



*Ensuring a Bridge to MH Systems for People with I/DD, brain injury, other cognitive impairments, and individuals who cannot rely on speech alone for communication*

***Supporting Crisis Services to Ensure Optimal Coordination  
for Children and Adults with Co-Occurring Cognitive Disabilities and Behavioral  
Health Conditions  
Policy Academy***

***Request for Application (RFA) for State Participation***

***Application Due Date: January 19, 2024***

## KEY INFORMATION

<b>Purpose</b>	The Link Center’s Policy Academy aims to support participating state , territories and/or tribes to ensure capacity and relationships sufficient to support children and adults with I/DD, brain injury (BI), and other cognitive and/or communication differences who are in need of 988 or other crisis response. The Policy Academy will assist as many as 5 states, territories or tribes in the development of resources and standard operating strategies to assure an inclusive, accessible 988/Lifeline and Crisis Response system while also cultivating necessary in-state, cross system strategies for needed ongoing support for individuals.
<b>RFA Release</b>	December 8, 2023
<b>Informational Calls for Potential Applicants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Monday, December 18, 2023: 2-3pm ET Registration Link: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsd-ChrDorGtQk4v4YoOWfnqO8XfBaJmh8">https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsd-ChrDorGtQk4v4YoOWfnqO8XfBaJmh8</a></li><li>Thursday, January 4, 2024: 2-3pm ET Registration Link: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAqc--qqz4iHtJ4m9AhETJNAld8TsbGF84q">https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAqc--qqz4iHtJ4m9AhETJNAld8TsbGF84q</a></li></ul> <p>Please contact <a href="mailto:thelinkcenter@nasddds.org">thelinkcenter@nasddds.org</a> for any accessibility accommodations needed</p>
<b>Applications Due</b>	January 19, 2024, at 11:59 pm ET  <b>All applications should be submitted by 11:59pm ET on January 19, 2024.</b> <b>Submissions should be emailed to <a href="mailto:TheLinkCenter@NASDDDS.org">TheLinkCenter@NASDDDS.org</a></b>
<b>Selection Notification</b>	February 2024
<b>Program Period</b>	February – September 2024, with follow-along support for 12 months post in-person symposium
<b>First All-Participants Meetings</b>	Virtual Kick-Off Meeting, February 22, 2024, 2-3:30 pm ET
<b>Eligibility</b>	State governments with required participation of leaders from Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Agencies, 988/Lifeline, State Mental Health and Substance Use Agencies, Brain Injury Administrations, Medicaid, Peers/Family Members, DD Act Partners,.. (Up to 8 members of required representation). States may also include other key state leaders, such as those from Child Welfare or Department of Education (Exceptional Education), essential to their efforts to build an inclusive and proactive 988/Lifeline system that can effectively support individuals with disabilities during a period of crisis. (Up to 2 additional partners for onsite meeting in September).
<b>The Link Center Contacts</b>	Director: Mary Sowers, NASDDDS Executive Director



## ***Purpose and Background***

As states are building robust 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline systems, as well as shoring up and enhancing crisis response capabilities more broadly, there is a growing recognition of the need to ensure that these services are available to everyone, including children and adults with both a mental health challenge and intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, brain injury, other cognitive impairments, and individuals who cannot rely on speech alone for communication. Siloed service delivery systems have often contributed to a lack of access to trauma-informed clinical and support services for these populations, resulting in adverse outcomes, including long-term boarding in hospital emergency departments or other settings that may exacerbate already difficult circumstances.

Partnerships are essential to building optimal state-level responses that meet the holistic needs of individuals with cognitive disabilities and co-occurring mental health support needs.

In September 2022, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) funded a Technical Assistance and Resource Center for Individuals with I/DD and Mental Health support needs, now known as The Link Center. The core partnership leading this work is the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS), the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) and NADD, the national organization focused on individuals with intellectual disabilities and mental health needs. Together, these organizations propose to augment the work of The Link Center through the development of a State Policy Academy aimed at building strong, collaborative service systems that enable states to effectively support individuals in crisis regardless of disability and/or communication differences. The work of the Policy Academy will be closely calibrated and aligned with the work of The Link Center, enabling the leverage of that considerable effort.

As states mature their 988 and crisis response systems, they are seeking to ensure a depth in their capacity to serve all citizens needing assistance. This Policy Academy will provide a framework for leadership at the state level to both initiate and sustain needed strategies to both meet the immediate needs of children and adults requiring interventions available through 988 and crisis response, but also to forge cross system strategies to enable longer-term supports and services, if needed, for people with I/DD, brain injury (BI), and other disabilities.

## **Curriculum**

The curriculum will reflect individual state needs identified during early engagement efforts initiated at the outset of the academy. Additionally, it will reflect the growing body of best practices in supporting children and adults with disabilities who are experiencing a mental health crisis, including successful accommodation procedures, the adaptation of certain evidenced based mental health treatments, cross-system collaborative approaches, and others. Furthermore, because the goal of the Policy Academy is to foster long-term improvements and capacity building among state leaders, the curriculum will also leverage the *Framework for Public Sector Leadership*<sup>1</sup> as developed by the National Association

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.chcs.org/media/LCB-Consortium-Framework-Fact-Sheet\\_9.14.20\\_Final.pdf](https://www.chcs.org/media/LCB-Consortium-Framework-Fact-Sheet_9.14.20_Final.pdf)



of Medicaid Directors in collaboration with the Milbank Memorial Fund and the Center for Health Care Strategies. This framework spotlights that members of the public sector can be key leaders, regardless of their formal position. Given the inter-agency nature of this Policy Academy and the ongoing need for collaboration, this framework is especially apropos, highlighting key domains critical to success in public leadership: Personal leadership and self-management; Setting and managing strategic direction; Engaging and motivating people; Practicing good public administration; and; Driving and delivering results.

Typically, the Policy Academy will feature faculty for group learning opportunities with expertise in supporting children and adults with I/DD, brain injury, and other cognitive disabilities and co-occurring mental health and/or substance use support needs. The Policy Academy will provide access to expertise and resources both during the academy and in the months following to meet the specific needs of the states as identified during the onboarding process.

The Policy Academy will feature:

- *State Specific Environmental Assessment, leveraging leadership framework and analysis of existing crisis models within the state*
- *State Specific Goal Identification for Policy Academy, culminating in a long range workplan*
- *Group Learning Sessions Structured with State-Specific Needs and Goals in Mind*
- *State Specific Technical Assistance and Team Building, informed by team of SMEs as needed*
- *In-Person Symposium with Long-Range Workplan Development*
- *Accountability Cohorts for 12 months post-symposium*

## **Academy Structure**

### Membership

The Policy Academy will be open to 5-6 states, with each state bringing a team of partners that includes:

Required (up to 9 individuals, recognizing that a person may fill more than one category):

- 988 Lifeline leadership and/or key staff
- State mental health authority leadership and core staff involved in 988 and Crisis Response
- State I/DD authority leadership and core staff involved in supporting children and adults with complex support needs
- State Medicaid leader(s) with knowledge and oversight of MH and/or LTSS
- State Brain Injury Administrators, core staff, and/or partner organizations involved in supporting individuals with traumatic or non-traumatic brain injuries
- People with lived experience
- Family member
- One or more State DD Act Partner organizations (DD Councils, University Centers for Excellence in DD (UCEDD), Protection and Advocacy Organizations)
- States are also strongly encouraged to include a partner from Child welfare, given their support of children and adolescents with complex support needs

Optional:



- Department of Education, i.e. staff involved in policy and practices in Exceptional Education services and supports that are provided to students with disabilities, including school-based mental health programs where the need for crisis services is often identified
- Title V partners
- Law enforcement
- County or local partners (including County Behavioral health authorities)
- Service delivery partners such as managed care entities
- Other partners as determined by the state

Each team will be led by 2-3 individuals from State Mental Health, 988/Lifeline and I/DD or BI Agencies. Each state team may consist of 8-11 individuals total (including team leads). Team composition should reflect a lens toward ensuring that the state-level solutions will be informed by principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The aims of ensuring an inclusive crisis response system will not only span disability but cultural and linguistic appropriateness and socioeconomic considerations. We encourage all states to consider applying, regardless of the status of existing partnerships. The Academy can assist states along all steps in the continuum to an effective, inclusive system.

### Approach

#### Exploratory survey

- An effort to collect information prior to state participant selection related to general areas of need that will inform and give an aggregate scope of focus for successful academy activities

#### State Tailored Interventions:

- State specific planning meetings with state leads
- State-level (virtual) town hall discussions to provide landscape information on areas of need
- Strategic plan of target areas for each state team

#### Virtual Learning Opportunities:

- Based on state target areas, develop a series of six (6) virtual learning engagements for cross-state participation (identifying peers for both elevation of good practice and group solution identification)

#### In Person Academy:

- A two-day symposium in the Washington DC area focused on cultivating sustainable networks and ongoing information sharing. In-person participation is prioritized with virtual accommodations provided to address extenuating circumstances. The symposium will include:
  - Pre-planning with each state (two meetings)
  - Group learning and state-specific breakout sessions to optimize learning, sharing, and action plan development.
  - Post-meeting follow-up activities with each state, including development of a plan for implementation, sustainability and quality improvement activities (including success metrics)



#### Post Meeting Activities and Follow-Along Technical Assistance:

- TA Collaborative will meet with state teams to finalize action steps developed from the in-person meeting;
- TA Collaborative will meet monthly with state teams to provide follow-along support of implementation and sustainability activities.

#### State Selection Criteria

Agencies/Individuals within States, Territories and/or Tribes leading State I/DD, Mental Health, 988 Lifeline/Crisis response are eligible to apply, including leaders from child welfare, long-term support services, Medicaid, mental health, substance use treatment, public health, juvenile and adult justice and broader health and human services (See required and optional team makeup above). Each State should submit one application with leads/co-leads and team members clearly identified.

The Link Center is committed to ensuring that state teams are poised to address the equitable access of strong crisis response efforts. The submissions will be reviewed in consideration of the following criteria:

1. ***Strength of statement of interest and vision for the academy.*** Applicants should describe the reasons for their state's interest in the academy, including a long-range vision for the goals of the state in building an inclusive, sustainable crisis response system.
2. ***Leadership commitment, including senior-level key decision-maker(s) to serve as lead(s)***
3. ***Demonstrated commitment to cross-agency collaboration and partnerships with key organizations within the state***
4. ***Diversity of Perspectives and Aims for Policy Academy. Focus on the following is highly valued:***
  - a. ***Geographic reach of efforts (including rural, frontier, urban)***
  - b. ***Interest in reaching underserved, marginalized communities***
  - c. ***Interest in reaching individuals with varying strategies for communication (including those who do not use spoken word to communicate)***

Applications should include:

1. ***Cover sheet.*** Applications must include a cover sheet with the lead's and/or co-lead's name and contact information (including title, mailing address, phone number, and email address), as well as the name and contact information of an administrative assistant, as applicable.
2. ***Application narrative.*** Applicants must submit a narrative that addresses each of the above selection criteria. Applications should not exceed three single-spaced pages with standard one-inch margins and 12-point font (the cover sheet, letter of support, and requested attachments do not count against page limits). Applications should describe the state's experiences in working across agencies and preliminary vision for success metrics for academy participation.



3. **Letter(s) of support.** Applicants should gather letters of support from each of the participating executive branch agencies and other partners included on the team. The applicants should also aim to gather support letters from other key partners in service to the population.
4. **Participant resumes for team leads, including current roles and responsibilities and listing of other team members**

**All applications should be submitted by 11:59pm ET on January 19, 2024. Submissions should be emailed to [TheLinkCenter@NASDDDS.org](mailto:TheLinkCenter@NASDDDS.org)**

