



Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

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DDPC Announces Funding for *Yes She Can* Employment Mentorship Model

The New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council is pleased to announce \$150,000 in grant funding a year for a total of three-years to expand an employment mentorship program for women with developmental disabilities to learn and practice skills needed in a work setting to increase future job prospects.

Yes She Can, a Westchester-based non-profit, helps teens and young women with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other related social and communication disabilities, to develop job skills they can transfer to the competitive job market. Currently **Yes She Can** operates Girl AGain, an American Girl Doll resale retail store where clients work with neurotypical mentors on a wide range of jobs skills.

With this grant funding, **Yes She Can** will expand its trainee and mentorship curriculum and identify other businesses interested in participating as mentors and employers.

Statics show 80 percent of adults with ASD are unemployed, regardless of academic achievement. While many people with Autism may have the skills to perform necessary job tasks, they often lack workplace social and other essential skills to succeed. A recent study showed while women with ASD seem to obtain post-secondary vocational or educational placements at the same rate as men, they have greater difficulty maintaining those positions over time. The study concluded women with ASD are doubly vulnerable in the workplace, both by virtue of being female and having an ASD.

“It is clear there are not enough programs that teach essential work skills and provide accompanying training and supports, specifically for women with DD,” said DDPC Executive Director Vicky Hiffa. “**Yes She Can** provides real world learning and experience, and a true path to future employment and greater independence.”

“We are grateful to DDPC for providing **Yes She Can** with the opportunity to provide many more women with autism and other related social and communication disabilities the chance to increase their work skills through a mentorship program with neurotypical peers.”
Yes She Can Executive Director Robin L. Davies Small

See some stories from current **Yes She Can** trainees in the video: *What Work Means to Me*: <https://youtu.be/Rkqbw9zA4N4>

The grant-supported program is expected to begin in October 2023.

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