

Significant By-Law Changes Proposed

For the **Self-Advocacy Association
of New York State**

Drafted September 2005

We've received a lot of positive feedback about the by-law changes, and the SA Board is preparing to make its decision.

How will these changes affect you?

Read on to learn more!

A Note from the SA Board of Directors

We want to explain why we are proposing some significant by-law changes at this time. We have had a lot of discussions in the past year about the importance of getting back to our grassroots. **What makes SA strong is our self-advocate members, all of you, speaking up for yourself and for each other as part of self-advocacy groups and regions.** That's how SA leaders develop. That's how our organization has grown.

We created a chart to teach people about our grassroots organization which you can find on the next poster. In the last few years, we have noticed that many of the people involved in self-advocacy, including some board members, are not members of self-advocacy groups. We have also noticed there are many groups and advisory councils are popping up all over the state. Organizations and people other than self-advocates started many of these groups. At this point, we are unsure of all of the groups that exist across the state.

Because of these issues, our board decided to make sure, to affirm, that SA groups are a key part of SA and our grassroots approach. We also wanted to make sure that each area of our state is well represented by an SA board member.

The way to make these changes is to amend and expand our by-laws. That is what we are recommending with the proposed changes that we have drafted below. We believe the following changes will make SA stronger.

We are an organization of self-advocates, so we are going to talk to as many self-advocates and supporters as we can about these proposed changes and get as much feedback as possible over the coming year. We know there will be lots of talk about some of the proposed changes and we need your thoughts. Our goal is to revise the by-laws in time for our 2006 conference and have the changes in the by-laws take effect over a two-year period.

The Organizational Structure of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc.



1 Regional Structure of the Self-Advocacy Association and Board Representation from the Regions:

Current Structure

There are 3 board members for each of the 6 regions of New York State plus the immediate past president. The regions are Long Island, NYC, Hudson Valley, Capital District North, Central and Western.

Purpose of Change

To ensure that we have board members representing various areas and regions of the state based on population within a region, size of the region, and location of key regional State offices such as DDSOs.

Other things the board considered include:

- ~ Keep the board the same size as it is now—19 members
- ~ Ensure that each DDSO within a region has a board representative
- ~ Make sure that counties are aligned with the DDSO that covers their regions. For example Jefferson County is part of the Sunmount DDSO (Capital District/North) but it is currently part of our Central Region

1 Regional Structure of the Self-Advocacy Association and board representation from the regions:

Central—Two board members—one from Broome DDSO and one from Syracuse DDSO

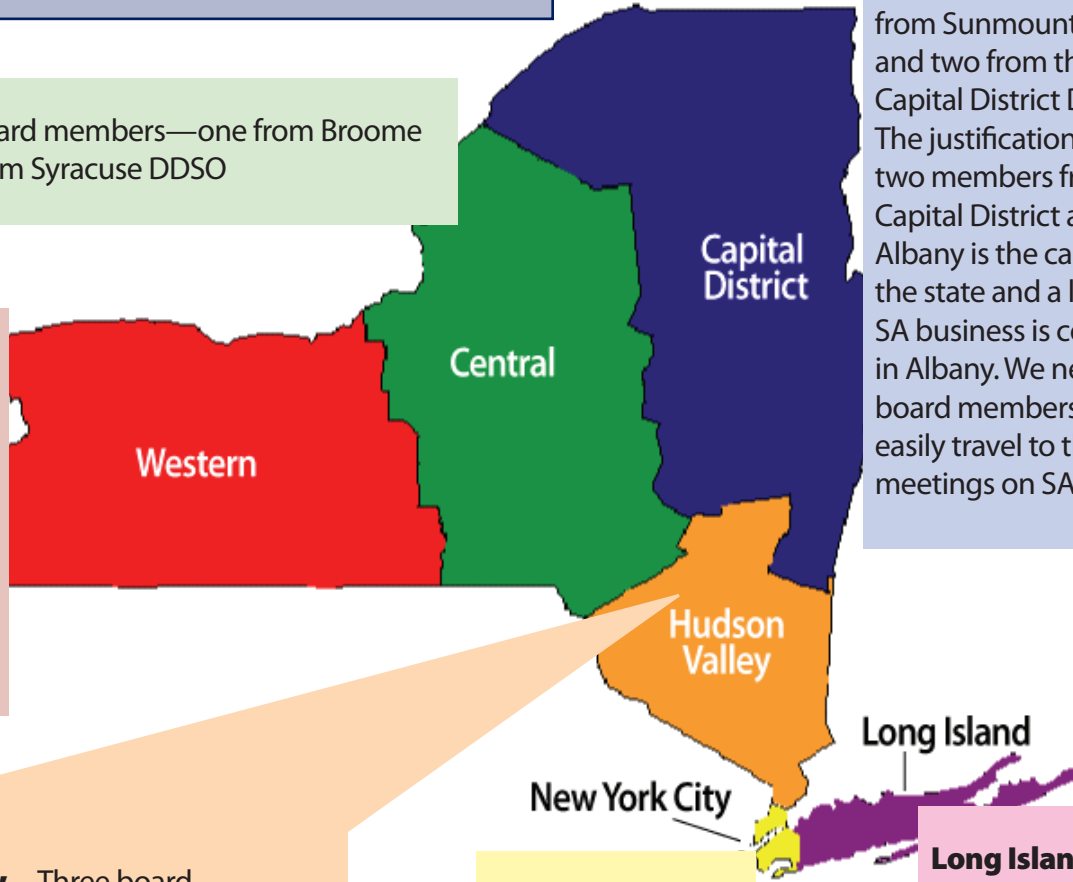
Western—Three board members, one from West Seneca DDSO and two from the Finger Lakes, including one from the southern section of the region.

Hudson Valley—Three board members—one from Taconic DDSO, and two from Hudson Valley. For Hudson Valley, one member will be from Westchester County and one from the remaining part of the DDSO. (Westchester County has close to one million people).

New York City—5 Board Members, one for each borough: Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island.

Capital District—Three board members—one from Sunmount DDSO, and two from the Capital District DDSO. The justification for two members from the Capital District area is that Albany is the capital of the state and a lot of key SA business is conducted in Albany. We need a few board members who can easily travel to the various meetings on SA's behalf.

Long Island—Two Board members, one from Nassau County and one from Suffolk County.



Proposed County Realignment:

Jefferson County, which is part of the Sunmount DDSO area, will become part of the Capital District/North Region

Cayuga County, which is part of the Syracuse DDSO area, will become part of the Central Region; Thomkins and Tioga Counties, part of the Broome DDSO area, will also become part of the Central region



2 What is an Official Self-Advocacy Group?

Note: We want to answer this question for two reasons.

One, there is a lot of confusion about the difference between a self-advocacy group and an advisory council.

Two, we want to make sure that SA groups are formed and controlled by self-advocates. This is not to say that an advisory council is a bad thing. It is good for agencies to involve people in decision-making and seek input; that is part of self-advocacy too.

Criteria for status as an official group of the Self-Advocacy Association of NYS

1. Groups must **elect their leaders**—PRESIDENT and VICE-PRESIDENT etc.
2. Groups **choose their own advisor(s)**
3. Groups **develop their own agenda and activities**. They PARTICIPATE in **regional and state SA activities** (even if only one person goes to the regional meeting, conference, etc.)
4. The **main purpose** of the group is **self-advocacy activities**
5. If affiliated with an agency, the group remains **INDEPENDENT** of that agency and the way that agency functions.
6. **Maintains membership records** and list of current officers with SA's main office.

3 Qualifications Required to Be a Candidate for a SA Board Position

1. **Be a member of an SA group**; 1 YEAR OF EXPERIENCE in a leadership role (officer) in an SA group; a RECCOMENDATION from the current SA group the candidate is a member of.
2. Available to **travel to 4 Board meetings**, which at this time include three days and two nights in Albany.
3. **WILLING TO SPEAK** for themselves and others including **IN PUBLIC** (at meetings, etc.)
4. Available to **attend regional meetings**
5. **Commitment to activities** within the region they represent
6. **HAVE A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY** (receive or be eligible to receive services from OMRDD)