

Disability Strong

Disability Strong Virtual Conference
September 20 – 24, 2025

**RECORDED SESSIONS- click on the links in blue
below to watch each session**

-session 4 is a transcript, not a recording

The Disability Strong Conference is a 5-day virtual conference that provides a platform to give voice to individuals with disabilities and allies to connect, share their stories, and advance disability awareness and advocacy in communities that support individuals with disabilities.

Saturday, September 20, 1:00 – 2:00pm PST, 4:00 – 5:00pm EST

Session 1: Building Change

Led by Nico Meyering

Disability advocate and civic leader Nico Meyering reflects on his lived experience with orphan disease and his journey through inaccessible systems toward impactful leadership. As Board President of Young Involved Philadelphia and Chair of the Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities, Nico has helped reshape how local civic institutions engage with disability—placing justice, access, and inclusion at the center. Through stories that are personal, political, and at times unexpectedly funny, Nico explores how Disabled people build power, forge coalitions, and drive meaningful change in the nation's most Disabled big city. Attendees will leave with fresh insights and practical inspiration on how to reimagine civic spaces, not just as accessible—but as places where Disabled people lead, thrive, and belong.\

Sunday, September 21, 9:00 – 10:00am PST, 12:00 – 1:00pm EST

Session 2: From Trauma to Healing

Led by Nicole Demos

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines trauma as “a delayed or protracted response to a stressful event or situation (either short or long-lasting) of an exceptionally threatening or long-lasting nature, which is likely to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone. Join Nicole as she openly shares her experience with trauma and healing in Finland. Help her share the importance of self-care, advocacy and finding voice that is nurtured when surrounded by people you trust within your safe space.

Sunday, September 21, 1:00 – 2:00pm PST, 4:00pm – 5:00pm EST

[Session 3: Intersectionality of Race and Disability](#)

[Led by Nancy Williams-Nettles](#)

Intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), explains how overlapping oppressions like racism and ableism create unique challenges for marginalized groups, especially people of color with disabilities. These individuals often face compounded discrimination, including misdiagnosis and exclusion from equitable systems. Although disability is seldom included in intersectional research, increasing awareness of ableism offers potential for more inclusive, justice-driven approaches that reflect the complex realities of those most affected.

Monday, September 22, 4:00 – 5:00pm PST, 7:00 – 8:00pm EST

[Session 4: Civic Engagement, Policymaking, and Advocacy](#)

[Panel Discussion with Nico Meyering, Nancy Williams-Nettles, and Jacob Lesner-Buxton](#)

This panel discussion will outline how to get more involved in the community to promote positive change, politically and non-politically. This could include any activities or meetings, virtually or in-person. The important part is to get involved and speak out. This could include sharing a social media post or even being a panelist at the Disability Strong Conference! The panelists will discuss how to get more involved to influence and highlight how they have done this through their life experiences and journey.

Tuesday, September 23, 5:00 – 6:00pm PST, 8:00 – 9:00pm EST

[Session 5: Using Inclusive Language/How to be an Ally](#)
[Designed by Nicole Demos, Led by Jenn Chassman Browne](#)

This session will help you to:

- Foster belonging, inclusion, equity, empathy and care to discover the value of being a genuine, thoughtful ally
- Be inspired to be advocates for change at your own pace, and in your own way
- Embrace how words and actions can collaborate and make accessibility and inclusivity a reality in every environment

Wednesday, September 24, 5:00 – 6:00pm PST, 8:00 – 9:00pm EST

[Session 6: How Violence and Disability Converge](#)
[Led by Margaux Sorenson](#)

This session offers a deeper understanding of how violence impacts people with disabilities. Participants will learn about the disproportionate rates of abuse, the structural barriers to reporting and healing, and how stigma, institutionalization, and perceived vulnerability have historically left disabled people unprotected.

We'll also explore the roots of ableism, the impact of the ADA, and the work being done by The Initiative to center disabled survivors in advocacy and systems change. This session is both educational and empowering—focused on increasing awareness while uplifting real efforts toward safety, equity, and justice for all disabled people.