

Biographies for GMSA Trainers

Karen Topper

Karen Topper is the Administrative Director for Green Mountain Self-Advocates. She manages the GMSA office, supervising employees, training persons with developmental disabilities in techniques of self-advocacy, and program development work. Topper is the co-author of *Sexuality Education for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*, a curriculum designed for self-advocates and allies to teach a sexuality education series together as a team. She has been working with people with disabilities for the past 40 years. She has created individualized supports for people moving out of institutions in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Topper has extensive experience in developing curricula for self-advocates, providers and families on: Independent Living, Abuse Prevention, Supportive Decision-Making, and Sexuality Education. Topper has been an ally of the self-determination, disability rights, and self-advocacy movements since the early 90's.

Max Barrows

Maxwell Barrows is a young man with Autism, who works for Green Mountain Self-Advocates, a disability rights organization in Vermont. As the Outreach Director, he mentors youth and adults with developmental disabilities to speak up for themselves and become leaders. Max connects with people on all levels advocating for true-inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. In his work, he advances the message that when you meet an individual with a disability, presume competence. Max is currently on the board of Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), the national self-advocacy organization. His goal is to travel internationally to spread his messages of true-inclusion and self-advocacy. Recently, Max was recognized for his hard work in Disability Advocacy by being selected as a Champion of Change at the White House.

Skye Peebles, MPH

Skye Peebles, MPH has worked on media, technology, healthcare, and other self-advocacy projects with Green Mountain Self-Advocates since 2008. Her roles of ally and sibling in the self-advocacy movement make her passionate about building a global community where people with developmental disabilities are truly included and valued. Skye served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Botswana working on projects related to HIV/AIDS from 2006-2008. From 2010-2011, Skye was a Health Administration Fellow in the University of Rochester Leadership Education and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program and a Student Fellow in the American Public Health Association's Maternal and Child Health Division. Skye has a Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of Rochester and Bachelor's Degree from Mount Holyoke College.

Biography for VTDDC Trainer

Kirsten Murphy

Kirsten Murphy is the Acting Executive Director for the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council where she has worked since 2013. She began her career in non-profit management in the 80's developing programs for high risk youth in New York City and Boston. Her interests turned to disability rights and community inclusion when her two sons were diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Kirsten founded a family support program, ARCH, serving the Upper Valley region of NH and VT, directed the New Hampshire Autism Council, and is credited with securing equitable insurance coverage for NH children who experience the interfering symptoms of autism. She is a 2010 graduate of the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program, through the University of New Hampshire. Now a Montpelier resident, she brings over three decades of experience in public policy, systems thinking, and advocacy.

Biographies for Vermont Family Network Trainers

Lisa Maynes

Lisa Maynes is a Family Support Director with Vermont Family Network, working on grants that are health and wellness related. She has been actively involved with work in Vermont that tries to make a better life for individuals with disabilities for 17 years. She has an 18-year-old son with a rare genetic disease and a 23-year-old daughter.

Janice Sabett

Janice Sabett is a Family Support Consultant/Training Specialist with Vermont Family Network. She has more than 15 years of experience in communications, training, and program development. She is the proud adoptive mother of three young Latino adults. She volunteers with NAMI-VT (The National Alliance on Mental Illness) teaching classes and facilitating a Family Support Group. Her life motto is “no health without mental health!”