

**2023 LIFE CONFERENCE SESSION DESCRIPTIONS – VIRTUAL**

**Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

**8:30am-8:45am**

**Welcome Remarks**

**Speaker:**

**Haley Shiber, Founder, Haley’s Rays of Sunshine**

**Speaker Bio:**

**Haley Shiber** is a young advocate, artist, small business owner, and boss lady on wheels. Born with a genetic neuromuscular disorder, Pontocerebellar Hypoplasia (PCH) Type 1B, she embraces her zebra stripes and shares a day in her life with all those who are willing to lend a listening ear. She is so passionate, she founded her own small business, Haley's Rays of Sunshine (HROS). Through HROS she spreads literacy to all, advocates for many, encourages use of technology for independence, shares her love of art, and community.

In her day-to-day life she relies on skilled caregivers to aid with her many medical complexities and empowers her to live in her home. She loves creating art, exercising, social media and being a part of duo teams in 5k races, all thanks to adaptations. She embraces her challenges, allows nothing to stop her. Fearless!

**8:45-9:45am**

**2023 Keynote Address - Inclusion On the Path to What is Possible**

**Speaker:**

**Russell Lehmann, Speaker, Poet, Advocate**

**Keynote Address Description:**

Inclusion has become a trendy term when it comes to creating an equitable environment for all people. Yet, how often are our inclusion practices translating to the *feeling* of being included? We often think of inclusion as a goal, rather than a verb that has to be practiced every day.

A sense of belonging is a cornerstone to building a solid foundation upon which the possibilities of the future can be built. Too often, however, individuals with disabilities are left behind, invalidated, and dismissed, resulting in cracks not only in the foundation of an individual’s sense of self, but also in their self-esteem which often forms roadblocks on the path to what is possible.

**Attendees will learn:**

* How to prioritize the lived experience of those with disabilities in creating inclusive practices.
* That being included oftentimes does not equate to one feeling included.
* How to re-humanize the term “inclusion” by engaging in open dialogue within the workplace, educational environments, and society at large.
* How to remove and prevent roadblocks that hinder an individual’s chance of personal growth, which directly correlates to one’s realization of the extent of their true potential.

**Speaker Bio:**

**Russell Lehmann** is an award-winning motivational speaker and poet. A graduate of MIT’s “Leadership in the Digital Age” course, Russell sits on numerous national boards and councils, and he is also a contributor for Psychology Today. Russell showed signs of autism as a newborn, however, he was not formally diagnosed until the age of 12 after suffering through 5 weeks in a lockdown psychiatric facility. Russell has presented for entities all around the world, from King’s College of London and the Mohammed bin Rashid Center in Abu Dhabi, to being invited to the Finnish Parliament to discuss government supports for the disability community. Setting his sights on erasing the stigmas and stereotypes that come with having a disability, Russell’s passion is to be a voice for the unheard, for he knows how difficult and frustrating it is to go unnoticed.

**10:00am-11:15am**

**Connecting People with Assistive Technology: Delaware’s Independent Living Centers**

**Speakers:**

**Debbie Bain, MA, Special Education, MA, Administration and Supervision, Executive Director, Delaware Statewide Independent Living Council**

**Jody Hougentogler, CCNP, AA, Executive Director, The Freedom Center for Independent Living**

**Despina Wilson, EdD, Executive Director, Independent Resources, Inc.**

**Session Description:**

Learn how Delaware's Independent Living Centers get their funding, about the supportive devices they make available to people with disabilities, and how individuals throughout Delaware can access the devices.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Debbie Bain, MA,** is the part-time executive director of the Statewide Independent Living Council, educating members on how to influence policy and be catalysts for change. The top priority of the Council is the development of the next State Plan for Independent Living. Debbie also is adjunct faculty at the University of Delaware (UD), where she teaches an undergraduate mentoring course for the Disabilities Studies Minor. Previously, she served as program coordinator for the Career and Life Studies Certificate program, a post-secondary education program offering for adults with intellectual disabilities at the University of Delaware. Passionate about capacity building and networking, Debbie recently developed a self-advocacy workshop series aimed at youth in transition and is eager to offer these training modules to school districts.

**Jody Hougentogler, CCNP, AA** has a son who in 2011 at the age of 18-years-old experienced a catastrophic brain injury. Her career changed with his injury. She became a caregiver to a medically complex human, and a professional of disability advocacy in Delaware. She has worked for the past 10 years in various advocacy roles, but her current role is Executive Director of The Freedom Center for Independent Living, Inc. The goal of the Independent Living movement is for any person with disabilities to be included in their community of choice, through self-determination and peer mentoring. The Freedom Center's staff are people with disabilities, providing services that help individuals remain independent and included in their communities. Jody is a computer network engineer by education, but an advocate at heart

**Despina Wilson, EdD,** comes to Independent Resources Inc., as the Executive Director since 2017, after serving in multiple senior leadership positions over the course of 21 years in State and local governments as well as non-profit organizations.

Her expertise ranges from public entity financial and organizational management practices to statistical and data analysis tools and strategic planning.

Despina has a passion for learning and is a lifelong learner. She holds a Doctorate degree in Education: Organizational Leadership & Innovation. In addition, she holds a Master’s degree in Business Administration, a Master’s degree in Public Administration, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting with Minors in Finance & Economics.  Despina is a strong advocate for people with disabilities.

**11:30am-12:45pm**

**College for People with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities**

**Speakers:**

**Brian Freedman, Ph.D., Director, Swank Autism Center, Nemours Children’s Health**

**Wes Garton, M.S., Program Manager, Spectrum Scholars, Center for Disabilities Studies, University of Delaware**

**James Sellers, M.A., Program Manager, Career and Life Studies Certificate, Center for Disabilities Studies, University of Delaware**

**Session Description:**

I want to go to college, what are my options? In the past autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities (ID) have faced challenges with attending and getting the most out of college. This is changing in Delaware! In this session, students and staff will discuss different types of programs that are available to you at the University of Delaware.

The Career & Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) is a 2-year and 4-year program for students with intellectual disabilities. In this program, students will receive education from teachers who are aware of some of their needs, students will receive work-based learning experiences, and campus life activities, including living in residence halls and off-campus housing.

Spectrum Scholars is a support program for undergraduate students on the autism spectrum that provides training, one-on-one meetings with teachers, and workshops to other students and staff on campus. Both programs offer individual and group coaching, advice from people who have experience, and career development opportunities for students.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Brian Freedman, Ph.D.,** is the Director of the Swank Autism Center at Nemours Children’s Health. From 2011 to 2022, he oversaw postsecondary transition programs for students with I/DD at the UD Center for Disabilities Studies. Brian has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology.

**Wes Garton, M.S.** is the Program Manager of Spectrum Scholars, a college-to-career autism initiative at the University of Delaware that offers comprehensive support for the autistic and neurodivergent community at UD. Wes has worked at UD since 2016 in other roles supporting college-age students with disabilities.

**Jay Sellers, M.A.** is the Program Manager for the University of Delaware Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC), an inclusive college program for students with intellectual disabilities. He has extensive experience supporting underrepresented students in higher education and frequently presents at state and national conferences.

**12:45pm-1:45pm**

**Sponsor Roundtable Discussion Sessions**

**Session Description:**

Just like walking up to Sponsors at their exhibit tables at Dover Downs, this session is an opportunity to meet with the 2023 Sponsor organizations.

What are you most interested in? Who do you want to answer your questions? The **Roundtable Discussions** are a chance for you to meet with **Disability Service and Advocacy Organizations** in small groups to learn about how they can help you and to answer your questions. Don’t miss **YOUR** opportunity to select the category you are most interested in**.**

PLEASE NOTE: There will not be any presentations in this session.  Please come prepared to ask your questions of the organizations that will better help you navigate the system and find resources for you and your family.

**1:45pm-3:00pm**

**The Lifespan Waiver and Long Term Supports and Services (LTSS) – Which Waiver is Right for You?**

**Speakers:**

**Kathleen Dougherty, Chief of Managed Care Operations, State of Delaware Health & Social Services, Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance**

**Marissa Guariano, Student, Delaware Technical Community College**

**Stacy Watkins, Social Services Chief Administrator, Assistant Director of Community Services-Operations, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services**

**Session Description:**

A waiver means that you are giving up your right to live in an institution. Under a waiver you are given some services and supports that allow you to live in the community, Delaware has two waivers for people with disabilities: the Lifespan Waiver and the Long-Term Services and Supports Waiver (LTSS). If you have Medicaid, you may be choosing one of these waivers. We will be discussing each waiver, what they offer, and how you are able to access each one.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Kathleen Dougherty** began her career with the State of Delaware in 2000 working for Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance determining eligibility for Medicaid Long Term Supports and Services (LTSS). She has held increasing positions of responsibility moving from Social Worker to Chief of Managed Care Operations. As the Chief of Managed Care Operations for the State’s Medicaid Program, Diamond State Health Plan, Ms. Dougherty has oversight responsibilities for the State’s Managed Medicaid/CHIP and Long Term Supports and Services contractors, the External Quality Review vendor, the Non Emergent Medical Transportation vendor, PACE and the State’s Health Benefit Manager.

**Marissa Guariano** is a student at DelTech Community College studying Education and plans to be a preschool teacher. She is a graduate of Newark High School in Delaware where she was an active participant of the Aspira club. As a member of the original cast of “Boundless, a Musical Journey” she acted, sang, and danced in several performances across Delaware in 2019. She has appeared in professionally produced videos for the Delaware Disability Council entitled “Onward I'm Earning My Degree” and for Bayada when her physical therapist won the National Hero Award. She has also volunteered with Easterseals at the annual volleyball fundraiser and as a speaker at their annual dinner. Marissa currently participates in Art Therapy Express where she can relax and enjoy time with her friends expressing her passion and creativity through art.

**Stacy Watkins** has worked for the State of Delaware for twenty years, initially with the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families and worked in various positions during her ten years there. In 2012, she joined the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and has worked in various capacities, including Director of two State operated Day programs, Quality Improvement for the Pathways to Employment Program, Assistant Director of Day and Transition Services, Director of The Lifespan Unit, and in her current position as the Assistance Director of Community Services-Operations for the last 4 years. Stacy has been connected to the disability community for nearly 30 years. She grew up in a Shared Living home where DDDS service recipients lived as part of her family and spent many summers volunteering at the Stockley Center.

**3:15pm-4:30pm**

**Financial Planning: Delaware ABLE Plan (DEpendABLE) and Medicaid Estate Recovery**

**Speakers:**

Selina Butcher– Delaware ABLE Plan User

Colleen Davis, Delaware State Treasurer

William Erhart, Esq., Certified Elder Law Attorney

**Session Description:**

Learn about the DELAWARE ABLE Plan. The State of Delaware offers a low cost savings plan called **DE**PEND**ABLE,** which allows individuals with disabilities and their families to save for expenses without losing their benefits.

Also learn how to protect your family’s assets (your money and your house.) Come to this session to learn more about Medicaid Estate Recovery.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Selina Butcher** is a young woman with Cerebral Palsy. Growing up, she always felt like she was the “different one” no matter how much she was actually the same as others! Because Delaware is so rural, she always felt trapped, but was determined to go away to college and have a fulfilling experience. She is a proud graduate of Temple University in Philadelphia. Selina says, “I live my life, my disability doesn’t define my life. My disability is a small part of my life. I have had my struggles and will continue to have my struggles in work and school but I live in spite of them; I persevere.”

Selina’s professional career has included working at the Delaware Supreme Court, State of Delaware Psychiatric Center, and the Freedom Center for Independent Living where she is currently an Independent Living Specialist.

**Colleen Davis** was elected Delaware State Treasurer in November 2018. Since taking office Treasurer Davis has focused on three main priorities: bolstering retirement security and readiness, creating pathways to economic empowerment, and promoting a culture of financial excellence.

She is a member of the National Association of State Treasurers (NAST) and was elected Region Vice President in August 2021. She chairs NAST’s Banking and Cash Committee and is a member of its Long-Range Planning Committee. Treasurer Davis also sits on the Executive Board of the College Savings Plans Network (CSPN) and is a member of the Market Transparency Advisory Group (MTAG) of the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (MSRB).

**William Erhart, Esq.** became a Delaware lawyer in 1982 and focuses on estate and elder law exclusively. Over his career he has helped thousands of individuals and families with estate planning, family trusts, veterans’ benefits, Medicaid planning and probate.

After high school, Bill joined the Marines, an experience that provided the foundation for his personal and professional beliefs and values. Following his service, Bill graduated from both the University of Delaware and the Reformed Episcopal Seminary. After graduation from Rutgers Law School and his admission to the Delaware Bar, Bill served as a law clerk for Superior Court and began his legal career as a prosecutor before entering private practice.

Bill is an avid outdoor sportsman who delights in the time spent with family, friends and colleagues. He has a wife and a daughter.

**Thursday, January 19, 2023**

**8:30am-9:45pm**

**A Seat at the Table: An Interactive Discussion with Key Delaware Decision Makers**

**Speakers:**

**Betsey Coulbourn, State Director, Office of Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester**

**Molly Magarik, MS, Cabinet Secretary, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)**

**Senator Nicole Poore**

**Session Description:**

Join a talk about Delaware disability laws and rules called regulations. Laws are rules are for everybody. Regulations are also for everybody. Regulations are rules that tell us how laws are supposed to work. Different types of people make laws and regulations. Come meet some of the people who help make the decisions about laws and regulations. Sharing your questions and helps them make good decisions. It also helps make laws and regulations better for people with disabilities. Come talk to the people who help make decisions about laws and regulations in Delaware and ask your questions.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Betsey Coulbourn** serves as the State Director for Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester (DE-01). She’s held several policy roles in the Congresswoman’s Washington, D.C. office since 2016, including as Health Policy Advisor. Prior to that, she served in Congressman John Carney’s office. In 2021, she returned to Delaware after her promotion to State Director.

In her current role, Betsey develops and implements policy objectives, strategies, and operating plans for Rep. Blunt Rochester’s district offices. She also directs activities ranging from strategic outreach to delivering constituent services.

As a lifelong Delawarean, Betsey grew up in Sussex County. She graduated from the University of Delaware in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Minors in Political Communications, Journalism, and Islamic Studies. Betsey currently resides in Seaford and enjoys spending her time doing outdoor recreational activities.

**Secretary Molly Magarik** was sworn in as Cabinet Secretary of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services on July 31, 2020. As Secretary, she leads the principal agency charged with keeping Delawareans healthy, ensuring they get the health care they need in a fast-changing world, and providing children, families and seniors with essential social services including food benefits, disability-related services, and mental health and addiction treatment.

As part of her portfolio, Secretary Magarik is leading strategic planning efforts, including realigning the organization with greater accountability, reimagining service delivery, and continuing the agency’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secretary Magarik earned her Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Delaware and her Master’s in Health Care Delivery Science from Dartmouth College.

**Senator Nicole Poore** represents the 12th Senate District, which includes most of New Castle and Bear, all of Delaware City and communities south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, including Whitehall, Bayberry and others.

Senator Poore’s interest in government policy began after the birth of her oldest son Nicholas, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Her activism in the special-needs community led to a successful 2012 bid for state Senate.

Senator Poore currently chairs the Joint Capital Improvement Committee and serves as Vice Chair of both the Senate Health & Social Services Committee and the Senate Labor Committee. She also sits on the Senate Elections & Government Affairs Committee.

**10:00am-11:15am**

**Assistive Technology Giveaway Programs**

**Speakers:**

**Allison Berdoulay,** Project Coordinator, Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative, University of Delaware’s Center for Disabilities Studies

**Beth Mineo**, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Director, Center for Disabilities Studies, Associate Professor, School of Education, University of Delaware

**Haley Shiber**, Founder, Haley’s Rays of Sunshine

**Session Description:**

Several assistive technology giveaway programs are available to Delawareans with disabilities. They include the Borrow-to-Own Low Vision Device (BOLD) program, offering tools that cost less than $100 for people who are blind and visually impaired; the Tobin Fund, which provides tools such as desktop and portable reading devices for those who are blind and visually impaired; a program that supplies talking currency identifiers to people who are blind; the Delaware iCanConnect program for individuals with combined hearing and vision loss that gives them access to internet and phone communications; and the AT Exchange, with a portion of its devices offered free to people with disabilities. Each of these programs is run through the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Allison Berdoulay** is the Project Coordinator for CDS’s Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI). She oversees DATI operations; manages the equipment inventory for DATI's Assistive Technology Resources Centers in Newark and Milford; and administers a number of assistive technology giveaway programs. She is a UD alumna.

**Beth Mineo** is Director of the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) and an Associate Professor in UD’s School of Education. She’s also Co-Director at UD of the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program. Dr. Mineo teaches graduate and undergraduate courses about assistive technology, augmentative and alternative communication, clinical practices in speech-language pathology and a senior seminar on disability studies, the capstone of UD’s Disability Studies minor. She also directs the assistive technology unit at CDS, which includes the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (the state AT program), the Delaware AIM Center and a federally-funded AT access initiative. She received her Ph.D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Pittsburgh.

**Haley Shiber** is a young advocate, artist, small business owner, and boss lady on wheels. Born with a genetic neuromuscular disorder, Pontocerebellar Hypoplasia (PCH) Type 1B, she embraces her zebra stripes and shares a day in her life with all those who are willing to lend a listening ear. She is so passionate, she founded her own small business, Haley's Rays of Sunshine (HROS). Through HROS she spreads literacy to all, advocates for many, encourages use of technology for independence, shares her love of art, and community.

In her day-to-day life she relies on skilled caregivers to aid with her many medical complexities and empowers her to live in her home. She loves creating art, exercising, social media and being a part of duo teams in 5k races, all thanks to adaptations. She embraces her challenges, allows nothing to stop her. Fearless!

**11:30am-12:45pm**

**Strategies for Supporting Mental Health – Telehealth and beyond!**

**Speakers:**

**Kerri Hanlon**, Co-founder and Creator of Adaptive Yoga Program, Yoga Home

**Sue Mulhern**, Assistant Director of Advocacy and Education, NAMI Delaware

**Greg Nemes**, **BA** Helpline Coordinator for the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Delaware

**Chris Oakes**, Trainer III; Planner/Project Mgr. for Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)/NWD Systems & Health Promotion/Disease Prevention for Division of Services for Aging and Adult with Physical Disabilities

**Session Description:**

This session will present a range of strategies for supporting mental health and incorporating Telehealth into your resources. Telehealth became popular after COVID-19. This session will address how to utilize it.

The pandemic has brought or worsened mental health challenges. In this session, we will explore some ways to offer mental health support for those who may be afraid to ask for help. We will also share some of the difficulties that caregivers face because of COVID-19. By exploring these topics, we hope to provide guidance and support to those who need it most.

The speakers will present practical methods and resources for addressing caregivers' needs and easing their worries. Participants will explore key approaches to healing and recovery, discussing both therapies and best practices.

The journey to recovery and strength is a difficult one, but we'll explore all the options available and find the best ways to move forward.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Kerri Hanlon,** Owner, Co-Founder, teacher. Kerri Hanlon believes the heart of a yoga practice is the art of acceptance, of ourselves and others. It's her belief that yoga is for everyone - all ages, all abilities, all body shapes and sizes. Whether she's teaching an invigorating Power Class or soothing body and soul with a Restorative Class, Kerri prioritizes holding sacred space so her students are free to completely drop into their practice. She is passionate about bringing Adaptive Yoga, and credits her son, Sean, with being her inspiration. She created Yoga Home's Adaptive Yoga program with classes for children and adults with physical, cognitive and/or emotional disabilities at Yoga Home, at schools, day and residential programs.

**Sue Mulhern** is the Assistant Directory of Advocacy and Education for the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Delaware. She is a certified instructor for NAMI Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Prevention Programs who creates and teaches mental health programs for various community groups, educational institutions, businesses, and faith communities.

Sue experienced a mental health crisis that led her to leave her corporate job. Recognizing the need for more open, honest conversations about mental health conditions, she is on a mission to reduce the stigma and embarrassment around mental health conditions and provide easier access to information. Sue is an avid reader with a bachelor's degree in finance and management information systems from the University of Delaware. She loves to travel, cook, and host small gatherings in her home.

**Greg Nemes, BA** is the Helpline Coordinator at the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Delaware. In this role, Mr. Nemes assists those who reach out to NAMI Delaware with finding appropriate resources. In addition, he offers a supportive ear to those who need someone to listen.

Greg graduated from the University of Delaware in 2018 with a bachelor’s degree in psychology. While he was a student at the University of Delaware, Mr. Nemes struggled with his own mental health. After experiencing panic attacks and depression, he decided to reach out for help. He was fortunate to have those in his life who listened and offered support during this time. Now, as the helpline coordinator at NAMI Delaware, he does his best to offer that same support to others in need.

**Chris Oakes** has worked for 23 years as health educator, trainer, program administrator, and community liaison for Delaware’s Division of Services for Aging & Adults with Physical Disabilities. Her work spanned the aging and disability network, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and caregivers. She promotes health, equity, inclusion, and access, and leads the establishment of Delaware’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, the access point and coordinating hub for long-term services and support.

As a Delaware Developmental Disability Council member, she provides leadership, technical expertise, and training for staff and community partners. A UD graduate, trained in aging and disabilities services, Chris is the primary caregiver for her 99-year-old mother and proud mom of a military veteran and police officer.

**1:00am-1:30pm**

**SCPD Awards**

**1:30pm-2:15pm**

**Steering Our Own Ship: A “Lunch” Townhall**

**Session Moderators:**

**Daniese McMullin-Powell, Disability Advocate**

**Benjamin Shrader, BA, Disability Advocate**

**Session Description:**

A free-flowing discussion giving individuals with disabilities the opportunity to discuss the core issues facing our community such as education, community living, and transportation. Together we will explore options and ponder answers. Feel free to eat your lunch during this informal session.

**Moderator Bios:**

**Benjamin Shrader, BA,** is a political activist, specializing in disability issues, social media, and communications. He was born with cerebral palsy which helped him realize that no one gets anywhere on their own. In 2019, he graduated from Belhaven University with a degree in Theatre (concentration in Dramatic Writing), and a minor in Political Science. He then moved to Delaware and worked as a disability policy advisor on Beto O’Rourke’s presidential campaign. More recently, Benjamin worked as a member of the social media team for the Jess Scarane for Senate campaign. Bolstered by his belief in shared responsibility, he is currently working to create RISE (Redefining independence and social empowerment), A first of its kind self advocacy project for Delaware with the mission of creating a community space by and for people with disabilities. He is also Chair of the State Council for Persons with Disabilities and an occasional film critic. Benjamin hopes his example can get more people with disabilities unlocking their best selves. He lives in Greenville, Delaware with his family.

**Daniese McMullin-Powell** is a grass Roots Disability Rights Activist and formed the Delaware Chapter of ADAPT and Not Dead Yet (NDY).  She continues the fight for Civil Rights, to include full Community Integration for people with disabilities.

Daniese is a 1996 graduate of Partners in Policy Making, former Chair of the State Council for Persons with Disabilities and has sat on the Boards of Directors of Center for Independent Living, Inc., Independent Resources, Inc and Freedom Center for Independent Living.  She worked for DE Medicaid’s Money Follows the Person Program for several years and received the 2008 Regional Award for Advocacy from the National Council on Independent Living and the 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award from SCPD.

**2:20pm-3:35pm**

**Diploma vs. Alternate Diploma**

**Speaker:**

**Dale Matusevich, Director, Exceptional Children Resources, Delaware Department of Education**

**Session Description:**

In this session we will discuss Delaware’s two diploma options: the High School Diploma vs. the Diploma of Alternate Achievement Standards. You will learn what each diploma means and what it can help you to do after high school.

**Speaker Bio:**

**Dale Matusevich** has been with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) since July 2008. On July 5, 2022, he was named the Director of Exceptional Children Resources after serving as the Education Associate for Secondary and Transition Services. Prior to his position with DDOE, he was employed at the Virginia Department of Education’s Training and Technical Assistance Center at Radford University (RU T/TACT). While a special education teacher for Roanoke City Public Schools in Roanoke, Virginia, he taught at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in a variety of settings. In addition to teaching, he has been a mental health counselor. Dale has an undergraduate degree in psychology from Hampden-Sydney College and a master’s degree in special education from Radford University.

**3:45pm-4:15pm**

**Getting Involved: Join Your Peers and Allies**

**Speakers:**

**Khalil Wilks – Aspiring Disability and Mental Health Advocate**

**Derek Diaz – Advocate**

**Session Description:**

You learned a lot yesterday and today! Join this session to talk with advocates about how to use what you have learned to have a voice. Advocates will talk with you about how to make things better for you and people with disabilities in Delaware.

**Speaker Bios:**

**Khalil Wilks** is a 19-year-old native of Smyrna, Delaware. He is an aspiring Disability and Mental Health Advocate, and future Information & Technology Support Specialist. Khalil is a curious, compassionate, courageous person who thinks critically about society through the lens of social storytelling. He also enjoys gaming, technology, psychology and philosophy. He is a graduate of the 2022 Junior Partners in Policymaking Program which teaches young individuals with disabilities how to advocate for change for people with disabilities. Currently, he is enrolled in the Google Grow’s IT Support Professional Certification program. Khalil wishes to pursue a career in IT or Human Services.

**Derek Diaz** is a 17-year-old senior attending Positive Outcomes Charter School in Camden, Delaware. Derek grew up participating in many activities including: baseball, chess and gymnastics but found his biggest success competing in Jiu Jitsu. Presently, he finds his biggest enjoyment in gaming and Dungeons and Dragons where is a member of several clubs. Derek has achieved many academic accolades, most notable being on honor roll throughout most of his school career which culminated recently by being inducted into the National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS). Outside of the classroom he has volunteered at many organizations, including within the Delaware Public Library system, Food Bank of Delaware and 3 Palms Zoo & Education Center. He is a graduate of the 2022 Junior Partners in Policymaking Program where a passion to work with other youth who also have disabilities to advocate for themselves was ignited in him. Derek aspires to attend college in the Fall of 2023 majoring in Mechanical Engineering where he plans to use his education to continue helping others.