

# *Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin*

## *Disability Rights is a Civil Rights Issue*

*November 2004*

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If you want something to appear in the next edition send it to me at [jayne@kleinmanconsulting.com](mailto:jayne@kleinmanconsulting.com) or Jayne Kleinman, 55 Corrigan Ave., Meriden, CT 06451, 203-238-9391.

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## Calendar of Events

<u><i>Date</i></u>	<u><i>Event</i></u>	<u><i>Location</i></u>	<u><i>Sponsor</i></u>	<u><i>Contact</i></u>
Nov. 5	Nursing Facilities Transition Grant Steering Comm		CACIL	paulatcacil@megahits.com
November 9, 2004 – 10 am – 12 noon	Presentation by Theresa McGrath – Executive Director of Family Alliance for Children in Education	Office of Protection and Advocacy	Special Education Advocates Network	Gwen McDonald - 860-297-4386
November 10, 2004 7:30 am – 5:00 pm	Current Trends in Aging and Disability Issues	Radisson Hotel Cromwell	Nat’l Assn of Social Workers, CT Chapter & CT Systems Change Grants	860-257-8066 www.naswct.org
November 11, 2004 5:30 pm	Focus Group on accessibility to mammograms for women with visual disabilities	Glastonbury	CT Women and Disability Network, Susan G. Komen Foundation, Qualidigm	860-613-3685 or relay communications 1-800-842-9710
Nov. 14 Nov. 15	Families for Educating Children with Autism (FECA) conference	11/14 – NYC 11/15 – White Plains	FECA	Fecainc.org/events_2
Nov. 16	ADA Audio Conf.		See page 10	adainfo@newenglandada.org
November 30, 2004 9:30-3:30	The Fearless Caregiver Conference	North Haven	See page 11 for more information	800-829-2734 Caregiver.com
December 22, 2004 –	Open House	263 Farmington Avenue	University Center on Disabilities at the	860-679-1500

<b>3:00 pm – 5:00 pm</b>		<b>Farmington</b>	<b>UConn Health Center</b>	
<b>July 25- 28,2005</b>	<b>Youth Leadership Forum</b>	<b>UCONN Storrs</b>	<b>Application being taken. See page 4.</b>	<b>Ctylf.org</b>

## **Olmstead Coalition**

On Wednesday, October 22, 2004 the Olmstead Coalition sponsored what may be its last educational workshop, hosting Jose Cantu from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Mr. Cantu shared the Lone Star state’s experience adopting state legislation and regulations that promote community living. A series of Executive Orders, state legislative proposals, the Promoting Independence Initiative and Plan, a revised Promoting Independence Plan, and a series of state “Riders” has created a system in Texas where the concept of “money follows the persons” has been successfully implemented. Interested individuals can find out more about the Texas experience at: [www.hhsc.state.tx.us/about\\_hhsc/reports/search/search\\_LTC.asp](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/about_hhsc/reports/search/search_LTC.asp)

The Olmstead Coalition has been a state leader in promoting community living ever since the Olmstead Supreme Court decision in 1999. The Coalition has been an effective advocate for people with disabilities:

- In the development of CHOICES, the Olmstead Plan for Connecticut
- In the development of the 2004 Long Term Care Plan, which incorporated much of what was in the Olmstead Plan
- By participating on the Long Term Care Advisory Council, so that it now pursues vigorously the community inclusion goals of the Coalition
- By supporting the state’s application for a series of federal Real Choice grants
- By created a web site – [ctolmstead.org](http://ctolmstead.org) – which contains a great deal of information about community living
- By sponsoring a series of luncheons that brought in national leaders to inform Connecticut policy makers and individuals with disabilities about best practices to implement community living.

Quincy Abbot has provided dogged leadership for the Coalition over the last year and a half, and deserves our applause and our thanks for a job well done. He is one of Connecticut’s “treasures”.

### **\$500,000 to Support Independent Living for People with Disabilities**

The state Bond Commission has approved \$500,000 in state funding to support people with disabilities seeking to make the transition from convalescent care to independence.

The funds will be used for renovations needed to make apartments suitable for individuals with disabilities. Under the program, prospective tenants will be able to apply for a grant if they have permission from the landlord to make accessibility renovations.

The funds will allow for modifications to be made in approximately 25 apartments at an average cost of \$20,000 per unit.

The funds for renovations would be available to low and moderate income applicants and are linked to Section Eight Housing Vouchers. Combining the grants and the housing vouchers is seen as a successful strategy for making it possible for people with disabilities to obtain affordable housing suitable for their needs.

The funds will be administered by the Corporation for Independent Living (CIL), a not-for-profit organization. Established in 1979, CIL is a not-for-profit organization working to help individuals and families create accessible living environments (860-563-6011).

### **Applications out for YLF 2005**

Applications for the seventh annual Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities (YLF) are now available. The event is scheduled for July 25 – July 28, 2005 at the University of Connecticut, Storrs campus.

The program will bring together forty high school students with disabilities from throughout Connecticut for a four-day training forum focusing on enhancing community leadership skills. The forum provides a concentrated educational and motivational experience for the students selected.

YLF delegates will explore personal leadership skills, define career goals and leave the forum with a very specific action plan that describes what they will do back in their local communities to enhance the lives of people with disabilities. Eligible applicants must be a high school sophomore or junior with a disability who demonstrates leadership skills in their communities and school. It is the goal of the YLF planning committee to select students from all regions of Connecticut, who represent a wide range of disabilities and ethnic backgrounds. Copies of the application can be obtained by logging on to the YLF website – [www.ctylf.org](http://www.ctylf.org)

If you have any questions about the program, please feel free to contact Karen Halliday at (860) 713-6923 or [karen.halliday@po.state.ct.us](mailto:karen.halliday@po.state.ct.us) or Kathleen Kabara at (860) 713-5231 or [Kathleen.kabara@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Kathleen.kabara@po.state.ct.us).

### **Community Services and Supports Resolution**

The American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT) is proposing a resolution for discussion at the February 2005 National Governors' Association meeting entitled "Community Services and Supports Resolution—Commitment to Community-based Long Term Care Services and Support." For a complete copy of the resolution you can go to the ADAPT web-site ([www.adapt.org](http://www.adapt.org)).

## Update on IDEA Reauthorization

[From DREDF's IDEA Rapid Response Network (RRN) News Briefing #36 - October 28, 2004 [Note: Past RRN updates are available at <http://www.dredf.org/>]

IDEA (the Individuals' with Disabilities Education Act) is now being discussed in a conference committee which includes members from the U.S. House and Senate. The Senate approved its IDEA bill on May 13, 2004 (see RRN #35 for details), and the House passed its bill on April 30, 2003 (see RRN #21 for details). Because the bills contain substantive differences, they must be reconciled through a conference committee process.

The House bill drastically weakens civil rights protections for students with disabilities; the Senate bill improves the law in certain areas but also contains some provisions that water down students' rights.

Even after the conference committee takes final action, the new provisions will not go into effect until regulations have been issued, a process that can take at least a year and perhaps longer. In the meantime, as has been the case throughout this process, the law currently in force remains the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997.

These are the core principles Disability Rights and Education Defense Fund (DREDF) believes are the most critical and is asking the conference committee to endorse:

- **Funding:** The federal government needs to keep its promise to pay its fair share of IDEA costs.
- **Benchmarks and objectives:** In order to hold schools accountable for providing services to students with disabilities, it must be clear what the goals are and how they are to be reached so that progress can be assessed and monitored.
- **Discipline and stay put:** Students whose disabilities present behavioral challenges require functional behavioral assessments and positive behavior intervention plans, not a punitive system that penalizes them for their disabilities. Schools should not unilaterally remove certain students from their current placement for violations that result from the child's disability.
- **Procedural protections/"paperwork reduction":** The term "paperwork reduction" has been used as a smokescreen for eliminating or weakening procedural protections. Streamlining documentation is a laudable goal, but it must not occur at the risk of accountability.
- **Attorney fees:** IDEA is a fee-shifting statute that provides for payment of fees by the school districts to parents who prevail at administrative hearings and in court. These provisions are modeled after and are identical to other civil rights fee-shifting provisions designed to allow poor and low-income and minority and non-English-speaking plaintiffs access to attorneys. Any provision to cap attorney fees for attorneys who represent families is a disaster for parents of disabled children who already face striking disadvantages when going up against educational

institutions. Moreover, this provision presents a dangerous precedent for the setting of attorney fees in other areas.

The advice from DREDF: speak your mind if you have something to impart to Congressional conferees -- whatever your views. It is critically important that members of Congress know that this bill affects millions of students and families and that we are paying attention.

## **A Big Step Forward in New York**

ADAPTers in New York celebrated last month when a five year advocacy campaign took a huge "step" forward! Late in the evening on Tuesday, October 19th, New York ADAPT received a call from the Governor's office to report that Governor George Pataki had signed the Nursing Facility Transition and Diversion Medicaid Waiver bill into law. This was right down to the wire as Pataki signed the bill only a few hours before the deadline, after which it would have been an automatic veto.

This legislation directs the New York State Department of Health to create a waiver to transition people out of nursing homes, or divert them from being forced in in the first place. Although New York already had a waiver for people with Traumatic Brain Injury and one for people with Developmental Disabilities, there were huge holes that people with MS, MD, Spinal Cord Injury and many other disabilities were falling through and ending up in nursing homes.

The legislation indicates that the Waiver will have 5,000 slots for the first three years. This is well in-line with New York ADAPT's goals of transitioning 1% of the nursing home population each year, and diverting more than a thousand people as well!

## **Focus Groups on Barriers to Getting a Mammogram**

Thanks to a grant from the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the Connecticut Women and Disability Network and Qualidigm are conducting a series of focus groups involving women across the disability spectrum to discuss the barriers to getting a mammogram. The first focus group will be held on November 11 for women who are blind and visually impaired. Eligible volunteers who participate will receive \$50. If you are interested please call 860-613-3685.

## **Civil Rights Stories**

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Library of Congress and AARP are collaborating on an interesting project. They are collecting stories from individuals about their experiences with the Civil Rights Movement, broadly defined and specifically including people with disabilities as well as people of color. These first hand accounts (in writing, audiotape, and videotape) are being archived as part of a special project that will

eventually be housed at the Library of Congress. If anyone has stories to tell, or know of someone who has a story to tell, check out their website at [www.voicesofcivilrights.org](http://www.voicesofcivilrights.org).

## **Winter Heating Assistance Program**

[From the Department of Social Services website – [dss.state.ct.us/svcs/energy/](http://dss.state.ct.us/svcs/energy/) Updated September 29th, 2004]

Thousands of homeowners and renters across the state will be eligible for heating assistance during the winter of 2004-2005 under the state's Energy Assistance Program. The program's goal is to assist eligible Connecticut residents in maximizing potential energy assistance options so that their health is not jeopardized by the inability to meet heating needs.

The Energy Assistance Program is administered by the state Department of Social Services and coordinated by regional Community Action Agencies, in cooperation with municipal and other non-profit human service agencies. For further information about heating or weatherization assistance, please call 2-1-1 Infoline or the Department of Social Services' winter heating assistance line at 1-800-842-113.

The assistance service will pay for such heating sources as oil, natural gas, electricity, propane, kerosene, coal and wood. Both homeowners and renters may apply. The only sure way of knowing whether your household is eligible is to apply. Applications are being taken beginning October 1, 2004 at about 160 community sites. For referral to an application site near you, please call 2-1-1 Infoline or a regional Community Action Agency. The last day to apply is March 15, 2005.

Households eligible for the winter heating program may also be eligible to receive weatherization assistance. This can help conserve energy and lower heating bills.

## **"EEOC Fact Sheet -- People with Intellectual Disabilities" Dispelling Myths and Fears Can Promote Employment Opportunities**

[From a Press Release from The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, <http://www.eeoc.gov>, October 20, 2004]

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has released a fact sheet on the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to persons with intellectual disabilities in the workplace. The new publication is available at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov).

The term "intellectual disability" describes the condition once commonly referred to as "mental retardation." Approximately one percent of the United States' population, an estimated 2.5 million people, has an intellectual disability. Estimates indicate that only 31 percent of individuals with intellectual disabilities are employed, although many more want to work..

"More often than not, individuals with intellectual disabilities face barriers in the workplace posed not by mental impairments but by other people's attitudes," said Commission Chair Cari M. Dominguez. "With this fact sheet, the EEOC aims to break down myths, fears and misperceptions that stand in the way of employment opportunities and sometimes even lead to harassment on the job. People with intellectual disabilities want to work and have a lot to contribute. Employers who are not tapping into this community are missing out."

The new fact sheet addresses such topics as: when an intellectual impairment is covered by the ADA; when an employer may ask an applicant or employee questions about his or her intellectual disability; what types of reasonable accommodations employees with intellectual disabilities may need on the job; how to address safety concerns and conduct issues in the workplace; and how an employer can prevent harassment of employees with intellectual disabilities.

## **Assistive Technology Act of 2004**

[From a Press Release from the Association of Assistive Technology Act (ATAP) Projects, <http://www.ataporg.org>; October 27, 2004]

The recently enacted Assistive Technology Act of 2004 will ensure that individuals with disabilities throughout the US and its territories have access to the technology they need to help them be independent in school, at home, the workplace and in the community. This legislation represents an important commitment to people with disabilities from the President and the Congress.

"The impressive bi-partisan effort of Congress to ensure the continuation of these vital programs is heartening for people with disabilities and the programs that serve them," said Deborah Buck, Executive Director of the Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs. When the Congress puts aside partisanship in order to address the needs of people with disabilities, it is a victory for all Americans."

The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) worked for several years to educate Congress about the significance of the Act in the lives of people with disabilities. Joined by other national disability organizations, technology companies and business representatives, ATAP shared with Congress the many successes of the programs and the difference the law can make for people with disabilities. ATAP salutes the Congress and the President for their important work in reauthorizing this law and removing the sunset provision.

The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) is a national, member-based organization comprised of state Assistive Technology Programs funded under the Assistive Technology Act. <http://www.ataporg.org>

## Need to Restore & Protect ADA

[From a press release provided by the Office of House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer, October 21, 2004]

On October 21, 2004 House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (MD) delivered the first annual Tony Coelho Lecture in Disability Employment Law and Policy at New York Law School. Rep. Hoyer was a lead House sponsor of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and focused his speech on the unfulfilled promise of the ADA and the urgent need to address the weakening of protections afforded to people with disabilities.

The following are excerpts from Rep. Hoyer's speech:

"The ADA--the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities--was an explicit statement that a disability need not result in exclusion, paternalism or dependence. Under this new law, Americans with disabilities were guaranteed that employers could not discriminate against them simply because they have a disability.

"And over the last 14 years, there is no question that the ADA has ushered in significant change. Ramps, curb cuts, Braille signs, and assistive listening devices at movie theaters. Signs of progress surround us. Thousands of Americans with disabilities have joined the workforce - which, in the words of the first President Bush, unlocked 'a splendid resource of untapped human potential, that when freed will enrich us all.'

"However, our progress and the best efforts of so many in the business community must not obscure this fact: The promise of the ADA remains unfulfilled for far too many of America's 54 million citizens with a disability. Given the adverse rulings by the Supreme Court and lower courts, the time has come for us to consider aggressive legislative action in Congress to address the unmistakable weakening of the protections afforded under the ADA."

Rep. Hoyer set forth four broad principles that should guide ADA restoration efforts, although he pointed out that this is not a comprehensive list:

"First, Congress must make unmistakably clear that we intended the phrase 'disability' to include every person in America with a disability, not merely those who can avoid interpretational traps constructed by hostile courts.

".... Second, I believe that we must make clear that determinations of disability should be made without regard to mitigating measures, or whether the impairment is episodic in nature.

"...Third, in light of the Court's decision in *Echazabal*, we must clarify that people with disabilities can make decisions for themselves, just like all other Americans.

When we wrote the ADA we understood that there should be a defense available to employers if an employee poses a threat to others. However, we never intended that the law should be interpreted by the courts to allow employers to assert a 'risk-to-self' defense. That kind of out-dated, paternalistic reaction based on old stereotypes and prejudices is exactly the type of behavior that the ADA was intended to eliminate.

"And fourth: We should make clear that both employers and employees with disabilities owe an obligation to sit down and find truly reasonable accommodations."

### **The Invisible Disabilities Advocate: Helping people understand chronic illness and pain**

Do people have a difficult time understanding your illness, because to them you "look" fine? IDA helps friends and family see the courage and determination it takes to live with a debilitating illness, amidst the challenges, frustrations and losses. "A Guide to Understanding and Encouraging People with Chronic, Debilitating Illness and Pain!" is great resource to hand out to friends and family to help them with "what to say," "what not to say" and "how to help." Go to <http://www.myida.org> for more information

### **Bad Drivers to Help Fund SCI Research**

Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney recently signed into law the Spinal Cord Injury Trust Bill, which raises money for SCI research from fees paid by people who want to reinstate a suspended or revoked driver's license. The new law adds a \$50 surcharge to existing fees, which range between \$100 and \$1,200, depending on the transgression. An average of 32,700 Massachusetts drivers reinstate their licenses each year.

The legislation is expected to raise \$900,000 to \$1.5 million. Half of the total funds generated will be earmarked for SCI research and the rest will be directed to a general fund. New Jersey, one of several states with a similar law, raises about \$3.5 million annually for research.

### **ADA Audio Conference**

The New England ADA and Accessible IT Center in Boston is sponsoring an audio conference on the employment provision of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Tuesday, November 16 from 2:00 to 3:30 pm. Sharon Rennert, Senior Attorney from the ADA division of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, will present. There will be time at the end of the presentation for Q&A. The cost is \$25 for non-profit organizations. To register call 1-800-949-4232 or e-mail [adainfo@newenglandada.org](mailto:adainfo@newenglandada.org). They will then send you a toll free call-in number shortly before the audio conference.

### **MEDICARE ISSUES**

## **"Medicare Power Wheelchairs: Request for Stories"**

The United Spinal Association (formerly the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association) shares the following request:

This is a critical time for the disability and aging communities. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency that runs the Medicare program, is in the process of developing new Medicare coverage guidelines for power wheelchairs. United Spinal Association commends CMS for revising this outdated coverage policy. Unfortunately, the agency continues to state that these revisions will not address the problematic statutory language "used in the patient's home."

Currently Medicare will only cover power wheelchairs for beneficiaries who need to use them in their home. If a beneficiary is able to move from room to room in their own house (with or without the assistance of a walker, cane, or walls and banisters), but they are unable to walk to work, school, or even their mailbox at the end of their driveway, then Medicare will not pay for a wheelchair because it is being used outside the home! Medicare's archaic policies and misguided practices are limiting the independence, stifling the potential, thwarting the ambition, and jeopardizing the well-being of many American wheelchair users.

We know that the health of individuals with disabilities, both physical and mental, is wholly intertwined with their ability to be as functionally independent as possible. Therefore, any restriction that stifles the independence of beneficiaries, such as Medicare's power wheelchair coverage policy regarding "in the patient's home," also threatens their health and well-being. We need to let CMS know that the "in the patient's home" restriction is harmful to individuals with disabilities by limiting access to wheelchairs and compromises our independence, health and well-being.

Please submit your story to us via email at [LegislativeAlerts@Unitedspinal.org](mailto:LegislativeAlerts@Unitedspinal.org), or call us at 202-331-1002 for more information. If you would like us to share your story as part of a public education campaign, please submit your contact information, including your name and a phone number where we may reach you.

## **The "Donut Whole" Needs to Go**

The prescription drug benefit in the 2003 Medicare legislation does not cover the drug costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100 for most Medicare beneficiaries according to a recent AARP voters' guide. AARP supports closing the gap in coverage for all beneficiaries and believes that more must be done to bring down soaring drug costs such as the legal importation of prescription drugs and allowing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries.

## November is National Family Caregiver Month

**The Fearless Caregiver Conference** - a day of education and support for all Connecticut family caregivers - will be held on Tuesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 am-3:30 pm, at the Fantasia Banquet Facilities (404 Washington Ave., North Haven). Topics such as navigating the healthcare and legal systems, improving the financial impact of care giving on your family, and how to connect with local and national care giving resources will be discussed. Also, meet with other local caregivers and speak to the experts. Lunch included.

The Fearless Caregiver Conference is sponsored by the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, the North Central Area Agency on Aging, the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services (Elderly Services Division), the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, and by *Today's Caregiver* magazine. The keynote speaker will be Gary Barg, Editor-in-Chief of *Today's Caregiver* magazine, and author of *The Fearless Caregiver*. A limited number of stipends are available for qualified caregivers; for all others, the cost is \$45. For registration and information, please call 800-829-2734, or log onto [www.caregiver.com](http://www.caregiver.com).

### Related Resources

**Alzheimer's Respite Care Program** provides respite care services, resources and support for family caregivers taking care of someone with Alzheimer's or related dementia. Respite care services such as home health aides and adult day services offer caregivers temporary relief, or a break, from care giving duties. To apply for this program call your local Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-994-9422. Areas Agencies on Aging are private, nonprofit planning and advocacy organizations serving the needs of older adults and their families. You may also visit their website at [www.ctagenciesonaging.org](http://www.ctagenciesonaging.org)

**CT Home Care Program for Elders** program helps people who are older to continue living at home instead of going to a nursing home. The program is administered by the Dept. of Social Services (DSS) and offers assistance with daily living activities such as cleaning, cooking and home health aides. Call 1-800-445-5395 to begin the screening process.

**Benefits Check-up** is an online eligibility screening tool created by the National Council on the Aging designed for individuals to quickly find programs for which they may qualify. To access Benefits Check-up, log onto the Elderly Services Division website at <http://www.ctelderlyservices.state.ct.us>.

### The Brooke Ellison Story

**The Brooke Ellison Story** was aired on October 22 on the A & E Television Network. The story offered "insight into the challenges of living with quadriplegia, and the strength of the human spirit to achieve what not long ago was considered impossible," said National Organization on Disability President Alan A. Reich. "This film celebrates two

people who have never let being paralyzed from the neck down, director Christopher Reeve and subject Brooke Ellison, prevent them from accomplishing great things. Christopher's final film also pays tribute to caretakers like Brooke's mother Jean who help to make miracles possible."

"The Brooke Ellison Story" was the final project of the National Organization on Disability's Vice Chairman, Christopher Reeve. Mr. Reeve knew Ms. Ellison, a fellow Board Member, from her book "Miracles Happen: One Mother, One Daughter, One Journey" and was attracted to her story as one that would resonate with television viewers.

Ms. Ellison was paralyzed from the neck down after she was struck by a car when she was 11 years old. She went on to graduate from Harvard Summa Cum Laude and then from its graduate school of public policy, assisted by her mother, who joined her in her classes and dorm.

Mr. Reich noted. "This film calls attention to the challenges a family faces when their insurance runs out, and the individualized arrangements that even a bright young woman needs to attend college while living with a significant disability. It also shows how assistive technology and skilled caretaking help to remove roadblocks. Christopher felt this film would reach many people with a compelling message. I know his effort will be rewarded, even as we mourn his loss."

## **Disability Advocacy Collaborative**

### **Background**

**Problem Statement: Starting in the early fall of 2003, a small group of individuals began meeting to determine the feasibility of developing a new advocacy initiative in the state of Connecticut. At that time a number of state agency disability leaders were retiring, and the state legislature's Program Review and Investigations Committee was considering a proposal to merge several disability agencies into one super-agency.**

**Meetings continued over several months with larger groups of advocates and the following needs were identified:**

- **We must improve communication between and among the various advocacy organizations**
- **We must create a more unified voice among disability advocacy groups, which would result in a stronger political power base**
- **We must enhance support for broad based advocacy issues**
- **We must do a better job of educating the legislature**
- **We must include youth and elders in disability advocacy strategies**

- We must include individuals with disabilities and families not currently involved in disability advocacy, with an emphasis on grass roots organizing and leadership development
- We must encourage passion and enthusiasm in the promotion of disability rights

### **Disability Advocacy Collaborative Background – (Begins on page 13)**

The concept of a Disability Advocacy Collaborative was therefore born and the above bullets became the Problem Statement the Collaborative would address.

**Summary of the Initiative:** The newly formed Disability Advocacy Collaborative proposes to revitalize the disability rights movement in Connecticut by pulling together advocacy organizations under the umbrella of a “collaborative” structure. The Collaborative, which will be in place by the end of this calendar year, has been designed to take place in three phases: 1) a concentration on voter education and voter registration this year, 2) a series of regional cross-disability self-advocacy training workshops in year 2 (2005) and 3) the big event - a large scale disability convention in the fall of 2006, which will be the next year we will elect state constitutional officers (i.e., Governor, Attorney General, Treasurer, Comptroller, Secretary of State).

For 2005, the Collaborative has received funding (\$27,970) from the Council on Developmental Disabilities to organize a series of cross-disability self-advocacy workshops that will be offered in six regions of the state from June – December. The outcome of these workshops will be a solid foundation for a Disability Convention that will be held in the fall of 2006, the next election year for our state constitutional officers (i.e., Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, etc.).

The DD Council funding will support the development of the organization by enabling it to 1) complete the compiling of a comprehensive disability advocacy contact list, 2) secure the support (i.e., sign on) of all identified disability advocacy groups, 3) identify self advocacy training curricula that currently exist (e.g., Advocacy Unlimited, Partners in Policymaking, People First), 4) develop a curriculum for regional, cross-disability, self-advocacy workshops, be culturally and ethnically diverse, and include families as well as people with disabilities, and 5) plan and implement a series of self-advocacy workshops in each of the six regions of the state.

The work of the Collaborative will be directed by Stan Kosloski, recently retired Assistant Director of the State Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, and currently a Community Facilitator (part-time) for the University Center on Disabilities at the University of Connecticut Health Center, and Jayne

**Kleinman, a long time disability rights advocate and the principal behind Kleinman Consulting, LLC.**

**The primary outcome of this community organizing project will be a strong, respected, and effective cross-disability rights organization, fully capable of advocating the critical issues facing people with disabilities and families.**