

For May 7, 2018

## ADWA Champions

A champion is defined as “someone who stands up for a cause, a principle or another person.” ADWA’s cause as a professional association is the development and recognition of disability workers as skilled professionals. ADWA’s board and staff try to champion that message to our members, government and others who work in the field. We need people to be aware of how we are working for them, but we can’t be everywhere. And while we send out regular E-Bulletins, not everyone reads them. So we need a way to extend our reach and find more personal ways to connect with our members and to grow our professional community. The Champions initiative aims to do that.

**What does an ADWA Champion do?** An ADWA Champion is a disability worker who is a proud disability professional willing to be the face of ADWA in their organization and community. The Champion makes a commitment to speak to others about what ADWA is (and is not), what ADWA is doing, and what is in the latest E-Bulletins. This can happen informally or at staff meetings that you might normally attend, or by invitation to other meetings that fit your schedule as long as your employer approves. If there is a staff newsletter, the Champion can share small updates from ADWA so that people are more aware of us.

The Champion is not only a voice for ADWA, but also its ears. We need to know when people are having difficulty signing up for ADWA, accessing the *Members Only* section of the website or our Perkopolis perks program. We have found that many members will not contact our office when they run into problems, but they will tell someone they work with. A Champion can answer questions about ADWA and initiatives like certification, or address misconceptions that might not come to our attention. In some cases, an ADWA Champion might speak about ADWA to another organization that has few or no members, with their employer’s permission. How an ADWA Champion carries out this role is as unique as the individual and the organization they work for.

**How does ADWA support its Champions?** It is very important for Champions to have good information about ADWA. We have prepared a set of 1-2 page summaries that will give you the basics on what ADWA does, its history and accomplishments, the certification initiative, board and staff contacts and frequently asked questions (FAQs). The ADWA Coordinator will send you a monthly update of what the board and staff have been doing that you can use when you talk to others. She will also work out a schedule for connecting by phone or Skype or text message at least monthly to answer your questions, provide support, share what other Champions have found useful and hear about what you have been doing. In addition, a staff or board member can arrange to be available by phone/Skype/text while you are speaking at a regularly-scheduled meeting and answer questions that you may not have an answer for. If you are unsure of an answer at other times and can’t reach the Coordinator in the office, it is perfectly okay to say, “I don’t know. I will get back to you on that.” Eventually, we may create opportunities for Champions to meet to share their experiences (e.g., virtually or at an event like the ACDS conference).

**What are some benefits of being a Champion?** Becoming a Champion will give you a deeper understanding of ADWA and a stronger voice with the organization. It could be a first step to board or committee membership, or just another way of contributing to our shared goal of building a valued, proud and professional workforce.

**How do I become an ADWA Champion?** If you are interested in becoming an ADWA Champion, check with your employer to see if they are supportive of you taking on that role. Share this E-Bulletin as a starting point to discuss how you might take on that role in your organization with your employer’s full

support. If you or your employer have any questions or concerns, contact the ADWA Coordinator at [disabilityworkers@gmail.com](mailto:disabilityworkers@gmail.com) or 587-288-0909.

This is an ongoing initiative, so it is never too late to become a Champion at your workplace. Just call the ADWA Coordinator at 587-288-0909 or email [disabilityworkers@gmail.com](mailto:disabilityworkers@gmail.com).

Building a Valued, Proud and  
Professional Workforce

### Connect

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