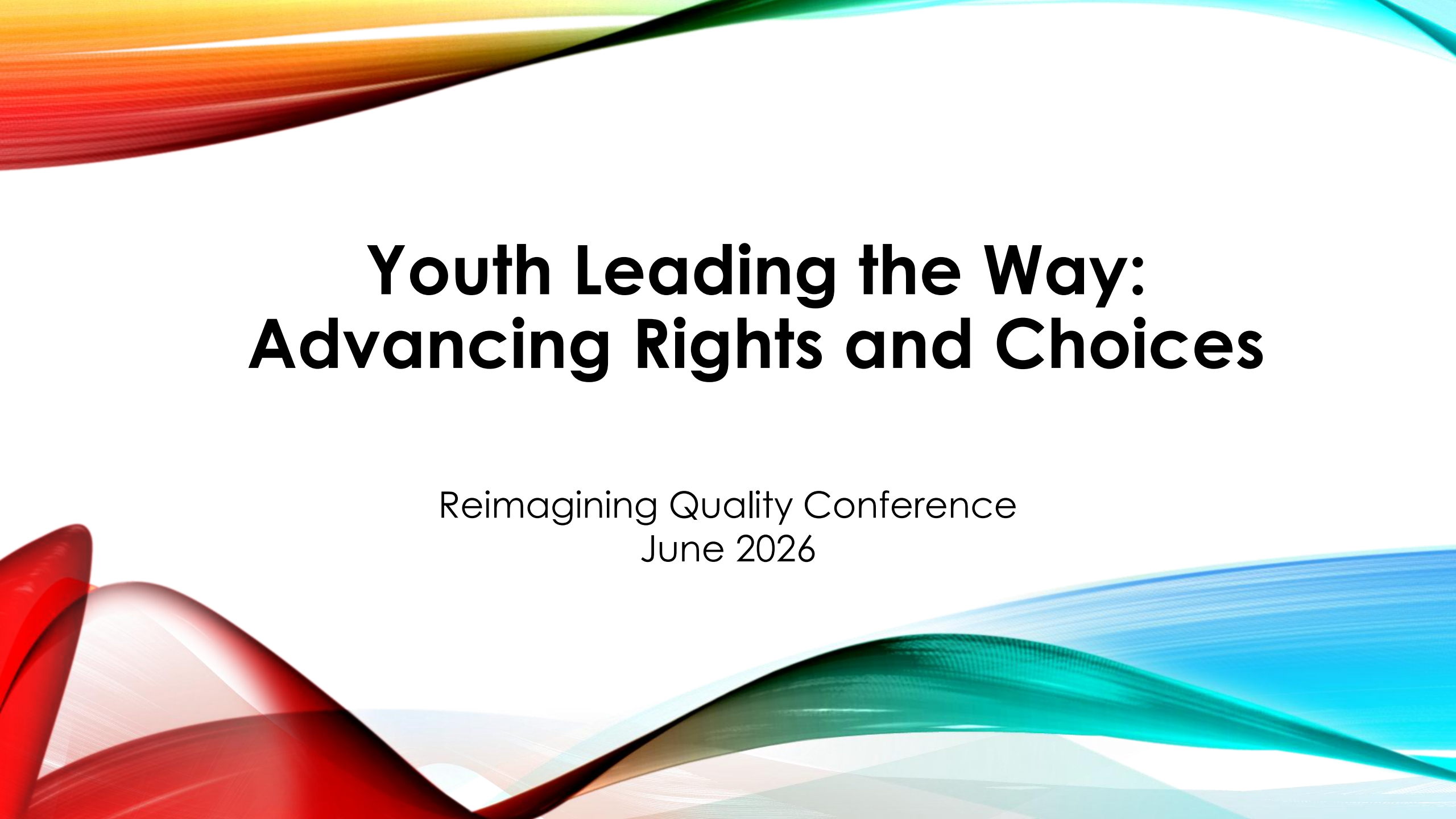




Youth Leading the Way: Advancing Rights and Choices

Reimagining Quality Conference
June 2026

INTRODUCTIONS



Corissa Pittman, MI



Giancarlo Vicari, NJ



Morgan Whitlatch, DC



CENTER ON YOUTH VOICE YOUTH CHOICE

- National resource center founded in Fall 2020 through a five-year grant from the Administration on Community Living
- Supports State Teams in promoting alternatives to guardianship for youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Promotes youth leadership in all levels of its work
- <https://youth-voice.org>

CYVYC PROJECT PARTNERS

- Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI)
- Center for Public Representation (CPR)
- Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)
- Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO)
- Human Services Research Institute (HSRI)
- Experts from Harvard Law School Project on Disability



Center for Public Representation

GAO

GEORGIA
ADVOCACY
OFFICE



THE CYVYC PROJECT

2020-2025

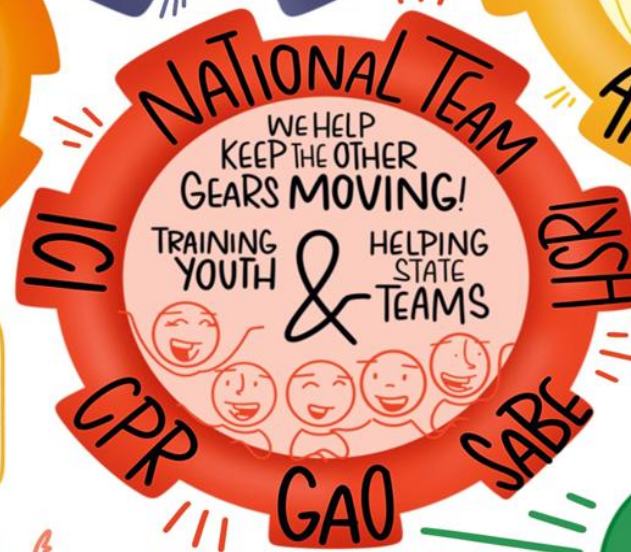
CENTER ON
YOUTH VOICE
YOUTH CHOICE



WHAT'S THE GOAL?



LIVING A LIFE OF CHOICE & SELF-DETERMINATION



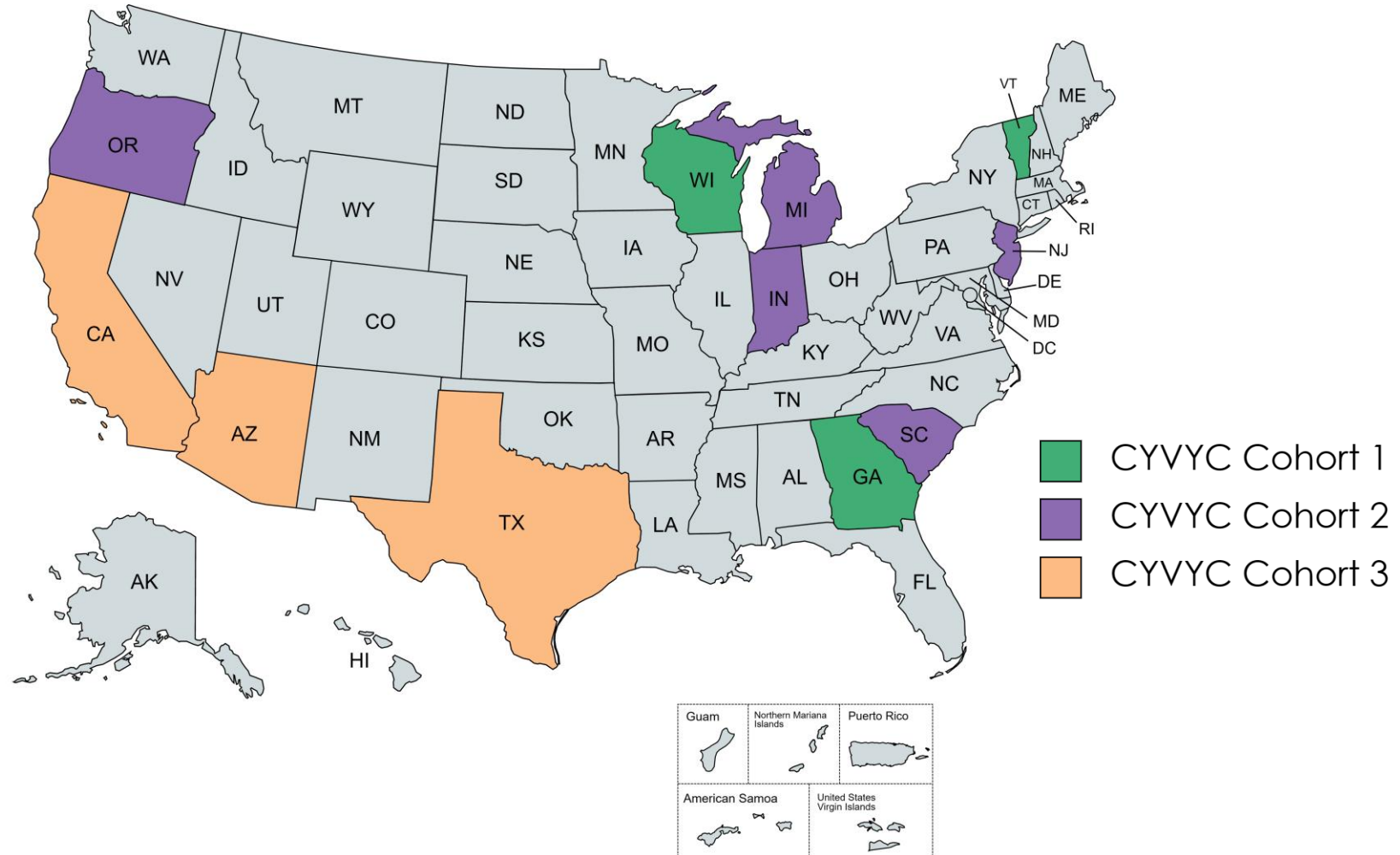
HOW DO ALL THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER...



GREAT QUESTION!



CYVYC COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO 11 STATE TEAMS

- **Led by the Center for Public Representation**
 - <https://www.centerforpublicrep.org>
 - <https://supporteddecision.org>
- **Implementation**
 - State-wide action plans supported by individualized TA
 - Cross-state community of practice meetings
 - Amplifying state team's work nationally
- **Recommendations for Replication**
 - Adopt a multi-faceted approach, with youth at the helm
 - Evolve meeting structures
 - Meet teams where they are
 - Advance alternatives through multiple strategies



**PROMISING
PRACTICES**

MORE CYVYC ACTIVITIES



- **Youth Ambassadors**

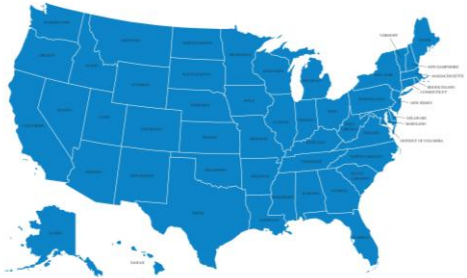
- 44 across 11 states, trained and supported by SABE
- Youth stories

- **Research**

- Briefs and promising practices
- Interactive map of alternatives to guardianship

- **Knowledge Translation & Dissemination**

- Youth curriculum
- Videos & speakers series
- <https://youth-voice.org>





**MI CYVYC
WEBPAGE**

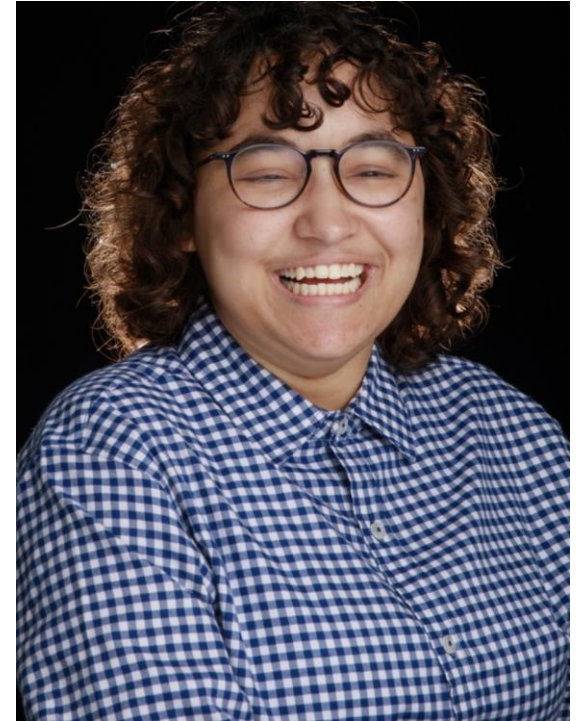
YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN MICHIGAN

Corissa Pitman
CYVYC Youth Ambassador



My Experience with Guardianship

- My first exposure to thinking about guardianship was when I applied to be a Youth Ambassador when I was 13 years old.
- I had never spoken to my family about it before that.
- I applied to be a Youth Ambassador, because I really enjoy advocating for people with disabilities like me.
- It made me really start thinking about how I want to make decisions about my life as an adult.
- Now I am 18 years old. As an adult, I have found community resources that help me make decisions.
- I have been a strong advocate for a while now. I want people with disabilities to be able to make their own decisions about their lives.



How Would You Feel If Your Rights Are In Jeopardy

- Deciding where to live
- Consenting to or, preventing any medical and health care or treatment
- Determining when and how to travel
- How you spend your money
- Making changes in educational or vocational programs
- Determining if and whom you can date
- What personal property you can own
- If and where, you worship

What is Supported Decision-Making anyway?

We all need supporters, helpers, and consultants in our lives in order to make good decisions, whether we have a disability or not

**Supported Decision-Making can look different for each person –
like for me and my sister**

Getting Started with Supported Decision-Making

Step 1) Start the conversation

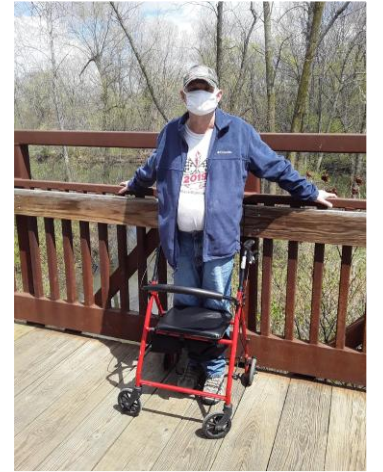
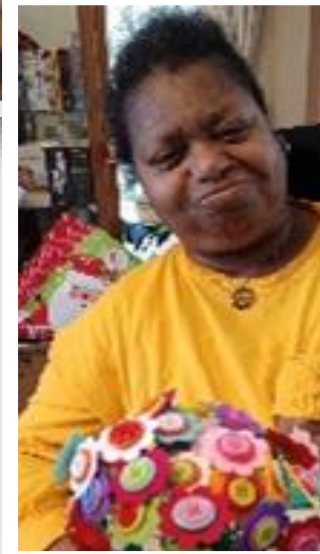
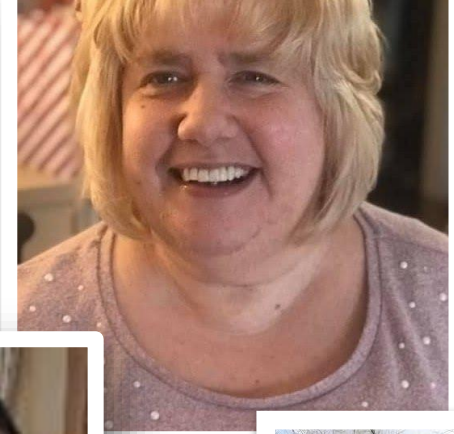
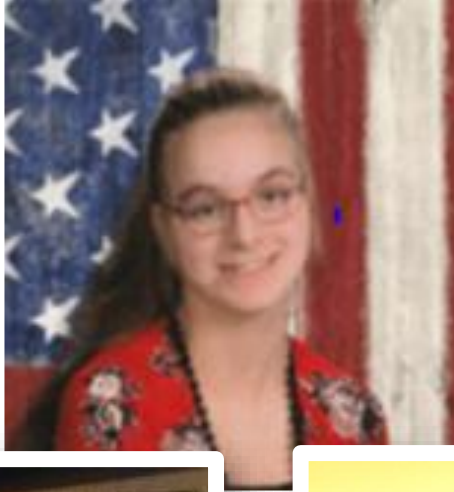
Step 2) Identifying who is willing and able to assist

Step 3) Plan and communicate

Step 4) Set up agreement

Step 5) Let everyone know

Remember, Supported Decision Making Can Be Used by ALL People



The Wrap-up

- Being a strong advocate
- Be person centered
- Begin young and continue throughout life
- Tie back into the ALL
- Don't freeze people in time
- Recognize what guardianship can and, can not do.



**NJ CYVYC
WEBPAGE**

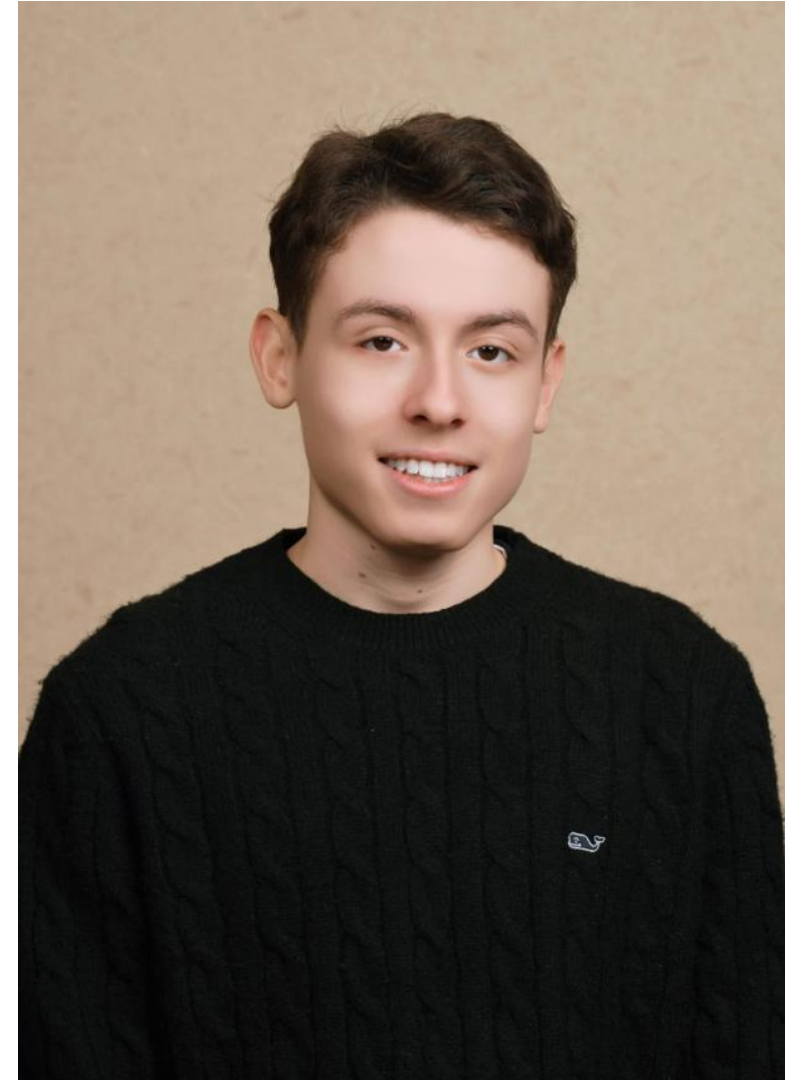
YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN NEW JERSEY

Giancarlo Vicari
CYVYC Youth Ambassador



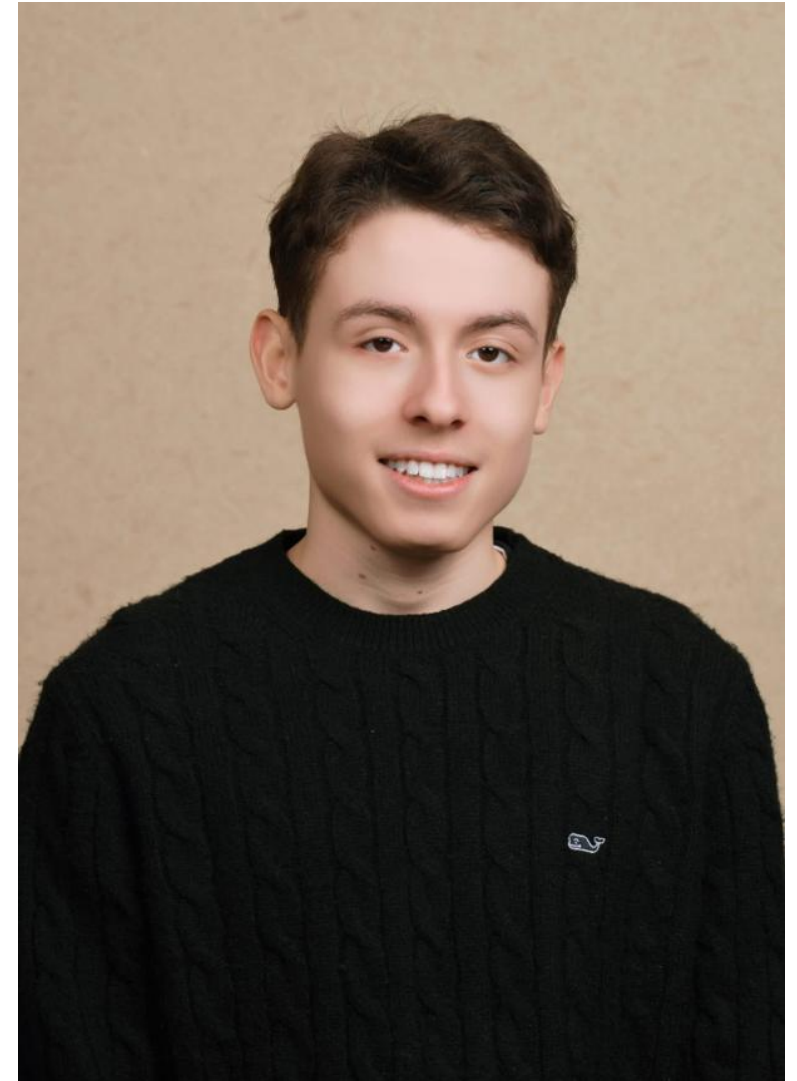
Who I Am

- My name is Giancarlo Vicari
- I am 17 years old and from New Jersey
- I am the youth ambassador of New Jersey for CYVYC.
- I have been working with CYVYC for 4 years now



Who I Am (Cont.)

- **Part of New Jersey State Team**
- **New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities**
- **The Boggs Center for Developmental Disabilities**
- **SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**
- **Disability Rights New Jersey**

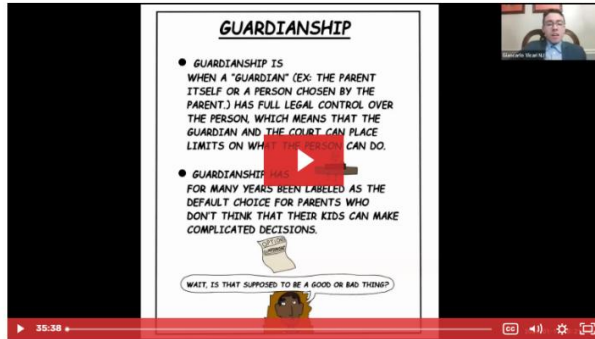


My Self-Advocacy Beginnings

Meet our Ambassador



Ambassador Project Showcase



CENTER ON
YOUTHVOICE
YOUTHCHOICE
Empowering Youth to Advance Alternatives to Guardianship



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New Jersey State Team

Team Lead Contact Information

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- I participated with CYVYC for over half a year in weekly zoom meetings, where I learned about concepts such as:
- Guardianship and its alternatives
 - The plight of neurodivergent people and how they overcame trials and tribulations to get where they are now
 - The art of advocating and the process of change

Tools for Decision-Making



GIANCARLO VICARI

8TH GRADE STUDENT AT NEWMARK K-8 SCHOOL

VISION

I am a very smart and charming teenager. I am very determined and loves the challenges especially if they are related to learning new things about history and film. I will find the solution to any grammar problem for sure. I want to live in an apartment by myself in Orlando, Florida. I want to pursue higher education in the Filmography field. I would like to have a job that provides for my needs and that he feels passionate about. I would love to continue building up new friendships and keeping his old friends throughout life. I would like to stay close to my siblings and family members. I hope to be able to make life decisions for myself in a safe and caring environment surrounded by people who loves me.

WHAT WORKS

- I like to have things written out in a list.
- I like to have music while I work.
- I like to have breaks.
- I like to give presentations orally rather than written out.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- I don't like to take notes.
- I don't like to be talked down to just because I have a disability.
- I don't like to be kept working for too long.



GIANCARLO'S STRENGTHS, ABILITIES AND INTERESTS

- I am very funny, bright, and intellectual.
- I know a lot about pop-culture history such as films, cartoons, books and video games.
- I have very good social skills with adults.
- I know a lot of life skills.
- I like to play sports such as Basketball, Golf, and Tennis.
- I am very helpful.
- I prefer cats to dogs. (🐱🐶)
- I am part of the Center for Youth Voice, Youth Choice (CYVC) ambassador program which promotes alternatives to guardianship.
- I am enrolled in the Union County 4-H community service club.
- I enjoy filmmaking after I took a class at the NJ Film Institute.
- I like to hang out with friends on the weekend.

GIANCARLO'S CHALLENGES

- I am not very good with planning and organization.
- I am not very patient with other people.
- I am prone to zoning out when someone talks for too long.

Tools that I've used to make decisions and voice my concerns:

- Having someone explain the options and the pros and cons to me
- Asking for help understanding info that doctors, lawyers, employers, etc., are telling me
- Getting to know myself, my strengths, weaknesses, and preferences

My Participation in Peoples and Families Magazine



The Center on Youth Voice, Youth Choice

Giancarlo Vicari is New Jersey's Youth Ambassador with the Center on Youth Voice, Youth Choice, a national organization promoting alternatives to guardianship for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

As part of his Ambassador Project, he created an animated guide designed for teens to help them explore alternatives to traditional guardianship.

This resource center promotes alternatives through its own advocacy efforts and collaborates with youth around the country to educate parents, school staff, and other professionals. The Center has 41 youth ambassadors in 11 states, including Vermont, Wisconsin, Georgia, South Carolina, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, California, Arizona, and Texas. It also maintains a library of resources, including state-specific resources for all 50 states, on its website: youth-voice.org.

Along with the rest of the New Jersey state team, Giancarlo seeks to promote supported decision-making as a more widely accepted alternative to guardianship. The team includes youth ambassadors, the NJ Council on



Giancarlo Vicari

Developmental Disabilities, The Boggs Center for Developmental Disabilities, the NJ Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), and Disability Rights NJ.

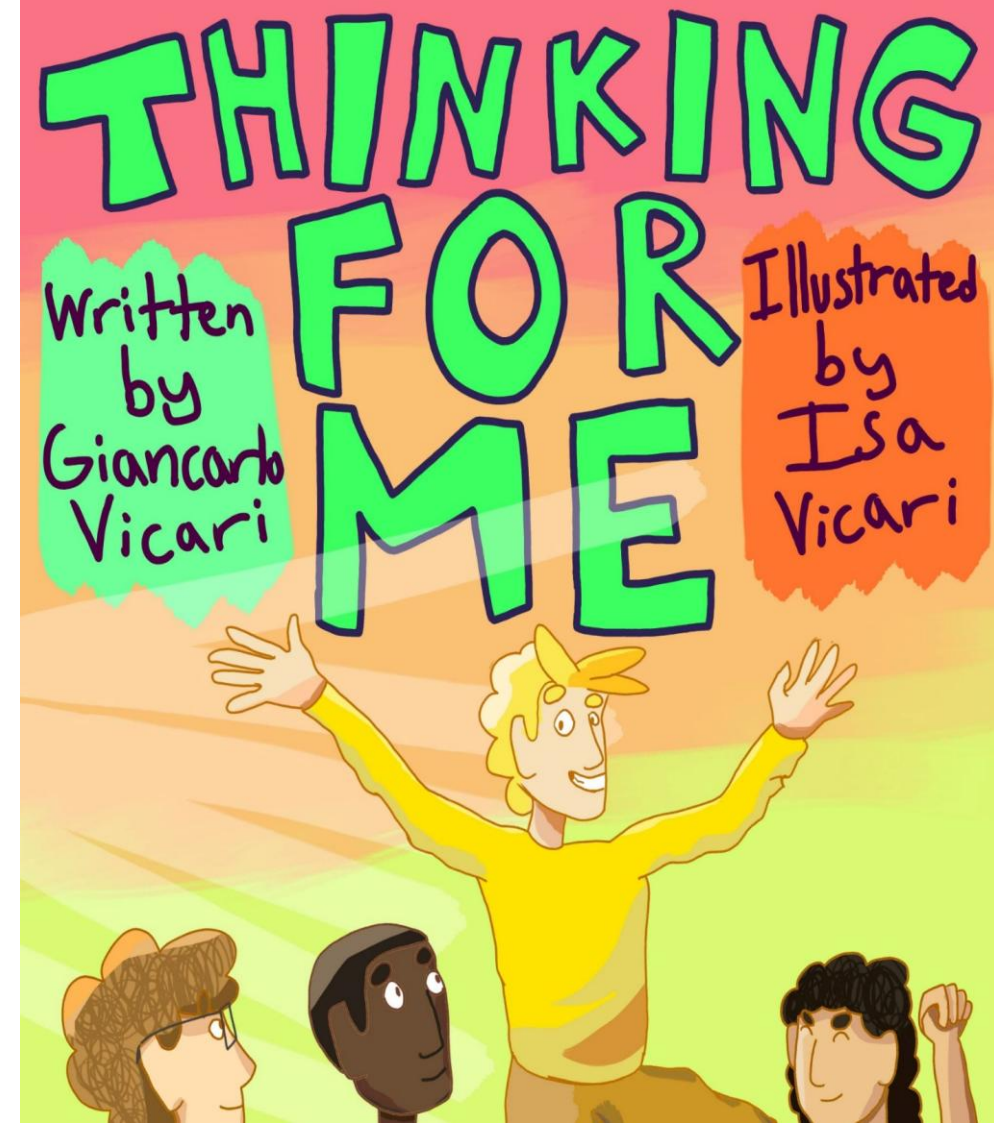
As part of the community of practice, the team has educated itself on best practices, and in turn, will then educate individuals with I/DD, families, educators/school system personnel, the judiciary, disability attorneys, advocacy organizations, and support coordination agencies about the value of self-determination and supported decision-making. They hope to create a multimedia approach that includes webinars, written materials, videos, and other forms of media complemented by the youth ambassadors' projects. [PDF](#)

ALL THESE OPTIONS SOUND GREAT! I'LL BE SURE TO MENTION THESE TO MY PARENTS AND THE PEOPLE IN MY IEP MEETINGS. THANKS GUYS!



Thinking For Me

- Informational Graphic Guide about alternatives to guardianship.
- Interactive Version:
<https://icimedia.wistia.com/medias/dltgy68yys>
- Translated in Spanish
- Printed Copies



Thinking For Me (Cont.)

THIS
IS
JAKE.



HEY GUYS!



HEY MAN! HOW'RE YOU DOING!



JAKE'S A TEEN WHO'S
ABOUT TO ENTER THE
NEXT BIG STAGE
OF HIS LIFE.



I HEAR YOU'RE
TURNING THE BIG
ONE-EIGHT SOON!



SO, GOT ANY BIG PLANS FOR
YOUR PARTY?



WELL, I HAVEN'T REALLY HAD TIME TO
PLAN A PARTY YET BECAUSE OF MY
PARENTS.



WHAT'VE YOU BEEN
TALKING ABOUT?



WELL, THESE PAST FEW DAYS MY PARENTS HAVE BEEN WORRYING THAT I WON'T BE ABLE TO
MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS FOR MYSELF IN ADULTHOOD BECAUSE OF MY DISABILITY. SO,
THEY'RE THINKING ABOUT PUTTING ME UNDER THIS THING CALLED "GUARDIANSHIP".



OH! I'VE HEARD OF THAT KIND
OF SITUATION BEFORE!



WELL, WHAT'S IT ABOUT?



GUARDIANSHIP'S BASICALLY LIKE THIS THING, LIKE THE PARENTS OF CERTAIN
PEOPLE...THEY UH...I FORGET.



Motion Comic Version



Since My CYVYC Showcase



- I have collaborated with transition coordinators and presented to high school students
- I presented Thinking For Me at the Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (KTDRR) conference in 2025
- I was awarded the Youth Leadership Award by the SPAN Parent Advocacy Network last month

QUESTIONS NOW OR LATER?

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SLIDE DECK