A Review of the NH Parent Information Center Volunteer Advocate Training Program

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Parent Information Center (PIC)
A statewide family organization that provides families and youth (with a focus on children and youth with special health care needs and disabilities) and the providers who serve them, with the knowledge and support they need to make informed decisions that enhance each child's development and well-being.

Volunteer Advocates (VA) Training Program
The program is a free 11-week (44-hour) course for parents and others who want *to gain the knowledge and skills to support other parents of children with disabilities in the special education process, while at the same time, enhancing their own advocacy skills.* The training series is offered twice each year.

Objectives:
1. Work with the Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC) staff to gain an understanding of the VA program.
2. Conduct an environmental scan of other parent centers of similar size and profile to document the training and support provided to volunteers to assist other families.
3. Work with staff to conduct focus groups of PIC Volunteer Advocates (VAs) on whether the program is meeting its goals.
4. Summarize results and make recommendations to staff regarding the program.

Environmental Scan
"What others are doing"

Focus Groups
Interviews and Key Findings

Table 1

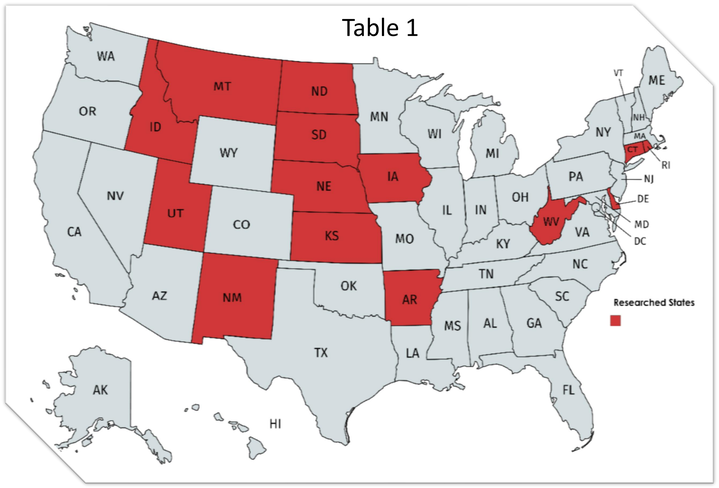


Table 2

Name of the Topic/ Training/Workshop	New Hampshire	Connecticut
Important Tools for Advocates: Effective Communication		
Federal Laws: IDEA, FERPA, Section 504, ADA		
State Rules and Regulations		
Special Education Process		
Development of the IEP		
Evaluations		
Eligibility, Disability Classification, Disability Resources		
Educational Placement		
Secondary Transition		
Section 504 and IDEA - What's the Difference		
Supporting Other Families; Asking the Right Q's		
Procedural Safeguards & Alternative Dispute Resolution		
Introduction to Medicaid, Family Voices		
Assisting underserved families		
Transitioning to Adult Life/Employment and Self-Advocacy		
Skills of Advocacy and the Role of the Family/Personal Stories		

topic of Volunteer Advocate Training program
separate workshops/online trainings/webinars on "a la carte" basis

- Table 1. 14 State PTIs of similar size and profile.
- Table 2. VA Training comparison by topic with the *State of Connecticut's program "Next Steps Parent Leadership Training Series."*
- Most states discontinued the program due to the funding and shifting priorities.
- Some states, like NH, provide "on-demand" trainings and workshops for families on the most popular topics, while others focus on the basics of volunteer mentoring.

Focus Groups Goals:
1. Review Volunteer Advocate Training Program Curriculum.
2. Provide feedback on the most beneficial aspects of the program.
3. Make recommendations for change (as appropriate).

1 in person session
1 virtual session via Zoom

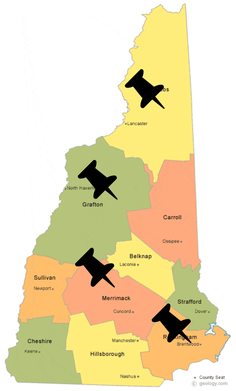
Total: 9 participants

Key Findings

- VA is a great program that helps a lot of families.
- VA empowers advocates.
- VA's LOVED the training.
- Some took the training multiple times.
- VA's would recommend the training to others.
- The information provided in class was very beneficial, relevant and helpful.
- VA's LOVED the Instructors.

Areas for further review:

- Training Length and Format
- Interactivity of Classes
- VA Utilization
- The Training Manual



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