

>> NEIL: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Neil Purohit. I use he/him pronouns, and I am the Program Manager for the American Association of People with Disabilities Internship Programs. It's really great to be here with everyone today.

I'm a South Asian man with olive skin, side-parted hair, and a thick beard. I have a pair of clear glasses on and I'm wearing a button-down gray and white striped shirt. Behind me is the unadorned wall of my cubicle here in the AAPD's office in downtown Washington, D.C.

And throughout the presentation, I'll be looking into the camera and to the side at my second monitor, where I have some notes up. Thank you all so much for joining today's webinar. Over the next hour, I will be sharing some information about the 2026 AAPD Summer Internship Program, as well as how you can apply.

You'll also have the chance to hear from some of our incredible alumni panelists. And time permitting, we'll save a little bit at the end to answer any questions that our team is unable to get to in the chat. Next slide, please.

Before we begin, I wanted to start with some housekeeping. This meeting is being recorded and we will be sharing this recording on our website within the next week or so. We'll also be sharing a copy of the slides so that everyone has the information from today.

For access, we have CART transcription available. You can access the CART transcription by hitting the "closed caption" or "CC" button on the Zoom toolbar, or by clicking on the Streamtext link, which my colleague April will share in the chat.

We also have ASL interpretation available today. The ASL interpreters will be spotlighted and you should be able to see them already. If you're having issues seeing the interpreters, you may want to switch which Zoom view you have selected, or switch to a different type of device if possible, like a laptop or a computer.

If at any point you can't see the interpreters or access the CART transcription, you can send a message via Zoom to my colleague, April, who should be showing up as AAPD Tech Support to help troubleshoot.

If you have any questions throughout the presentation, we encourage you to use the Q&A feature on Zoom, which will let you send questions directly to our team. Some of my colleagues will be answering questions in the Q&A box throughout the presentation and at the end of the presentation, I will turn to the Q&A box to answer any lingering questions they are unable to get to.

We will not be tracking questions that come in as direct messages. So, again, please be sure to use the Q&A feature to send your questions to us. If that's not accessible to you, please send us an email and we will do our best to get back to you promptly.

With that being said, let's get started. Next slide, please.

I'm going to begin our presentation today by sharing a brief overview of the Summer Internship Program. And after that, I will talk about the process of applying, and some important dates to keep in mind. Once that is done, you'll have a chance to hear from three of our AAPD alumni. We'll talk about their experiences in the program, and share a little bit about what they are up to now.

At the end of our presentation, we'll have time for questions and answers. Myself and our alumni will be able to answer any questions that you may have. On the left half of this slide is a photo of our 2025 summer interns. We're standing on a rooftop patio and posing for the camera.

This photo is from last summer's welcome reception. It brings me so much joy to see it here. This photo was taken before I began my current role. I was at this event just a few feet away from the camera person, mingling with other community members and other AAPD alum. So many happy memories. Next slide, please.

The program is an opportunity. To apply, you need to identify as a person with a disability and you need to be a current student, or a recent graduate from a U.S.-based program or university. You also need to have a valid U.S. work authorization.

The AAPD internship program has three main goals -- to help interns access meaningful employment, to help interns build leadership skills, and to help interns connect to the broader disability community.

Expanding on those a bit, the first goal is focused on career. We really, really hope that after participating in the program, our interns leave not just with valuable work experience, but with a better understanding of the types of careers they want to build.

The next goal is focused on building disabled leaders. Throughout the summer, all of our AAPD interns, whether they are remote or in person, will have opportunities to build leadership and advocacy skills and to connect with disabled leaders from across the country.

That leads us to our third goal, which is focused on community. As a social worker, this goal is really near and dear to my heart. We really hope that by participating in this internship program, people feel a sense of belonging to the broader disability community, and that folks leave their internships with an understanding of how they can build community.

Moving on to specific details about the 2026 Summer Internship Program. Next slide, please. This coming summer, our program will be hybrid. When we say hybrid, we mean that some of our interns will spend the summer in person in Washington, D.C., and that some of our interns will be fully remote. And they will spend the summer wherever they may live.

Regardless of the format you choose for your internship, the internship program will run for ten weeks, from late May through early August. During the program, interns will work

for 32 hours per week, Monday through Thursday, and interns will receive a stipend equal to roughly \$20 per hour.

On Fridays, instead of going to work, interns will have the opportunity to participate in a series of community events, which aim to help interns grow as professionals while learning more about advocacy and the disability community.

Next slide, please. Let's talk about placement sites. Our interns are placed at a really wide range of placement sites, which is where our interns do their 32 hours of work each week.

The placement site process is individualized, meaning we take your wishes, interests, and long-term goals into account when we are exploring possible opportunities. My colleague, April, will drop a link into the chat shortly with some of our past placement sites. I strongly encourage everyone to look through it.

We are constantly bringing new partners into our community. In the past, we've worked with a few of our interns to explore new placement opportunities at organizations they felt would be a really good fit for their interests.

Pulling back slightly, all of our internship placement sites fit into one of several categories. First, there are Congressional offices. These are placement sites on Capitol Hill which can include House representative offices and Senate representative offices.

The AAPD is a nonpartisan organization, and these placements can be in the offices of either Democrats or Republicans. These placements can also be on committees, like the Health Committee, short for Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, to name one example. It's most common for interns interested in a Congressional placement to be placed at the office that is associated with either their home state, or the state that their college, university, or training program is located in.

Our interns are also frequently placed at federal agencies. In the past, we've had interns placed with the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, where one of our panelists today used to work; the Department of Energy; and the EEOC, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, to name a few examples.

Many of our interns are also placed at nonprofit organizations. These can be disability-specific organizations like the National Disability Rights Network, or organizations that are not disability-specific, like the Center for Technology and Democracy, or the Human Rights Campaign.

We have placed interns at a ton of nonprofits in the past. And if you're interested in seeing who some of our past placement partners have been, I really encourage you to check out the placement site list that April shared in the chat a few minutes ago.

Last but not least, our for-profit organizations. Some of these are the big-name businesses that you may already know like American Airlines, Elevance Health, or

T-Mobile, but we've worked with a range of smaller for-profit organizations in healthcare, tech, and consulting, among other fields.

While doing the application, you'll be asked to share your preference for placement sites in ranked order. So, I really encourage you to take a look at where some of our past placements have been, and to really think about the kind of work you want to do, and what kind of placement site you might be interested in before you submit your application. Next slide, please.

In 2026, there is also a slightly newer and specific opportunity within our internship program -- the Bobby Silverstein Fellowship, which began last year. It is for interns with an interest in disability issue from a legal perspective. You need to be a rising junior or higher.

Recent graduates and current law students are welcome and encouraged to apply. Bobby Silverstein Fellows will also have to be in person in Washington, D.C., for the summer. Last year, our Bobby Silverstein fellow was a 1L, meaning they were in their first year of law school and they were placed at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

They learned so much over the course of their internship. And I'm really excited to see who the next fellow is and what amazing work they're able to do over the summer. Before we move on, I do want to note that in order to be considered for the Bobby Silverstein Fellowship, you must complete one additional essay question, meaning you will complete a total of four essay questions instead of three.

If you're not interested in being considered for this fellowship, you do not need to complete the fourth essay question. Next slide, please.

All right. Moving on. In addition to work at placement sites, which take place from Monday to Thursday, interns have the opportunity to take part in a variety of community events, which take place every Friday afternoon.

These events are an opportunity to learn more about the disability community, to hear about the experiences of seasoned advocates, and to build meaningful connections with a broad range of community members and disabled professionals.

In the past, we've brought on an incredible range of speakers to meet with our cohorts. I'm excited to share that we're already deep in the process of exploring opportunities for our interns to connect with the broader AAPD community this coming summer.

On the right side of the slide are two photos from past community events. One of a number of interns in a breakout room. And one of a number of interns sitting around a table during a presentation on the history of the disability rights movement.

Next slide, please. Two other key aspects of the AAPD internship program are its focus on mentorship and its focus on community-building. Each AAPD intern is paired with an

experienced mentor in their field of interest who is able to share career advice, help folks get the most of their internships, and hopefully be a resource for years to come.

Mentors are also invited to some of our AAPD events, like our welcome reception, which typically takes place at the end of the summer internship's orientation week. Community-building is also a really big part of the program. And AAPD interns have the opportunity to attend a wide range of in-person, hybrid, and remote events throughout the summer.

To share one example of the community focus event, last summer we had an intern mixer where we brought interns and mid-career professionals from across D.C. together to meet one another and to talk about their experiences and their respective industries.

The event went really well. We were excited to explore more opportunities for interns to build meaningful connections and relationships this summer.

On the right side of the slide are three photographs from a number of our community-focused events throughout the years. One photo is from the internship program's 20-year anniversary celebration, where our VP of Programs, Christine, can be seen signing with an intern on a rooftop overlooking the U.S. Capitol.

Another photo is from a community reception in 2024, where a few interns and some alumni can be seen smiling for a photo outside. The last photo is from my own internship year, when I was an AAPD intern. And they chose me and some of my co-interns posing for a photograph in front of the White House, and a picture of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Next slide, please.

All right. Moving on, these next few slides are going to cover the components of the application and cover a few questions that we commonly receive. This slide displays the components of the internship application, which are general information, resume, internship placement site preferences, essay questions, and optionally, demographics.

I will go through each in order. Next slide, please.

The general information section asks for your contact information, location, and a few eligibility-related questions. To be eligible for the AAPD's internship program, you must identify as a person with a disability, and you must be a current student or recent graduate from a U.S.-based program, college, or university.

When we say recent graduate, we mean anyone who has graduated in the last five years. Put another way, anyone who graduated after the summer of 2021 may be eligible for the program. After the eligibility questions, we also ask a few questions about how you learned about the program, and how you learned about the AAPD.

These questions are really helpful to make sure that we're reaching a diverse subset of the disability community. After answering those, the application will ask for your resume. We request that everyone submit their resumes in an accessible format, as some of our reviewers may be using screen readers.

If you aren't sure what to put on your resume, I would encourage you to share information about any past experiences you may have that tell us something about you. For example, volunteering experiences, or even experiences as a caregiver. Your resume should not be longer than two pages.

If you have any questions about resumes, please feel free to type them out in the Q&A box, or to email us at the email address listed on the application web page. Next slide, please.

Moving on, we have internship preferences. We already went through these a bit earlier, so I will keep this section brief. There will be questions asking what placement preferences you have and what you would prefer as your first choice, your second choice, and so on. It also has an option to select if you are interested in being considered for the Bobby Silverstein Fellowship.

After that, the application asks for your preference of format, meaning whether you would like to intern remotely or in person. If you would like to intern remotely, you will intern from wherever you live. If you select in person, that means you will have to stay in the accessible dorm-style housing we provide in Washington, D.C.

There is also an option to note whether you are a flexible intern. We strongly encourage you to choose whichever option would work best for you. We hope you know we go through great lengths to ensure our programming is accessible, engaging, and informative for interns no matter what format they are participating in.

The next section of the application is three essay questions. The first is focused on your leadership style. The second asks about your proudest achievement. And the third is focused on how you would address a disability issue. There's a fourth essay question that's optional. Again, it's only required for those who want to be considered for the Bobby Silverstein Fellowship.

One piece of advice for these essays is that this is an opportunity for you to share a lot about yourself. We really hope that anyone who applies takes these essays as a chance to share about their unique experiences and to really give us a sense of their interests and values. Next slide, please.

The last section of the application is the demographic section. This section of the application is fully optional. That being said, this information is really helpful to us to make sure that our process is equitable and that we have a diverse cohort. The demographics that we ask about are disability, sexual orientation, gender, veteran status, race, ethnicity, age, and religion.

This section is completely-ended and all of these questions are optional. Next slide, please.

Before we go to our panel, I wanted to speak briefly about the timeline. Applications for the summer of 2026 AAPD internship program are due at 5:00 p.m. eastern time on Tuesday, October 21st. The applications must be submitted using the Survey Monkey

link on our application web page. You can preview the questions by going to the Google document version of the application, which can be found on our website.

We are hoping to make decisions by mid- to late December, so everyone should expect to hear back from us by the end of January at the latest. If you don't hear from us, please don't be discouraged. We get a lot of applications. And it sometimes takes us a bit longer than expected to work through them.

We've also had a lot of AAPD interns who did not get selected for the internship on their first try, but were selected on their second or third try. Next slide, please.

All right. Without further ado, I'm extremely excited to introduce you all to our three incredible alumni panelists who we will be hearing from for the next 30 or so minutes. I'm going to now invite our panelists, Verlencia, Kadesha, and Marcy, to share their names, their pronouns if you're comfortable with that, a quick visual description, what year you were an intern, your placement site, and what you're up to right now.

Verlencia, I'll let you take it away.

>> VERLENCIA: Can you hear me?

>> NEIL: Yes.

>> VERLENCIA: Hi, everyone. I'm Verlencia Somuah. I am -- my pronouns, that was the first thing. She/her/hers. I am a former U.S. Department of Labor and Policy Adviser in the office that Neil had spoken about. I was an AAPD intern in 2020, the COVID year. So my internship was -- I think actually the first remote -- fully remote internship.

And, yeah, I'm excited to be here. Was there anything else I missed? Did I miss anything, Neil?

>> NEIL: No, that's great. Thank you.

>> VERLENCIA: Cool. Sorry, visual description.

>> NEIL: Thank you.

>> VERLENCIA: I definitely shouldn't be forgetting that. (Laughing) I am a Black female. I have black wavy hair. And I am wearing a white shirt today with a black cardigan. And I'm visually impaired, so. To share that up front.

>> NEIL: Thank you, Verlencia.

>> VERLENCIA: No problem.

>> NEIL: We'll now move to you.

>> My pronouns are she/her. I was a 2025 summer intern. I worked remotely with New Disabled South in the data and research department. And I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in public policy at the University of Arkansas. A brief visual description of me is I am a medium brown-skinned woman with, I guess, it's a white shirt.

And then I have, like, a scarf on my head.

>> MARCY: Hi. My name is Marcy Waring. I use she/her pronouns. As a visual description, I'm a light-skinned young adult woman with brown glasses and black shoulder-length hair. I'm wearing a black shirt. And I'm in front of a blurred white background.

I was an in-person summer intern this year, 2025. My placement site was the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, ASAN. And currently I'm a research assistant at the Lowery Institute for Disability Policy. And government affairs intern at the Arc of Massachusetts.

>> NEIL: Thank you. What was your day-to-day like? Please share some tasks you completed and some projects you worked on.

>> MARCY: Go ahead, Kadesha.

>> KADESHA: So, this is Kadesha. At New Disabled South in the data and research department, my first week or so was mostly reading up on reports to get a sense of what the organization's priorities and the focus of the work generally and specifically for data and research.

But a lot of it was also just trying to get really acquainted with the organization's structure, because that was my first time working at an entirely remote organization. So all of the employees were remote. The entire staff was remote. They encouraged me to do department tours.

So basically, scheduling meetings with folks across the organization to learn more about what they do, what their day-to-day is like, and just to kind of -- I think maybe build some morale. So that was pretty cool. But it definitely varied.

And then some of the projects that I worked on during my two months was the data and research department was -- or is launching a Black disability institute. They have some projects that are focused on a Black disability anthology series. So I supported that work, as well as the Black -- it was a disability justice research guide.

So that was something that they were wanting to, kind of, get some meat on the bones so that they can continue fleshing that out with scholars and other research professionals in 2026.

>> MARCY: Awesome. I can go next. So, for me, I think ASAN made me an all-rounder intern. I was jumping from thing to thing, but I did enjoy that. For example, I was helping the policy team by attending Congressional hearings and taking notes. I was also helping the grassroots advocacy team by compiling contact information for other allied advocates and organizations.

I was also helping with the action alerts by doing research on specific topics. And I also had the honor of getting my writing published on the ASAN blog. So those were my tasks. And as far as scheduling and day-to-day went, my working times were generally 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Thursday.

And although I was in D.C. as an in-person intern, I mostly worked from the dorms. This gave me more freedom for breaks and taking care of myself. I needed a lot of flexibility with that and was fortunate to get a lot of support. Oh, I'm so sorry. Wait. Can you hear me?

>> NEIL: Yeah.

>> MARCY: Okay.

>> NEIL: Thank you. Verlencia?

>> VERLENCIA: So, this is Verlencia speaking. So, I had my placement at AUCD, which is a nonprofit, the Association of University Centers on Disability. And so my day-to-day was working with their Director of Policy. Specifically it was during a time where they were pushing disability voting rights.

So I did a lot of work attending coalition meetings, take notes and meeting minutes in regards to voting policy, and making voting accessible for people with disabilities, as well as working with their Director of Comms, doing things like social media and newsletters and blogs.

And then also, I guess for day-to-day, what my day-to-day looked like, I would meet with the -- both directors on each end and then also, I guess, figure out what my tasks were for the day or every couple of days. I was given the work and then had to figure out how to work on that work, while also doing all these coalition meetings, and meeting with Hill members.

So, it was fun because it was a lot of independent work, but it was such a great team. So I was doing a lot of teamwork as well and figure out where I could help out in different departments.

>> NEIL: Awesome. Thank you all for sharing. It's incredible to hear how much great work you were able to do as interns. I'm also glad to hear what you all are up to now. I think that this question seamlessly leads us into our next one. Can you share a little bit about your experience as either remote or in-person interns?

I know that you all touched on this in your previous answer, but if you can, please share what your experience with access and accommodations during your internship and during the broader summer program was like.

>> MARCY: This is Marcy. I can start. So, not to expose anyone in my cohort, but I think it's okay to say that really, on the last day in the internship program, a lot of us were genuinely emotional. And at least for me, that was because I never experienced such an accessible environment that took my needs seriously.

And I really didn't want to leave, largely because of that. Cross-disability inclusion is a huge priority in this program, whether it's visual descriptions for those with low vision or blindness, or masking up for, really, everyone, but especially to protect those with weakened immune systems, making sure the environments are physically accessible.

I feel like everyone in the cohort really did their best to understand other people's needs in such a beautiful way. And I'll give two quick examples of what this looked like for me.

One is that I mentioned in my application that sometimes my eating is restricted to just a few sorts of soft items. So without me even asking for it, an area of safe foods was set up in the AAPD office during events so that I could definitely always eat.

Another is that before I got my wheelchair, I had -- I still have -- but I had mobility limitations and walked very slowly. There were a few times that the cohort went out together. And in my previous experiences in friend groups I got so used to everyone walking in front of me and not making that effort to match my slower pace.

But that really never happened during the summer with the cohort, not with the AAPD staff, or with the cohort. I was always able to be with someone and not left in the back. So I feel like it's a great environment accommodation-wise.

>> VERLENCIA: This is Verlencia. I can go next. I will echo what Marcy said. I think that my internship program, even being remote, was an experience of a lifetime. I left with some of my best friends today from the internship program. And we were still figuring out Zoom, to be honest.

So I just felt -- there was this warmth from the entire cohort. And then also just not having to explain what access is or accessibility and feeling included in everything is the experience that I also had.

>> KADESHA: Yeah. This is Kadesha. Yeah. My experience was pretty -- they were very, very accommodating at my placement site with whatever needs came up. That was my first time working at an organization or in an environment where people were very vocal about what their needs were, where they were at on any given day, what the wins were, what the blockers were.

And I think they just -- they really made it a point to have a culture around accessibility needs and just making that a norm. So, they were very, very approachable in terms of whatever it was that I needed.

Again, I was remote as well. I was very fortunate for that, because I was able to work from the comfort of my home this summer. But I knew that if at all anything ever came up, that I could reach out to my direct supervisors or I could reach out to the AAPD internship program manager, who was also very, very welcoming, very approachable.

And so, yeah. I think the biggest thing that I took away from this experience was just making sure I understood what my own needs were and how I could communicate those so that I can show up in the best ways possible.

>> NEIL: Thank you all so much. It really warms my heart to hear how great all of your experiences were. And I can share that your experiences with accessibility also align with my own, as I was an intern not too long ago, and feeling so blessed now to be able

to manage such a program, and make sure it continues setting a standard for accessibility for years to come.

Moving to our next question. As you all alluded to, the AAPD summer internship extends beyond the internship itself. It includes weekly community events, one-to-one mentoring and opportunities to build community and connect with the broader disability community, both in D.C. and across the country.

Can you talk about one or two of your favorite experiences or memories from your summer with the AAPD?

>> VERLENCIA: This is Verlencia. I can go. I guess two -- my first experience would be, I think, the sendoff, the internship sendoff. Because I was the remote cohort during COVID, after -- following the stay at home orders, or the -- yeah, stay at home orders, AAPD actually flew out all the interns from my cohort for the -- I think a few years later for the sendoff party so that all of the interns in my cohort could meet.

And so I think that was the experience that I remember the most, because it was like things of course had changed, but our relationships hadn't changed. And I think that cohort in 2020, our relationships were really strong, as I'm sure all the relationships from every cohort are really strong. But we felt bonded, in a way.

So having that reception at the end made it full circle that we were all doing what the internship had allowed us to do, connect with other people with disabilities, aside from your own disability. So, that was a really great experience.

The other experience I had was from my internship program. And -- because I was doing voting -- disability voting rights, I worked on a social media campaign. And it was the I Vote Because campaign.

And so seeing that come to fruition even after my internship was over at AUCD, that was a really great experience, to see that people were taking the filter that I had created and posting, even though I didn't have the -- I didn't have all the time in the world to finish out the campaign after August.

I still had the opportunity to see it come to fruition. So that was a really proud moment for me.

>> KADESHA: Marcy, do you want to go, or do you want me to go?

>> MARCY: Sure, I can go. This is Marcy. Probably one of the most interesting things I've done is speak on D.C.'s National Mall at 1:00 a.m. in the morning. (Laughing) Being in this program during the summer, when a lot of impactful bills were passed was definitely interesting.

But I felt honored to be in such an active area, especially during that time. An example of this was carrying a 60-hour vigil for Medicaid on the National Mall's lawn. They had people sign up to read stories from Medicaid recipients who fear losing their coverage.

And by the time I found out about this amazing endeavor, most of the daytime hours were already taken. But I knew I wanted to be part of it and wanted there to be as few gaps as possible. So I took the 12:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. slot. But that was really a core memory for me.

And I was so grateful to see such a time-intensive and visible initiative being taken. So that really left an impression on me. And I was really glad I was there. And I was there with other individuals from AAPD as well. (Chuckling)

>> KADESHA: Yeah. This is Kadesha. There's so many experiences that were memorable, because AAPD really does a great job of trying to address all aspects of a person in the context of an internship program. So they did really well to connect us with mentors, as Neil mentioned.

We each had our own mentor. We definitely heard from members in the broader disability community. Like, there were sessions that I was just happy to hear from disabled elders about what their origin stories were, and how they organized back then, and how things have changed over the span of so many years.

They also gave us opportunities to get out and see D.C. a bit. So there was an opportunity to go -- they took us as a group. They took our cohort as a group to the National Mall to see the monuments and stuff. I wasn't able to make that trip, but I was looking forward to it. And I know the folks that did make it, they had a great time.

But at my placement site, I really enjoyed working with a researcher, a disabled gender studies researcher who is working with my placement site currently as a fellow. They are organizing a disabled scholars of color collective. And so there was a gathering this fall or summer in San Francisco that I was able to attend on behalf of my placement site.

And I had the chance to meet Alice Wong. That's my core memory from this whole internship experience. Having the opportunity to go to San Francisco for one, being with such phenomenal scholars, and then to meet the Alice Wong. To have dessert in her apartment was just -- you know, mind-blowing.

I would have never guessed when I applied for the internship that it would lead me there. But it has been a truly wild ride. And I think there's just been so many phenomenal memories, people I've met.

I think the biggest thing, if you ask me about AAPD's program, internship program, the biggest thing is the network. It's the people you meet. Because they are going to stick with you. They're going to support you. They are going to love on you. And it will just really be an experience like you probably could never dream of.

>> VERLENCIA: This is Verlencia speaking. Just one additional thing to add to that. So, I -- at the time when I was an AAPD intern, I was in my master's program. And so, once

the internship program ended, of course they had so many speakers come in to speak to us. But Judy Heumann came to speak to us.

Through the program, I was able to reach out to Judy Heumann and she was my master's senior adviser for my senior project in my master's program. So, I wouldn't have been able to have a connection like that. Just going back to that networking thing. Entirely new network, broad network is open to you through the internship program, I definitely did not have beforehand. So.

>> NEIL: Thank you all so much for sharing. My heart is so moved hearing how special this experience was to all of you, and all of the connections that you were able to make, and I hope maintain to this day. Really appreciate you sharing these happy memories. And I hope that this has given some of our webinar participants a bit of a broader understanding of what they might expect as AAPD interns.

I'm going to go now to our last panel question. What is some advice -- it can be really short -- that you would give to new AAPD interns, or to folks who are in this webinar right now thinking about whether or not they should apply?

>> KADESHA: I can go. This is Kadesha. My first piece of advice would be to anyone, if you're thinking about applying, you should apply. You should absolutely apply. There's nothing to lose.

And if you do get it or if you don't get it, just try again. There's always opportunities to join AAPD in various capacities. They have a lot of programming. So I encourage you to stay up to date. The other thing I would say is, if you land the internship opportunity, try to put yourself out there as much as possible.

Do things you wouldn't normally, maybe. Safely, obviously. But try to really challenge yourself, because this is the right time, the right space. I think there's so much support and there's so many folks to learn from. So I would just really encourage folks to just keep putting themselves out there.

>> VERLENCIA: This is Verlencia. I can go. So, my advice for anyone, if you are -- if you do get the internship, I would say similar to what I was saying before is to utilize your network. And then more so reach out to everyone in your cohort. Because it's new people, new experiences, new understandings.

And you just never know who could be your best friend. So, I would say utilize your cohort. And it's very easy to fall into your friend groups, but reach out to everyone, even if it's just a quick 20-minute coffee chat and it's remote. Reach out to everyone, because everyone has their experience.

And you never know, someone could be going through the exact same thing you are. And then, I would say, yeah. Apply. You have nothing to lose. I would say AAPD's one -- it really did change my life. It's one of the things that did change my life.

I wouldn't have understood the disability, I guess, network in D.C. and outside of D.C. without AAPD. So, yeah. You should apply.

>> MARCY: Hi. This is Marcy. I'd definitely echo that. You should apply. It also changed my life as well. Like I was saying earlier, I had never been in such an accommodating group, nor had I been with so many individuals in a cross-disability group.

And so, it really changed my life. And by the way, I applied two times. The first time I did not get in. The second time I did get in. So, just echoing that again, that if you don't get in the first time, you can try again. There's that.

And then if you are selected for the internship program, I'd say, yeah, utilize the connections you make. But also, rely on your cohort. I feel like there was a very healthy sense of interdependence where if someone needed something in the cohort, they felt very comfortable to just message in our group chat and ask, hey, can you come get me.

I'm not able to walk this distance. Or I cannot go to the groceries on my own right now. I'm out of energy. Can someone come with me and encourage me? I know I did that a lot. But, yes. The cohort is going to be something really amazing if you get accepted into it.

Being a group chat from my year is still relatively active and we still have calls pretty frequently, try to. But, yeah. So.

>> NEIL: All right. Thank you all so much. Really appreciate you all sharing your experience and this incredible advice for everyone in this webinar and for the folks who are watching at home in a week or so. We will now go to the Q&A section. Really appreciate your presence.

I think there are a few questions for y'all in the chat. So, stay tuned for those. April? Thank you for switching slides. All right. I'm going to take one moment to pull up the Q&A.

All right. Thankfully, I'm seeing there's a ton of questions. So I'm going to go in no particular order. I'm reading a question. Are letters of recommendations required when we submit our application? If so, do our sponsors need to be academic, professional, or personal?

This is a great question. Letters of recommendation are no longer required to apply for the AAPD internship program. In the past, this was a requirement. But to ensure that the application process is as accessible as the internship is, we decided to not request letters of recommendations for the 2026 program cycle.

Next question. How many interns actually convert into full-time employees? Ooh. I would have asked this question if I was sitting in this webinar years ago. So, we don't have an exact number on this. We generally keep track of how our alumni are doing. And some interns have been offered full-time positions following their internships at the

organization they interned at, or other community partners, but we don't have a specific answer to this question.

Though as our alumni noted, the AAPD internship is an incredible networking opportunity, and an incredible opportunity to build the types of connections that can often convert into full-time roles.

I'm seeing a question. Is there a possibility that an intern could participate both in person and virtually? This is a good question. And I think there's a few different components to it. So, as we heard from Marcy sharing, it is possible to be an in-person intern and to not go to a placement site in person every day.

There's a lot of flexibility in that some folks may request accommodations for a flexible schedule, or for transit while they are in person. Accommodations at the internship are typically negotiated with the placement site. And many placement sites are willing or already have hybrid or flexible options if they're needed.

And we are also there, our AAPD staff, to support folks in navigating and getting ready to navigate those conversations with their placement sites.

All right. I'm seeing a question. Can individuals be AAPD summer interns for multiple years? I'm very interested in the opportunity, specifically the Bobby Silverstein Fellowship, but I am not eligible yet. Could I apply for a different placement for this cohort and apply again for the fellowship when I'm eligible? Is it okay to apply multiple times?

It is okay to apply multiple times. Someone in this panel applied multiple times. Many of our interns have applied more than once. That being said, you can only be an AAPD intern one time. So there's no limit to how many times you can apply, but when you are an intern, you have that one intern experience to make sure that the internship is equitable and accessible for as many people as possible.

You cannot intern again.

I'm seeing a question. Is there support available for navigating D.C. and getting to and from the internship location from the dorm? I love this question. So, yes. We regularly bring on travel trainers in the pre-internship orientation sessions. We often have a full session that is just dedicated to getting around D.C.

And whenever the AAPD group is going to something, one staff member is typically available to help folks get from point A to point B. We recognize that traveling independently, even for folks who are experienced with it, can be a lot. I was delayed getting to the office today, and I've been commuting for over a decade now.

We make it a point to work and make moving around D.C. as accessible as possible, to make sure folks are prepared for that.

All right. A few more questions. How are community events done virtually? I really like this question. Nearly all of our events are hybrid, with mixed breakout rooms and with

opportunities for remote and in-person interns to connect. Every event might look a little bit different or have different components to it.

I can't say exactly right now what all of our community programming is going to look like in the summer, but I can share it's a priority of our team to ensure remote interns have fulfilling experiences and are fully included in as much of our programming as possible.

I'm seeing a question. How competitive is the process? Do rising sophomores in college often participate? Is it more about your qualifications? This is a good question. A lot of good questions today.

So, I can't share a specific number with anyone, but I can share that the process is fairly competitive. We typically get many, many, many more applications than there are slots available for AAPD interns. With that being said, we strongly encourage anyone who is interested and eligible for the program to apply.

We are not looking for the highest-achieving, straight A students from around the country. We're looking for people who are really passionate about the message -- the mission of the AAPD, who are really interested in exploring their identity as disabled leaders, and who seem like they would be a good fit for the program at this time.

So you're not sure if applying would be right for you, as many of our alumni have said a little bit earlier, I encourage you to just apply.

I'm seeing a question. Do the potential STEM-focused internships include social science or policy research placements? Yes. So, we have many, many different placement options. You can see a number of them on the placement site document that our colleague, April, had shared in the chat a little bit earlier.

We have a lot of social science and policy research placements -- or have had a lot in the past and continue to maintain those partnerships.

I'm seeing a quick question. Do y'all accept social work students for internships? Absolutely. I was a social work student getting my MSW. Verlencia, also a social work student, when we were AAPD interns. And I had a lovely experience. Verlencia, it sounds like you did, as well.

>> VERLENCIA: Yes.

>> NEIL: So -- awesome. Strongly encourage people across disciplines to apply. To share a little bit more about the process of finding a placement site, know that we really incorporate people's interests, people's long-term career goals, and our goal is making sure that your placement site fits what you want to do in your industry.

So we are regularly fostering new partnerships, reaching out to organizations that we may not even have known about or been in contact with before to make sure our interns are well-supported and doing work they're engaged with and interested in.

I'm seeing a question. Do we need to be available for specific weeks during the summer? What are the dates for the internship? Those are two questions. Yes. I can share that usually the internship runs from the last week of May to the first week of August.

I cannot say exactly what the start and end date will be right now, as we are still many months out from the summer. But in a couple of months, all the dates will be solidified. And during the process, if someone is selected for an interview, they will get a lot more information.

For people who receive an internship offer, they have a time window in which to explore program information, and really consider whether this is something they want before they accept. Okay.

And just looking quickly through a couple of questions in the Q&A box, recognizing we only have two or so minutes left before the webinar ends . . . Someone asked because of what's been occurring with the government, will AAPD positions be affected in regards to the program?

The AAPD does not accept any government funding for the internship program. The internship program is expected to continue, although depending on what's going on in the government, some placement sites may be options some years and may not be options some years.

For example, if a governmental department changes in some way and they don't have the capacity to accept an intern, we can't make an opportunity where there might not be one.

Are there interviews or other additional rounds other than the written application? Yes. After the written application, we send out interview invitations. We interview folks. And then a combination of your answers in the interview and your answers from the essay questions are taken into account as we make decisions.

Someone is asking, are there internship opportunities in the field of graphic design and/or illustration. Yeah. We have a lot of AAPD interns who are interested that kind of work and in communications. Once more, we really encourage folks in a broad range of disciplines, whether you're interested in STEM fields, creative or communicative work, or anything else, to apply.

All right. I'm seeing it is 5:00 p.m. And I think that that's all the time we had today. Really appreciate everyone who was here with us. If we were not able to get to your question, please do reach out to our email address that is listed on the application web page. And I'm wishing everyone the absolute best of luck with the application process.