



Down Syndrome Affiliates in Action Accreditation Process

The first step in DSAIA's Accreditation Program is determining your readiness to become an accredited program. Launching a capital campaign or just beginning to get your nonprofit status are examples that might take away the energy and resources you need to complete the accreditation process. Accreditation will strengthen your organization and identify areas that need attention. Beginning the process is a commitment and it is important that your organization understands and is ready for the challenge. DSAIA will schedule a time to meet with you and your Board to describe the process and answer questions. This will give you a better idea of the time commitment and amount of effort required.

The DSAIA Accreditation Self-Assessment tool provides a way for you to assess your organization's strengths and needs. This step gives you the opportunity to identify the areas that you feel are (1) definitely achieved; (2) somewhat achieved; or (3) need improvement. This document is used by DSAIA to create an individualized plan for your organization. Some organizations will complete the self-assessment and be ready to submit documentation for accreditation right away. Others will see areas that need to be developed and will be able to utilize DSAIA's resources to make improvements in their organization.

DSAIA is committed to helping our members be strong, effective, and efficient nonprofit organizations. The Accreditation program is one way that we can help you access the resources you need to serve individuals with Down syndrome and their families in your community. Here are the resources we think will help you achieve DSAIA Accreditation:

- Monthly Accreditation discussion groups for programs actively working on Accreditation. These monthly meetings will provide answers to questions, allow you to consult with colleagues for new ideas, set monthly goals, and celebrate accomplishments.
- Individual mentoring is available to all members active in DSAIA's Accreditation Program. It might be helping you locate sample policies, meeting with the Board to define program goals, or helping to set up a database. These mentoring sessions are on an as-needed basis.
- Member 2 Member webinars occur monthly and many of the topics selected will be focused on the accreditation items. These webinars are free to members.
- DSAIA Circles provide an ongoing opportunity to meet with leaders from around the country who share your role and interest areas.
- Annual Leadership Conference! Each year at DSAIA's annual conference look for workshops specific to accreditation topics as well as a chance to meet other members who are working toward accreditation. And when you do become accredited—expect to be celebrated!
- STACKS is DSAIA's online resource library, and it contains articles, videos, samples, and other resources organized around the accreditation topics. Members can access these resources directly through your STACKS login or can request the DSAIA locate and send needed resources.

Once you feel your organization has documented all the items that represent your organization's strengths and needs, you will submit your materials to DSAIA's Accreditation Panel. This panel will consist of three individuals who have strong expertise in nonprofit management and a thorough understanding of the unique challenges of organizations who serve individuals with Down syndrome and their families. It is NOT necessary that your organization complete every item. Some items may not apply, and others may be too difficult for your program to achieve. The Review Panel will make one of three decisions related to your organization:

- If it is clear that your accreditation packet demonstrates significant strengths in each of the nine categories and that there are no major omissions, DSAIA Accreditation will be granted, and the silver DSAIA Accreditation banner will be sent to you.
- (2) If your packet demonstrates extraordinary responses to the accreditation items, the Review Panel will acknowledge this advanced level of accomplishment with the gold DSAIA Accreditation banner. This level of accomplishment would apply to organizations which have been accredited by DSAIA in the past, which have been accredited by another organization, or which have gone above and beyond in documenting completion of the items in each of the nine DSAIA categories.
- (3) If the Review Panel feels that there are significant areas needing improvement, one or more of the nine categories is not represented in your accreditation materials, or there are many items that have not been addressed, recommendations will be made to help your organization re-apply. There is no timeline on when you can submit your materials for review. During the review process, the Review Panel may request additional information or clarification before a decision is made.

Success! Once DSAIA Accreditation is granted, you will receive electronic copies of the DSAIA Accreditation banner (silver or gold) and suggestions on how it can be used to communicate this important designation in your community. You will also receive a press release to disseminate to local media and your organization will be added to DSAIA's accredited programs list on our website. Expect a flurry of social media excitement! And, because we want to recognize you at the next DSAIA Annual Leadership Conference, your organization will receive a free conference registration in honor of your accomplishment.

While there is no timeline for initially completing DSAIA's Accreditation, there is a deadline for renewing your accreditation status. Your accreditation will expire three years. Approximately 6 months before your expiration date, you will be sent a renewal self-assessment. Once that is completed, the DSAIA Review Panel will determine if your accreditation status will be renewed. If it is, expect another round of excitement AND your organization will receive \$100 off one conference registration for the next Annual Leadership Conference so we can celebrate your accomplishment.

Questions? Call or email anytime! sarah@dsaia.org or 701-354-7255

