talking about barriers to transportation with other people.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ No

**I feel comfortable talking about solutions to transportation barriers.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ No

**I have had the opportunity to be a transportation advocate.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ No

**I am interested in transportation as a possible career.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ No

**Thank you!**



## Youth Interviews

The project included an opportunity to interview the advocates to determine what they learned from their transportation mentoring experiences. Below are the questions followed by the advocates' answers.

### Massachusetts Advocates Perspectives

#### ***Why did you apply to be a transportation advocate?***

- Project description was interesting
- Learn how to handle transportation challenges
- Increase confidence and independence in transportation
- Learn how to increase advocacy to make change
- Learn how to advocate for myself and others
- Learn others' experiences to find common approach to one advocacy goal

#### ***What did you learn from the peer mentors in Michigan?***

- Similar struggles with inaccessible transportation systems
- All focusing on one goal, to make some of the changes possible to increase accessibility
- Modes of transportation and barriers
- Testifying process

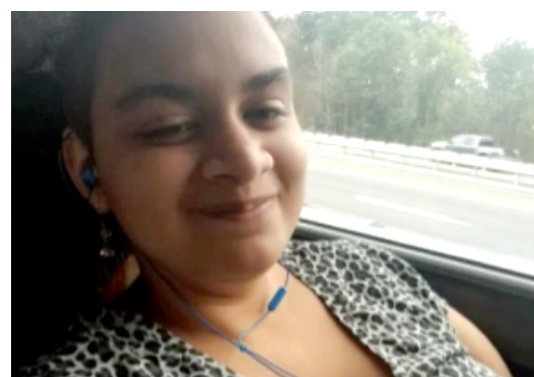
#### ***Can you describe your team's advocacy project?***

One Massachusetts advocate described the advocacy project, *Access to Reduced Fare Cards for People with Disabilities*. The details of this project, as reported by the advocate, are provided below.

The Massachusetts advocates identified that the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) reduced fare card for people with disabilities – the MBTA Transportation Access Pass (TAP) – was only available at a single location in Boston. This presents a significant challenge to riders with disabilities in suburban locations with an inability to get to that location. The advocates wrote and sent a letter about the problem that explained how challenging their procedure is for many individuals to access the location to get their fare card. In fact, for some



*Massachusetts advocates and Partners for Youth with Disabilities staff members together during a transportation advocacy outing.*



**Zulmarie Gonzales**  
Massachusetts Advocate

### Self-advocacy Skills

***“ I used the transportation advocacy training to help introduce a bill to make sex education more inclusive in schools. ”***

### Lesson Learned

***“ Make sure that you are heard! ”***

individuals it would take up to two hours and require several bus transfers to actually reach the single point of MBTA TAP distribution. The group wrote recommendations to increase the number of locations to apply and receive the reduced fair cards.

The MBTA promptly responded, identified they understood that it was an issue, and recommended that the advocates could provide a mail-in option while they improved access solutions.

The advocates were pleased to receive an interim solution. Furthermore, after closure of the advocacy project, the MBTA continues to explore expanding the mail-in option and offering alternate locations to pick-up the TAP fare cards.

#### ***What did you learn from participating?***

- Making change and advocating is a process that has steps.
- Change takes time.
- You need to be involved.
- Personal stories are very powerful.
- Working in a group is helpful.
- Don't give up; keep pushing to ensure you are heard.
- How to be a better advocate.
- Keep educating yourself and others.

#### ***How are you using the skills you learned?***

- Enhanced communication and presentation skills.
- Accessed MBTA TAP fare card.
- Enhanced independence in using transportation solutions.
- Joined a self-advocacy group and sharing lessons with the group.
- Introduced a bill to the state to improve inclusion of the Healthy Youth Act.



**Austin Carr**  
Massachusetts Advocate

#### **Self-advocacy Skills**

***“ I am involved in a town self-advocacy group and I am sharing what I have learned with the group. I feel more prepared now. ”***

#### **Lesson Learned**

***“ I learned that making change and advocating is a process. I learned about the process and the many steps it takes. I learned that change takes time. That you need to be involved. That personal stories are very powerful, working in a group is helpful, and don't give up. ”***

## Michigan Program to Educate All Cyclists (PEAC) Advocates Perspective

### *What did you learn by being a peer mentor to the advocates in Massachusetts?*

- You may be able to do things well, but when you have to teach something you improve your understanding and abilities to a new level. “When we teach, we learn.”
- Learned that common challenges exist in Michigan and Massachusetts.
- Learned that other individuals with disabilities exist; we aren’t alone.

### *What was the most challenging thing about being a peer mentor?*

- The amount of time that was required, this was hard work.
- PEAC students would have wanted more time to go further in the project.
- Asking questions to help pull out stories from the Massachusetts participants was a new skillset.
- The most challenging part was the responsibility of taking ownership of the project.

### *What advice would you give to others who want to be a transportation advocate?*

- Get connected, become an advocate by getting engaged in a group to learn techniques and skills.



**Tim Davis**  
Michigan Peer Mentor

### **Lesson Learned**

***“ You may be able to do things well, but when you have to teach something you really have to know your stuff. ‘When we teach, we learn’ ”***



# Best Practices In Peer Mentoring



This section is included for organizations to discover best practices in peer mentoring. For individuals seeking to design new peer mentoring programs, the program and model descriptions that are provided below may assist in customizing new approaches to meet specific community needs.

## Noted Practices in Peer Mentoring

Per the **National Council on Independent Living** (NCIL), peer support is a hallmark of the Independent Living Movement and a core service – both in statute and philosophy – of Centers for Independent Living. In this manner, peer mentoring is tied to self-advocacy in the community.

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are community-based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities. CILs are unique in that they operate according to a strict philosophy of consumer control, wherein people with all types of disabilities directly govern and staff the organization. Centers for Independent Living Provide:

- Peer Support
- Information and Referral
- Individual and Systems Advocacy
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Transition

There are 403 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) along with 330 branch offices and 56 Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs) in the United States.

## Independent Living Research Utilization – Building an Effective Peer Support Program

In order to facilitate Peer Support training and programming at the CILs, the *Building an Effective Peer Support Program* course was provided by the national training and technical assistance project for centers for

independent living (CIL-NET) and statewide independent living councils (SILC-NET). The IL-NET is operated by the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) Program at TIRR Memorial Hermann in partnership with the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL).

The course defines Peer Support Program as:

“recruits, trains, assigns, and supervises a group of individuals with disabilities whose role it is specifically to provide either one-on-one or group support to other individuals with disabilities. This may include individuals who are paid or volunteers, excluding full or part-time staff who are hired to fill basic positions within their centers, who also have a disability.”

To learn more about design and implementation of effective peer support programs, access the **[Building an Effective Peer Support Program course](#)**.

## Ability360 Peer Mentor Training Manual

Ability360, formerly the Arizona Bridge to Independent Living (ABIL), created a comprehensive peer mentoring training manual with supporting tools and appendices. The 124-page document includes a significant self-advocacy section.

The manual defines peer mentors as “people who have a disability and have successfully achieved independent living on their own. They are volunteers willing to assist others to achieve their own independent living goals.” Further, the description continues:

“A Peer Mentor is:

- Someone Who Cares About Your Dreams.
- Someone Who Is Willing To Spend Time And Effort To Help You Succeed.
- Someone Who Has Expertise, Experience And Resource Networks To Help You Meet Your Needs.
- Someone Who Has Reached Their Own Goals.
- Someone Who Is Willing To Be There To Talk To And Support You.
- Someone Who Is Willing To Share Themselves With You.
- Someone Who Is A Positive Thinker.”

Access the **[Peer Mentoring Training Manual](#)** and visit the **[Ability360 Arizona Peer Mentoring Services Page](#)**.

## National Mentoring Resource Center

The National Mentoring Resource Center, a program of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program at the U.S. Department of Justice, has a Peer Mentoring Program Portal that offers a variety of resources supporting at-risk youth programming. Resources include:

- **Reviews of Specific Peer Mentoring Programs:**
  - **Peer Group Connection’s program design** includes high school peer leaders engaging with groups of freshmen mentees. Read the **[review](#)** and the accompanying **[insights](#)** for practitioners.



- **The Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Program** engages high school students as one-to-one mentors for middle and elementary school students. Read the [review](#) and the accompanying [insights](#) for practitioners.
- **The Woodrock Youth Development Program** combines peer mentoring with other supports as a substance abuse prevention intervention for at-risk youth. Read the [review](#).
- **Reviews of Relevant Practices:** Providing match support for mentors can be a relevant practice to ensure that peer mentors have the support and guidance they need to be successful. Check out the [review](#) of this practice and the accompanying [insights](#) for practitioners.
- **Blog Post: [School-Based Peer Mentoring: A Powerful Tool to Help Close the Mentoring Gap](#)** discusses the impact of peer mentoring programs, like the Center for Supportive Schools' Peer Group Connection model, on expanding mentoring in schools.
- **Webinar: [Peer Mentoring: A Discussion with Experienced Practitioners](#)**, engages seasoned peer mentoring practitioners in a conversation about best practices for this model.
- **Implementation Resources: [The Peer Mentoring Handbook](#)** provides recommended practices for teens and young adults to mentor younger students or children.

Visit the [NMRC Peer Mentoring Page](#) to learn more.

## National Disability Mentoring Coalition Program Models

The objective of the National Disability Mentoring Coalition (NDMC) is to increase the awareness, quality, and impact of mentoring for individuals with disabilities across the nation. Member organizations share core values and align with the Coalition's initiatives to streamline communication, standardize and systematize data collection, reduce duplication of efforts, increase mentoring opportunities, and improve outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities.


The NDMC created a Peer Mentoring Workgroup to share information and practices to help elevate peer mentoring as an offering in more communities and programs. The NDMC Peer Mentoring Workgroup provided the resources listed below to support this *Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative Implementation Guide*.

Learn more about the [National Disability Mentoring Coalition](#).

## Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation Peer and Family Support Program

The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation created the Peer & Family Support Program for people living with paralysis, as well as those who care for them, to connect for hope, support, and a way forward. Available across the country, the foundation's free peer-to-peer network helps everyone, from newly paralyzed individuals and their family members to people who have lived with paralysis for some time, by offering the personalized information and resources needed to live a fulfilling life.





A Reeve certified peer mentor is someone who wants to make a difference by helping and supporting members of the paralysis community. The foundation identifies persons impacted by paralysis, thriving in life and able to demonstrate skills that empower others. Those individuals become peer mentors through expert training and certification and received ongoing information and support through a private online community.

Approximately 7,000 people have been helped by peer mentors located in 43 states with:

- Transitioning home from a rehab center;
- Researching job or educational opportunities;
- Getting information on health and secondary conditions;
- Coping with the responsibilities and emotional challenges of being a caregiver;
- Building confidence and motivation;
- Navigating local, state, and national resources; and,
- Understanding the progress of research.

Learn more about the [\*\*Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation\*\*](#) and the [\*\*Peer and Family Support Program\*\*](#) and read this [\*\*#ReeveMentors blog post\*\*](#).

## DO-IT at the University of Washington

The DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) Center is dedicated to empowering people with disabilities through technology and education. It promotes awareness and accessibility—in both the classroom and the workplace—to maximize the potential of individuals with disabilities and make our communities more vibrant, diverse, and inclusive.

In DO-IT programming, mentors can help protégés explore career options, set academic and career goals, develop professional contacts, identify resources, strengthen interpersonal skills, and develop a sense of identity. They can guide young people through the transition from structured high school environments to less structured postsecondary environments.

Peers also offer some of the same benefits as mentors, including coaching, counseling, advice, information, encouragement, and role modeling. Peers are sometimes easier for young people to approach than adults and typically offer a higher degree of mutual assistance. Relationships with individuals, who are a year or two older, near-peers, can also help high schoolers learn about academic accommodations, work with professors, live independently, and make friends. Near-peers make short-term goals seem within reach. In addition, mentor, peer, and near-peer supporters can become empowered as they come to see themselves as contributors in their supportive roles with young people.

Learn more about [\*\*DO-IT\*\*](#).



## DREAM at the National Center for College Students with Disabilities

DREAM (Disability Rights, Education Activism, and Mentoring) is a national organization for and by college students with disabilities. DREAM is supported by the **National Center for College Students with Disabilities** (NCCSD), which is based at the **Association on Higher Education And Disability** (AHEAD).

DREAM was founded in 2011 by three college students with disabilities who led a thread on a national disability- and-higher-education-related listserv calling for networking between students and student-led organizations across the U.S. DREAM is centered on a student-led model with a Coordinator, Student Advisory Board, and Campus Chapters and Affiliates. In the first year of its Campus Chapters and Affiliates program, DREAM leaders supported the development of 8 new DREAM chapters and 12 affiliates on campuses across the U.S. and receive new inquiries weekly.

In addition to developing peer-to-peer communication, support, and interaction, DREAM incorporates disability mentoring informally and formally through national programs such as DREAM Mentor Monday monthly webinars and the Disabled and Proud student-led conference. DREAM is open to higher education students of all types and disabilities and explicitly includes people who have traditionally been marginalized or underrepresented in the disability or higher education communities to lead the organization's programs and development. DREAM aims to develop disability culture and mentoring on college campuses, advance the study and inclusion of disability issues in higher education, and empower all students with disabilities to create local and national change.

Learn more about **DREAM**.

## Youth Leadership Forum

The Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities (YLF) is a unique career leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. The program was developed by the California Governor's Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons in 1992. The Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor seeks to replicate this initiative around the nation. The YLF is implemented at the state level by state and local partners.

In Massachusetts, the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is a one-day conference for youth and young adults with disabilities. YLF participants build leadership skills and leave better prepared for future employment, higher education, and independent living. YLF participants take part in both small and large group discussions and workshops on such topics as: self-advocacy, disability pride, assistive technology, independent living, employment skills, career exploration, higher education, legislative advocacy, the Disability Rights Movement, and community participation. Young people with disabilities can apply to be a YLF Delegate or Peer Leader.

Learn more about the **YLF model** and the **Massachusetts YLF**.



## Peer MentoringWorks from PolicyWorks

PolicyWorks provided a 21-hour online training program for the certification of peer mentors working with transition-aged youth in pre-employment programs called Peer MentoringWorks. The model developed for Florida Vocational Rehabilitation (FL VR) in concert with Florida Atlantic University, the Disability Center, the Stand Among Friends program and BF Duncan will provides both training to the mentor and also to the project coordinators who will supervise the programs for service providers.

In addition, a Pre-Employment Toolkit App is available and ongoing support is also available through a LinkedIn MentoringWorks Group.

Tools available to date:

- Guide to Peer Mentoring for Youth in Transition to Employment
- Guide to Training for Peer Mentoring Project Coordinators
- On-Going Training and Technical Assistance
- Recertification Training

PolicyWorks has customized similar modules for Alaska and Mississippi, provided through the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the **Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center** (WINTAC) as the peer mentoring pilot states. For each state, we have a customized certification for both peer mentors and peer mentoring program coordinators.

Learn more about [PolicyWorks](#) and the [Peer MentoringWorks](#) training program.

## Survive or Thrive

Survive or Thrive, empowers, educates, and builds awareness in a culturally-responsive manner to unite the disability community and their allies in raising societal expectations and maximizing potential. This is accomplished through mentorship, formal workshops, experiential learning activities, virtual information sessions, and social events.

Survive or Thrive assists youth with disabilities and their allies in exploring, creating, and executing post-secondary goals. Goals include, but are not limited to, pursuing higher education, employment, volunteering, and independent living skills development.

Working with participants, Survive or Thrive:

- helps students with disabilities and their families plan post high school goals as they navigate along their paths toward adulthood;
- assists students in taking ownership of their lives as they develop self-advocacy skills to achieve their goals; and,
- fosters family cooperation and involvement with the participant.

Learn more about [Survive or Thrive](#) and review their peer mentoring [videos](#) in multiple languages, including videos for parents as influencers.





## Other Resources

The following resources each served significant roles in developing the TAMI pilot and in producing this guide. The organizations provide online content to aid in mobility management, transportation and including youth through a variety of disability inclusion activities.

### National Center for Mobility Management

The National Center for Mobility Management is a national technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration and operated through a consortium of three national organizations—the **American Public Transportation Association**, the **Community Transportation Association of America**, and **Easterseals**. Learn more at **NCMM**.

### National Aging and Disability Transportation Center

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) goal is to promote the availability and accessibility of transportation options for older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers. The Center is a program funded by the **Federal Transit Administration** and administered by **Easterseals** and the **National Association of Area Agencies on Aging** (n4a) with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, **Administration for Community Living**. Learn more at **NADTC**.

### Transitplanning4all

The mission of Transit Planning for All, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services' **Administration for Community Living** (ACL) in collaboration with the Department of Transportation's **Federal Transit Administration**, is to demonstrate the value that inclusive processes can bring to coordinated transportation efforts. The project is developing, testing, and demonstrating ways to empower people with disabilities and older adults to be actively involved in designing and implementing coordinated transportation systems. The project's goal is to support communities nationwide in adopting proven, sustainable, scalable, and replicable models that include participation of people with disabilities and older adults in the design and implementation of coordinated transportation systems that are responsive to their needs. Learn more at **Transit Planning for All**.

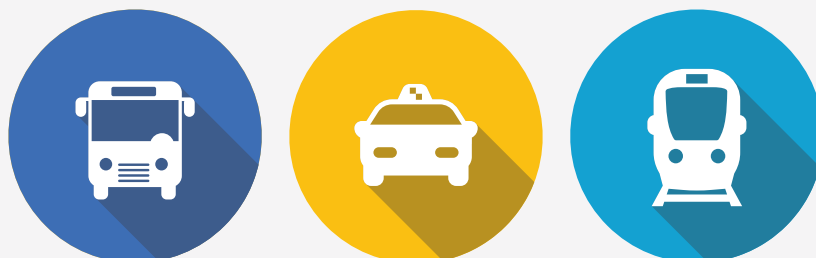
### Partners for Youth with Disabilities

Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) empowers youth with disabilities to reach their full potential by providing transformative mentoring programs, youth development opportunities, and inclusion expertise. PYD motivates youth to reach their personal, educational, and career goals, and guide organizations in becoming more inclusive. PYD provides one-on-one, group and online mentoring programs along with tailored programming for theater arts, job readiness, and leadership development. Furthermore, PYD provides training, coaching and consulting services regarding disability inclusion, mentoring and peer mentoring. Access the **PYD Disability Inclusion Assessment** and **PYD's Disability Inclusion Guidebooks**. Learn more at **PYD**.



# Get Moving into Peer Mentoring

## Get Moving into Peer Mentoring Leveraging peer mentoring to improve transportation advocacy skills



The *Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative* was an Easterseals project leveraging peer mentoring to improve transportation advocacy skills. This *Peer Mentoring Implementation Guide* was funded by the Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Community Living through an agreement with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and is available to assist organizations to leverage peer mentoring to improve transportation advocacy skills in communities.

If your organization is interested in partnering with Easterseals and PYD to implement a similar model in your community, please contact:

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