

Program Summary

The National Down Syndrome Society's (NDSS) Education Program works to develop a continuum of systems-level supports for students with Down syndrome and their families. We believe access to an education is a civil right, and the opportunity to learn is the key to a fulfilling life and the foundation of an equitable society. In pursuit of our mission to advance inclusive education across the country, the NDSS education team provides resources, programming and supports for families, educators and advocates. We work to influence policy at the federal, state and local levels to ensure that people with Down syndrome can access the education to which they are entitled and that the quality of that education is continually improved.

Advocacy:

We work proactively with stakeholders both in the government and in the broader disability community to protect the rights of and improve opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome.



Policy:

Numerous well-established legal protections exist to ensure access to education for individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities, but much work remains to be done. Our policy priorities include spreading inclusion, equity and disability justice; improving the quality of K-12 schooling, especially professional development for all educators; expanding supports for postsecondary transition, especially dismantling barriers to higher education and making career-focused education more inclusive; ensuring safety and wellness; and funding and appropriations that benefit the Down syndrome and disability communities.

Programming:

We strengthen and support the Down syndrome community across the country by developing and sharing resources and events to educate and connect those we serve.



Community Support:

We respond directly to requests from our community for information, resources and referrals to supports from our vast network of local partners.

Guiding Principles:

We must do the most good for the most people.

As a national organization, we're mindful of our responsibility to develop and promote initiatives that are practical and repeatable. What we do has to have a positive effect on the Down syndrome community, and it should work at scale whenever possible.

Building equity is essential.

Where education and disability intersect, the right to access an inclusive education is the foundation upon which so many protections have been built. Legal compliance is key, but it's only the beginning. We have a duty to educate the public and break down systemic and attitudinal barriers that too often impede the progress of members of our community.

Inclusion is not confined to the classroom.

Students with Down syndrome have lives outside the four walls of the classroom, and the supports laid out in their education plans too often ignore how involved they are in their communities. Inclusive practice should be widespread, and we believe schools have the potential to drive cultural change.