



# Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin

“Enhancing the effectiveness of disability activism by organizing and empowering individuals, families, groups and organizations”

## Empowerment! Opportunity! Justice!

**January 2007**

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**This Bulletin is supported by a grant that the Disability Advocacy Collaborative has received from the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities. In addition, in-kind support is being provided by the UCONN Center on Disabilities, and Communitas, Inc. serves as the project's fiscal agent. To all three we extend our deep appreciation.**

## **Update on Disability Advocacy Collaborative Activities**

With the start of the 2007 session of the Connecticut General Assembly on January 3, the Disability Advocacy Collaborative will focus this issue of the Bulletin on legislative matters that affect people with disabilities and families. Next month we will include updated information about the development of Regional Advocacy Networks and other Collaborative projects.

The Collaborative will be more active this year providing information to legislators at the General Assembly about the needs of people with disabilities and families so that informed decisions will be made by our elected officials. Collaborative priorities will be based on the Disability Agenda the Collaborative developed last fall that was presented to candidates for public office. The focus of the Collaborative's energies will therefore be on legislative proposals that affect:

### **EMPLOYMENT**

Work is important in the lives of all citizens in the State of Connecticut, yet the unemployment rate for people with disabilities exceeds 65%. The Collaborative calls for the development of employment opportunities that offer meaningful, competitively-paid and integrated jobs for people with disabilities.

### **HOUSING**

Housing that is safe and affordable is a fundamental need of all people. The Collaborative calls for the development of housing that is not only safe and affordable, but also accessible and integrated, so that citizens with disabilities can have real choices as to where they want to live.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation, whether public or private, is essential to the social and economic health of all people, and indeed to the state of Connecticut. The Collaborative calls for the immediate development of public transportation that is available, accessible and affordable to people with disabilities, and for the development of new alternatives for individuals that are both accessible and affordable.

### **EDUCATION**

Universal and high quality education for all citizens is essential to the health of our democracy. The Collaborative calls for full access to regular classrooms and the full curriculum for children with disabilities, and for increased opportunities in continuing and higher education for adults with disabilities.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

All people have the right to live in the community of their choice, and to fully participate in the economic, social and civic life of their community. The Collaborative calls for the development of consumer directed support services that enable people with disabilities to be fully involved in the life of their communities.

## **HEALTH CARE**

Health care is critical for all people, but especially for people with disabilities. The Collaborative calls for broader access to quality and affordable health care for people with disabilities.

### **Health Care Reform a Top Priority at General Assembly**

For many years, policy makers in most, if not all states, have grappled with the issue of their residents' lack of health insurance. Some, including our neighbors Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont, have passed laws designed to reduce the number of uninsured.

According to the state Office of Legislative Research (see following article), Connecticut has been very successful in reducing the number of uninsured children, largely through the HUSKY plan, its main public health insurance program. But in 2004 and 2005, nearly 400,000 residents had no insurance, and over half these individuals had income less than 200% of the federal poverty level (\$19,600 annually for one person).

During Christmas week, Governor Rell announced her plans to deal with the health insurance issue. She addressed the needs of children by proposing the elimination of a critical coverage gap by offering hospital based enrollment at birth. Almost 3,000 newborns during the last 30 months had no health insurance even though they were eligible for the state's HUSKY program, according to the Governor.

For adults, the Governor proposed a Charter Oak Health Plan that would include a full prescription package with a three-tiered co-pay; no eligibility restrictions for pre-existing conditions; a lifetime benefit up to \$1 million (there would be no annual maximum); and diagnostic services with a 20% co-pay. Doctor co-pays would range from \$25-50 per visit. Under the Governor's plan, it is estimated roughly half of uninsured adults would be covered within two years.

The Governor claims the program would require no new taxes and no employer mandates. She expects the private insurance industry would buy into the program as it would provide them with a large number of potential long-term customers. She estimates that insurance policies can be offered at around \$250 per month, roughly half of what private plans require.

The Democrats have responded by pointing out the relatively high deductibles, high co-pays, and other cost sharing challenges. They have noted that the Governor's plan does not provide universal health care, which she does not dispute, and that the \$250 monthly premium will be unaffordable for many residents. Many Democrats feel that there should be a financial investment in the initiative by the state.

The big question for the Collaborative: **HOW WILL PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND FAMILIES FARE UNDER WHATEVER PLAN IS ADOPTED?**

### **Massachusetts Program**

The recently enacted Massachusetts health insurance program contains the following features, as reported by the Associated Press:

- individuals below the federal poverty level pay no monthly premiums
- the program targets residents who are between 100% and 300% of the federal poverty level
- 100,000 uninsured residents are now eligible for health insurance
- monthly premiums for this population range between \$18 to \$106 per month for every adult in the house
- those who do not enroll will lose their annual personal exemption on their state tax return

### **Federal Healthcare Debate**

Many Washington observers expect Congress to focus on Medicare, prescription drug costs and safety this session, as well as efforts to cover the uninsured. All debate will play out against the background of the 2008 presidential election, with both parties working to lay claim to what they expect will be popular issues with voters.

One likely proposal would rely on private insurers to offer coverage that is at least as comprehensive as one of the standard plans now offered federal employees, require all Americans to buy it, and tax employers to help pay for it.

Regarding the Medicare drug benefit, Democrats are expected to push to require the government to negotiate drug prices for members of the new drug program. But there is disagreement on how it would be done and whether it would result in lower prices than the current method of having private insurers negotiate the prices.

Funding for a children's health program through the joint state/federal Medicaid program is up for renewal and is expected to pass. Observers say they expect Democrats will not only renew the program, but also put more money into it so it can cover more children.

Congress may also consider funding pilot projects in the states to experiment with new ways to cover the uninsured. But few expect that broad federal efforts to cover more uninsured will pass. Lawmakers are still skittish over the resounding defeat of the Clinton health system overhaul proposal in 1994.

## **State Legislature Begins 2007 Session on January 3**

Beth Leslie, Legislative Liaison at the state Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, has graciously distributed a report, produced every year by the state legislature's Office of Legislative Research (OLR), which identifies and provides brief descriptions of important issues that the General Assembly may face in the coming session. The complete OLR Report can be found on their website: [www.cga.ct.gov/olr/](http://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/) The Disability Advocacy Collaborative has taken the liberty to cut and paste excerpts from this report that may have a direct impact on people with disabilities and families:

### ***Long-Term Care Issues***

The legislature is very likely to continue exploring ways to help people with disabilities and elders stay out of nursing homes and other institutions. Some proposals will seek to increase the number of people who receive long-term care in their own homes.

The state's Long-Term Care Planning Committee is required to produce a plan every three years. The next plan is due in this month and is likely to contain more recommendations for continuing to rebalance the state's long-term care system by moving gradually from institutional care to more home and community-based care. It will also reflect results from a new comprehensive long-term care needs assessment for Connecticut.

### ***State Budget Issues***

Faced with structural deficits and spending cap problems in FY (Fiscal Year) 08 – which begins July 1, 2007 - and FY 09 (which will begin July 1, 2008), the General Assembly will need to consider various spending reductions and perhaps revenue enhancement alternatives. The legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis's (OFA) estimates that the current services costs for FY 08 exceeds the state's spending cap by \$ 510. 5 million; its estimate for FY 09 exceeds the cap by \$570.9 million. In addition to dealing with these upcoming budget problems, the General Assembly will need to consider how to dispose of the current year surplus, which OFA currently projects to be \$ 539.6 million.

The legislature may consider possible spending reductions in a variety of existing state agency programs and accounts, including municipal aid, in order to keep appropriations within the spending cap and balanced with revenues in FY 08 and FY 09. Some of the major cost drivers in the budget include Medicaid; teachers' retirement; debt service; state employee fringe benefits; and expenditures for various programs within the departments of Education, Children and Families, Mental Retardation and Social Services.

### ***Special Education Grants***

Special education grants are another area where increased funding may be sought. Some legislators may propose restoring separate state reimbursement grants for special education instead of continuing to include the bulk of state aid for special education in the ECS formula. Other possibilities are to reduce the threshold for special education excess cost grants (the state

pays the full cost of special education services for any student whose required program exceeds the threshold); to remove caps on state special education grants to towns; or to make the state responsible for paying all special education costs.

### ***Other State Taxes***

The legislature could once again see proposals for a so-called “millionaires’ tax,” which would impose higher tax rates on taxable incomes above certain thresholds. There may also be proposals to restructure or eliminate the state estate tax enacted in 2005. The legislature could see several other income tax proposals, including (1) establishing a state earned income tax credit to provide refundable payments for low-income taxpayers who owe no state income tax; (2) exempting some or all public or private pension income from the state income tax; and (3) allowing taxpayers to deduct certain expenses, such as the cost of purchasing health insurance.

## **Commissioner Supports Name Change!**

In a report issued this week (1/1/07) DMR Commissioner Peter O’Meara has come out in favor of changing the name of his agency to the Department of Developmental Services.

“As an agency whose mission is to promote respect and dignity for people with mental retardation, it is imperative that those who are supported by us feel respected, starting with the name of the agency”, O’Meara said in the report. The name change campaign was spearheaded by the Connecticut Chapter of People First.

O’Meara also pointed out that while the name change does not represent an attempt to serve a larger population of people with disabilities, it would allow for future expansion of services without another name change.

The Collaborative salutes People First, and Commissioner O’Meara, for addressing this issue head on. The final decision on the name change will be made by the state legislature, which began its 2007 session on January 3.

## **DD Council Hosts Public Comment Forum On Priorities and Initiatives**

1:30 p.m. - Tuesday, January 9, 2007  
Institute of Technology and Business Development/CCSU  
186 Main Street - New Britain, CT

The public is invited to comment on the Council’s current priorities and initiatives and to recommend new priorities and initiatives. Current Priorities include:

- “Able Lives,” a 10-part TV series with CT Public Television educating the public on inclusion of people with disabilities in community life.
- Self-advocacy, including Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) and the Disability Advocacy Collaborative.

- Family Support, including culturally appropriate supports through African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP).
- In-home support for families who have children who are chronically ill, technology dependent, medically fragile and who have special health care needs.
- More accessible, affordable and available public mass transportation.
- Social role valorization training to change people's values regarding people with disabilities.
- Changing DMR's name to eliminate the term "mental retardation."
- Changing DMR's mission to reach all people with developmental disabilities.
- Monitoring and regulating the use of aversives and restraints.
- Long-term care and Money Follows the Person.
- Reauthorization of the federal Developmental Disabilities Act.
- Disaster planning and preparation.

Please call the Council Office at 1-800-653-1134 toll free, if you need a sign language interpreter or any other reasonable accommodation as a person with a disability or family member to participate. More information about the Council can be found on the Council's web site: [www.ct.gov/ctcdd](http://www.ct.gov/ctcdd) and on the Council's blog: [www.ctcdd.org](http://www.ctcdd.org)

### **If There was a Disaster in Your Town . . . .**

The State Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A) is preparing a series of events in 2007 on emergency preparedness. One of their goals is to provide the state and regions with information on how to create shelter environments that offer universal access for almost everyone.

Universally accessible shelters are more usable for all people, not just those with disabilities. Especially during emergencies and disasters, when many people will experience new needs produced by extreme conditions, universal access will be a necessity.

Obviously, the shelter itself will need to be accessible. But P&A wants to go further and consider what items and policies will enable people, regardless of disability, to function as independently as possible. The question boils down to this: What items, factors and conditions are so important in your day-to-day life that you could not maintain independence, for even a short time, without them?

Without your participation, the P&A list will be based on their assumptions and the experiences of other people in other states. That isn't good enough. A plan for Connecticut must be based on the real life, everyday way Connecticut residents live their lives.

Please consider this critical issue and respond to Elanah Sherman at:

860-297-4322 (V)

860-297-4380 (TTY)

800-842-7303 (V/TTY)

[Elanah.Sherman@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Elanah.Sherman@po.state.ct.us)

In addition to the initiative undertaken by P&A, the University of Connecticut AJ Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service has put together a website ([www.uconnucedd.org](http://www.uconnucedd.org)) of resources and information to assist people with disabilities and emergency planners. One of the resources available on the website is the new publication, *A Guide for Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness Planning*. This guide, developed by the Connecticut Developmental Disabilities Network, is primarily intended to assist people involved in preparedness planning at the municipal and regional levels. It also contains information that will be useful to individuals with disabilities and families.

## **Did You Vote in November? Protection and Advocacy Wants to Hear from You!**

The Office of Protection and Advocacy is seeking comments from voters with disabilities on their experiences at the polls in November. Following are some of the issues they would like to hear from you about:

- Did you experience any problems gaining access to the polling place facility (for example, parking, getting into the building, moving through the building, etc.)?
- Did the voting area provide accessibility features such as adequate lighting, chairs for rest while waiting in line, availability of magnifiers, etc.?
- Were you treated with respect and courtesy by poll workers?
- Were you advised of the availability of the phone voting system?
- If you requested to use the phone voting system, were you encouraged or discouraged?
- If you voted on the phone system, was your experience satisfying or unsatisfactory? Why?
- If you voted on one of the other kinds of machines used in Connecticut (the lever machine or the optical scan machine),\* was your experience satisfactory or unsatisfactory? Why?
- Feel free to share any other information that you would like us to know regarding your experience casting a vote on November 7th.

Please respond to Elanah Sherman at 860-297-4322 (V) or [Elanah.Sherman@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Elanah.Sherman@po.state.ct.us)

\*The lever machine is the big machine that requires you to pull down little levers over the names of the candidates of your choice. The optical scan machine, used in only about 25 cities in Connecticut this year, reads a large paper ballot on which you have filled in little circles at the names of the candidates of your choice.

## **New Haven is in the Running.....**

The National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) has announced that ten communities have been selected as finalists in its 2006 Accessible America Competition: Alexandria, VA; Berkeley, CA; Bloomington, IN; Chicago, IL; Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY; Miami Beach, FL; New Haven, CT; San Francisco, CA and Sioux Falls, SD.

An independent, five-member judging panel of distinguished disability advocates and professionals from across the United States will select the winners, with results to be announced January 11, 2007. The cash prizes, awarded to one national winner and one runner up community, are sponsored by generous grants from UPS and Wal-Mart of \$25,000 and \$10,000 respectively. N.O.D.'s Community Partnership Program administers the competition to recognize and promote progress toward comprehensive accessibility and opportunity in US cities and towns. The money encourages further advancement of local disability-related efforts.

## **People First of CT 2007 Schedule**

People First of Connecticut has announced their meeting schedule for 2007. Meetings are generally held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month, with the board meetings at 6:00 pm and the state meetings at 7:00 p.m.:

- January 25 - State meeting
- February 22 - Board of Directors – The Arc of Southington
- March 22 - State meeting
- April 2 - Board of Directors – The Arc of Southington
- May 17 - State meeting (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday this month)
- June 28 - Board of Directors – The Arc of Southington
- July 26 - State meeting
- August – vacation month
- September 27 - Board of Directors – The Arc of Southington
- October – state conference – elections this year
- November 29 – Board of Directors – The Arc of Southington

For more information contact People First Advisor Jean Bowen at [advozealot@aol.com](mailto:advozealot@aol.com) .

## **SPECIAL FEATURE – HOUSING**

### **Shelters for Winter Overflow/No Freeze Shelters**

The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness has compiled a listing of shelters that will be operating this 2006-2007 winter season. View this list by going to [www.cceh.org](http://www.cceh.org) and clicking on the icon for Winter Overflow/No Freeze Shelters. If there are additional overflow/no freeze shelters that are not listed here, please contact the Coalition at (860) 721-7876 or e-mail [info@cceh.org](mailto:info@cceh.org).

### **Federal Housing Legislation**

The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 makes it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities in the sale and rental of housing, both public and private. It also requires new multi-family housing to be accessible and adaptable for use by people with disabilities. Landlords must also permit a tenant with a disability to make reasonable modifications to the inside of their unit – at the tenant's expense - to make it more accessible to them. Complaints regarding violations of the federal Fair Housing law should be filed with Fair Housing, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, DC 20410. Complaints of housing discrimination under

Connecticut law may be filed with the state Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities - 21 Grand Street - Hartford, CT 06106 - 860/ 541-3400 - Connecticut Toll Free 1-800/ 477-5737 TDD 860/ 541-3459 - FAX 860/ 246-5068.

Under Section 504 regulations developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), federally supported housing which is newly constructed or undergoing substantial alteration must provide accessibility in at least 5% of the units. These regulations were developed by HUD to implement their responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Public housing authorities, many cities and towns, and private housing developers often use federal money to construct or to renovate housing, and they would be covered by Sec. 504. Complaints regarding violations of Sec. 504 should be filed with HUD at the address listed above. Private lawsuits are also possible under Sec. 504.

### **How Is Your Housing Authority Doing?**

HUD has recently published a Bulletin entitled “How Is Your Housing Authority Doing with Accessible Public Housing Units?” [Information Bulletin # 112 (5/06)]. The Bulletin lists the largest public housing authorities in the country and provides the specific number of units that should be fully accessible. On June 5, 2006, HUD issued a news release that states “The Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded more than 3,145 public housing agencies across the nation \$2.2 billion in federal funding today. The funding allows these agencies to make large-scale improvements to the public housing developments.”

Connecticut cities that received funding include Bridgeport (124 Accessible Units - received \$4.5 million; Norwalk (41 Accessible Units - received \$1.3 million); Hartford (72 Accessible Units - received \$5.9 million); New Haven (154 Accessible Units - received \$708,582); and Stamford (44 Accessible Units - received \$1.6 million).

If your housing authority received funding make sure these newly released capital funds are used to provide the requisite number of fully accessible units. If your Housing Authority is not listed, it may have still received Capital Funds. To check go to [www.hud.gov/content/releases/capfundrpt061.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/content/releases/capfundrpt061.cfm).

Advocates — what an extraordinary opportunity. Your housing authority does not have a lack of money excuse. Organize to make sure these funds are used to comply with Section 504 and to enforce the civil rights of people with disabilities. Without accessible units, persons with disabilities do not have an equal housing opportunity! Don't miss this critical time to increase the supply of accessible public housing!

### **Bridgeport, New Haven, New London, and Norwalk Undergo HUD Section 504 Compliance Reviews**

HUD periodically conducts Section 504 Compliance Reviews of public housing authorities to determine if the authority has 5% of its units fully compliant with federal accessibility standards and if the authority has people with disabilities who require the accessibility standards actually residing in the accessible units. HUD's Section 504 Compliance Reviews conducted since

January 1, 2004 in Connecticut include housing authorities in Bridgeport, New Haven, New London, and Norwalk.

If you want to see the results of the reviews you should ask your local housing authority for a copy of the “Letter of Findings” and “Voluntary Compliance Agreement”. You may also obtain these documents by asking for them under the Connecticut Freedom of Information law. Without obtaining the “Letter of Findings” and “Voluntary Compliance Agreement,” disability advocates cannot know if a housing authority, at least according to HUD’s findings, are in compliance with Section 504. An Information Bulletin that includes a full report on the compliance reviews – as well as back issues of other Information Bulletins - can be obtained online at [www.stevegoldada.com](http://www.stevegoldada.com) with a searchable archive at this site divided into different subjects.

### **Other News About Housing Needs in Connecticut**

According to the *Norwich Bulletin*, a report released by the Connecticut Housing Coalition on December 12 shows housing costs remain out of reach for many Norwich-New London area residents. The study says a person must earn \$16.48 per hour to afford the rent for a modest two-bedroom apartment in the region without spending more than 30 percent of total household income on housing costs.

The report, done in collaboration with the National Low Income Housing Coalition, concludes that for many families, full-time work does not provide enough income to afford a modest apartment. In fact, a person earning the state’s minimum wage of \$7.40 per hour must work 2.2 full-time jobs to afford the region’s fair market rent of \$857 per month for a two-bedroom apartment. The national report found that the Stamford-Norwalk metropolitan area was the most expensive rental market in the entire country, surpassing San Francisco, Boston and Washington, D.C.

The *Bulletin* also reported that a Connecticut Department of Labor survey of the state’s occupations shows more than half — 321 of 630 — of the state’s occupations do not, on average, provide an income sufficient to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. Some of the occupations not paying adequate living wages include bus drivers, computer operators, construction laborers, EMTs, food service workers, machinists, nursing aides, pre-school teachers, police and fire dispatchers, retail salespersons, reporters, secretaries and bank tellers.

Another report, released by the Connecticut Housing Coalition, reveals that statewide a person must earn \$20.42 an hour to afford the rent for a modest two-bedroom apartment in Connecticut. The state’s 2006 “housing wage” increased by \$1.12 an hour, jumping from \$19.30 in December 2005. The “housing wage” is the amount a person must earn to afford a typical two-bedroom apartment, without spending more than 30% of total household income on housing costs. “Out of Reach,” the annual report prepared by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, concludes that for many families, full-time work does not provide enough income to afford a modest apartment. In fact, a person earning the state’s 2006 minimum wage of \$7.40 per hour, must work 2.8 full-time jobs to afford the state wide air market rent of \$1,062 per month or a two

bedroom apartment. In terms of annual income, a Connecticut household must earn \$42,480 a year to afford a typical two-bedroom rental.

For a full copy of the “Out of Reach” report, go to [www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2006](http://www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2006).

### **Federal Housing Resources**

HUD offers information for senior citizens and people with disabilities on fair housing and how to file a discrimination complaint. HUD is located at 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455 or go to their website at [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov). For Connecticut information go to [www.hud.gov/local/index.cfm?state=ct](http://www.hud.gov/local/index.cfm?state=ct).

### **A Connecticut Housing Resource**

The Corporation for Independent Living (CIL) was established in 1979 by a coalition of advocates and service providers to create small residences in residential neighborhoods for people with disabilities. A nonprofit housing development corporation, CIL offers assistance that includes community housing for people with developmental disabilities, accessible homes for people with physical disabilities, affordable multifamily housing as well as homes for first time home buyers of low income.

CIL administers two state-funded programs that provide financing for accessibility modifications to existing homes to eligible people with disabilities. They have been administering these programs since 1984 and have improved the quality of life for 1300 individuals with disabilities. Funding for both programs is provided by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

For more information about this important Connecticut resource go to: [www.cilhomes.com](http://www.cilhomes.com).

### **VA’s “Specially Adapted Housing” Program**

Veterans who have service-connected disabilities may be entitled to grant funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to construct or modify a home to meet the veteran’s specific needs. The goal of the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) Program is to provide a barrier-free living environment that promotes independent living. For questions regarding SAH, contact your local VA SAH agent. For more information on housing programs for people with disabilities, visit the Housing section of [www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov).

### **Housing Discrimination Information Available**

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Disability: Information from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on how the Fair Housing Act protects the rights of people with disabilities.

Fair Housing Booklet: Booklet from the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) which includes information on the Fair Housing Act and housing rights of people with disabilities and others.

Filing a Complaint under the Architectural Barriers Act: Online form for filing a complaint under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). The ABA requires that facilities designed, built, altered or leased with Federal funds be accessible to people with disabilities.

Filing a Housing Discrimination Complaint: Housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status, or disability is illegal. If you have been trying to buy or rent a home or apartment, and believe your rights have been violated, you can file a fair housing complaint.

Laws and Executive Orders That Prevent Discrimination in Housing: List of laws and executive orders that protect equal housing opportunities and prohibit discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability and family status.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: Overview of how the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) processes complaints filed by individuals with disabilities who have experienced discrimination as described under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. DisabilityInfo.gov.

### **Additional Resources Available**

*Programs That Help People in Connecticut* is a unique resource guide that gives an overview of federal, state, and local programs that provide assistance to residents of Connecticut. The publication is a joint project of Connecticut Light & Power, which funds and publishes the guide, and the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), which updates and verifies the information in the guide.

To obtain a single copy of the guide, send an e-mail to [info@cahs.org](mailto:info@cahs.org). For bulk shipments, send a snail mail request indicating number of copies needed to: Community Relations, Northeast Utilities System, PO Box 270, Hartford, CT 06106-8641. A companion guide for clients, written in English and Spanish, will be available soon.

### **Respite Care and Combating Autism Acts Signed into Law!**

The Lifespan Respite Care Act (S. 1283) and the Combating Autism Act (S. 843) both passed in the U.S. House and Senate unanimously during the first week of December. The President subsequently signed both bills into law.

The Lifespan Respite Care Act authorizes \$30 million for Fiscal year 07 (increasing to \$94.8 million by Fiscal Year 11) in competitive grants to states (including the territories) to develop or coordinate lifespan respite care programs for families providing care for an adult or child with a disability. The final compromise bill identifies the Aging and Disability Resource Centers,

recently authorized in every state through the Older Americans Act, as the lead agency eligible for these funds.

The Combating Autism Act provides \$945 million over five years for autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities research, screening, treatment and education.

### **United Nations Adopts “Convention” on the Rights of People with Disabilities**

The National Council on Disability (NCD) has commended the United Nations General Assembly, UN delegates, non-governmental representatives, and civil society for the hard work invested in a new convention – or treaty - on the rights of people with disabilities around the world. This occasion marks the end of a five-year long negotiation process that was unprecedented in its inclusion of non-governmental organizations made up of people with disabilities. It is the first convention of this magnitude in this century that will further the human rights of millions of people around the world, along with their families and the communities in which they live and work.

Countries that ratify the treaty agree to enact laws and other measures to improve disability rights, and also to abolish legislation, customs and practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities. Currently only some forty five countries have legislation that deal with persons with disabilities. The Convention will be opened for signature and ratification on March 30, 2007. If twenty countries sign and ratify, the treaty will enter into force.

For more information, please contact Joan Durocher or Mark S. Quigley at NCD at 202-272-2004 or 202-272-2074 TTY.

### **2005 Census Data Regarding People With Disabilities**

To be effective, disability advocates need up-to-date statistics to ensure informed decisions by public policy makers. Attorney Steve Gold has shared information from the 2005 American Community Survey ([http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)) that is a useful tool for promoting a disability agenda. Here are some statistics noted by Steve in his latest Bulletin:

- \* Nearly 15% of the population 5 years and over (i.e., 40 million people) have one or more disabilities.
- \* For the population 16-64 years, 12% of that population (i.e., nearly 23 million people) have one or more disabilities. Of all people 16-64 years, nearly 3% have a sensory disability, more than 7% have a physical disability, and 4.5% have a mental disability. [Remember people can have more than one type of disability and show up in two categories.]
- \* For the population 16-64 years, only 37.5% are employed. That is, more than 14 million people with disabilities are unemployed.
- \* For the population 65 years and over, 40.5% of that population (i.e., more than 14 million people) have one or more disabilities.

\* For the population 5 years and over who have one or more disabilities, 21.1% are below the poverty level (which is about \$9,200 for a single person). That is, more than 8 million persons have a disability and are below the poverty level.

\* As a comparison, for the population 5 years and over with no disability, 11.3% are below the poverty level, while for the same age group with one or more disabilities, 21.1% are below the poverty level.

This data is available at the web site noted above. Advocates should use this data to hold public officials accountable with respect to legislative decisions that are made, policies that are developed, and the various annual plans that must be written. Without the correct data, people with disabilities will be shortchanged. [Information Bulletin #186 (12/06) Steve Gold, The Disability Odyssey Continues - [www.stevegoldada.com](http://www.stevegoldada.com)]

### **Breakthrough Technology Provides TV Listings to People who are Blind**

The National Federation of the Blind has partnered with Tribune Media Services to add television listings to NFB-NEWSLINE®, the nation's largest on-demand news service for people with visual disabilities. Blind and visually impaired Americans now have independent access to their local TV listings, all in one place, only a telephone call away.

By simply entering the zip code, source of TV reception, and time zone, blind users will have quick and easy access to their local TV listings. The listings are interactive, as the user can navigate and choose between date, time, and/or channel listings. After a user enters the local zip code, he or she is presented with a list of cable and satellite providers in the area. The user can also indicate the use of a television antenna.

Over 50,000 NFB-NEWSLINE® subscribers already enjoy the free electronic newspaper service which carries 242 newspapers and magazines to 41 states and the District of Columbia. The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and AARP The Magazine are among the many national and local newspapers offered. Subscribers have access twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, through a local or toll-free telephone number. Individuals who are unable to read print due to a physical disability are eligible for this free service. To register or to request more information, call the National Federation of the Blind at (866) 504-7300, or visit them online at <http://www.nfbnewsline.org>.

### **Do You Know a Young Disability or Transportation Advocate?**

The Federal Transit Administration, Office of Civil Rights (OCR), is looking for young leaders ages 16 to 28 to participate in the 2007 National Youth Transit Dialogue July 27-28, 2007 in Washington, D.C. Participants will discuss transportation issues related to the ADA with national disability leaders, national public officials, and other active young leaders with disabilities from across the country. Visit the Berkeley (CA) Center for Independent Living's web site - [www.cilberkeley.org/youthtalk/index.html](http://www.cilberkeley.org/youthtalk/index.html) - and apply to participate in this conference. Airfare, hotel lodgings, meals and special services expenses will be covered for participants by the OCR.

## **Another Youth Leadership Opportunity**

Mobility International/USA (MIUSA) is currently accepting applications from young people with disabilities to take part in an international exchange program June 20 - July 5, 2007 in Costa Rica. Entitled the "US/Costa Rica: Youth Leadership and Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability Rights Exchange Program", this opportunity is open to young people with a disability between the ages of 18-24 who come from a culturally diverse background and are an inexperienced international traveler. Travel with 12 other young people with disabilities, live with a host family, take part in a service learning project and practice Spanish through immersion!

Since 1981, MIUSA has been pioneering short-term international exchange programs for people with and without disabilities from over 90 countries. As a non-profit organization, MIUSA is dedicated to promoting opportunities for people with disabilities in international exchange, leadership development and service learning. MIUSA exchange programs are inclusive of people with all types of disabilities, including people who are deaf and hard of hearing, or have cognitive, visual, physical, psychiatric, systemic, non-apparent, or other types of disabilities. MIUSA will provide appropriate accommodations to each qualified participant with a disability, including ASL interpretation and alternative formats.

Application materials can be found at [www.miusa.org/exchange](http://www.miusa.org/exchange), or requested by e-mail at [exchange@miusa.org](mailto:exchange@miusa.org), or by Tel/TTY at: 541-343-1284. Generous scholarships are available. Application deadline is March 2, 2007. Late applications will be accepted as space permits. Application materials are available in alternative formats upon request. Contact Information: Jena Price, Program Specialist Mobility International USA: Tel/TTY: 541-343-1284 Fax: 541-343-6812 E-mail: [exchange@miusa.org](mailto:exchange@miusa.org) Website: <http://www.miusa.org/>

## **Secondary Conditions of Spinal Cord Injury**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation developed "Secondary Conditions of Spinal Cord Impairment Health Education Video Series" under grant #532 from the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Education Foundation. This 11-part video series is intended to be equally useful for persons with spinal cord impairments at home or by health and rehabilitation centers for education and training activities. Many features of the series also apply to individuals with disabilities other than spinal cord injuries.

You can download the series, watch in streaming Real Media or purchase 3 DVDs. The series includes: "Understanding Spinal Cord Impairments and Functional Goals," "Life with SCI: A Group Discussion," "Sexuality & Sexual Function," "Life with SCI: A Group Discussion," "Sexuality & Sexual Function," "Bowel Management," "Bladder Management," "Pressure Sores," "Skin Care Prevention and Treatment," "Pain Management," "Neuropathic, Spastic Hypertonia," "Respiratory Management," "Cardiovascular Health," and "Bone Health."

The relevant web site is: [www.spinalcord.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=97417](http://www.spinalcord.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=97417) . It also includes tip sheets that offer rehabilitation care providers and consumer caregivers step-by-step instructions

and photo illustration on performing common activities such as: “Wheelchair Positioning ,” “Assisted Pressure Relief,” “Lift Transfers of Patients,” and “Assisted Transfers of Patients.”

**Please relay this Bulletin to your membership including those who do not have e-mail access. Suggest your membership without e-mail go to the library and go onto [www.kleinmanconsulting.com](http://www.kleinmanconsulting.com) to view or print a copy. If you would like to see previous issues of the Bulletin, read about the background of the Collaborative or if you would like to be added to the mailing list, you may also go to [www.kleinmanconsulting.com](http://www.kleinmanconsulting.com).**

**If you want something to appear in the next edition please send it to us – [jjk1009@hotmail.com](mailto:jjk1009@hotmail.com) or [skoslosk03@comcast.net](mailto:skoslosk03@comcast.net) — or Jayne Kleinman, 55 Corrigan Ave., Meriden, CT 06451, 203-631-4800.**

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