



Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin

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

Empowerment! Opportunity! Justice!

March 2007

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Please let us know.**

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For archived Bulletins go to www.kleinmanconsulting.com and www.ct-dac.org

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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

Upcoming Meetings of Regional Advocacy Networks

Northwest – Litchfield Arc in Torrington – March 14 at 10:30 am - contact: Larry Robinson (robinsonlarry@yahoo.com)

Southwest – March 28 – 1 pm – Norwalk Police Department – contact: Carol Kana (pkana@snet.net)

Danbury Area - February 22 – 5 pm – Ability Beyond Disability in Bethel – contact Pam Arturi (parturi@abilitybeyonddisability.org)

North Central – February 26 – 10 am – Independence Unlimited in Hartford – contact: Candace Low (clow@independenceunlimited.org)

Waterbury Area – March 28 – 3 pm – St. John's Episcopal Church in Waterbury – contact Mike Valuckas (mike.valuckas@independencenorthwest.org)

Northeast Area – new organizer – Carolyn Newcombe (cnewcombe@charter.net); will work with Varian Salters (DMR Self Advocate and leader of local People First Chapter)

New Haven area – new organizer – Suzanne Tucker (Coordinator at the SCSU Disability Resource Office – tuckers1@southernct.edu)

News from the SouthWest Corner

Carol Kana, Collaborative Network organizer in lower Fairfield County, reports that the Town of Greenwich, after much advocacy on Carol's part, has agreed to change the Town Hall restrooms to make one male and one female stall the proper size to allow for wheelchair use. She thinks the Town of Greenwich politicians are beginning to realize she doesn't back down easily. Coupled with Stephanie Paulmeno, who is part of the Southwest Network and works for the Town of Greenwich, Carol seems to have gotten their attention. This spring she plans to check out Town and City Halls in other areas in Fairfield County to see if they need attention.

She has also been attending the local LOCHSTP meetings, making transportation officials more aware of the needs of people with disabilities. She is concerned that the new buses that DOT is getting may not accommodate scooters. To quote Carol, "I would love to see a bus driver refuse to allow me with my scooter on a bus - that would be a good lawsuit."

Legislative Update

Public hearings are still taking place at the State Legislative Office Building and committee “JF” dates are rapidly approaching. The JF date is the deadline for committees to act on legislative proposals that are under its purview. Key JF dates are:

- March 6 – Committees on Children, Housing, and Aging
- March 15 – Insurance
- March 22 – Human Services
- March 26 – Public Health
- March 30 – Education & Government Administration and Elections
- April 13 – Judiciary
- April 19 – Appropriations – this is the big one – where the state budget is developed

For outstanding, up-to-date accounts of developments at the legislature the Collaborative refers readers to the web page maintained by Beth Leslie of the State Office of Protection and Advocacy (www.ct.gov/opapd/site/default.asp - click on “Legislative Information” and then click on “Bill Tracking Report”). To get on Beth’s e-mail mailing list, contact her at Beth.Leslie@po.state.ct.us .

The Budgets Are Here!

The Guv’s Budget

Although significant education initiatives headline the Governor’s new budget proposal, many of the programs and services that impact Connecticut’s low-income residents, including many individuals with disabilities, were either not addressed, cut or eliminated in her plan. Despite these drawbacks, the Governor’s proposal did include some positive responses to low-income issues. The Governor’s budget will serve as a starting point as the Appropriations Committee develops its budget bill.

Here’s a brief summary of some of key points in Governor Rell’s two year budget:

- Increases funding for the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) to annualize support for the Supportive Housing Initiative. The funding will cover subsidizing 250 housing units and providing services to 75 families. (cost: \$1.9 million each year)
- Carries forward and then annualizes additional funding for RAP certificates (cost: \$1.8 million each year)
- Funds the Governor’s Charter Oak Health Plan - Under this proposal, insurance companies will offer basic health insurance to individuals not otherwise covered for a monthly premium of \$250. The state would offer financial assistance for premiums on a sliding scale ranging from \$175 of assistance for those with income less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL), to no assistance for those with income over 300% of the federal poverty level. (cost: \$18.9 million in the first year; \$36 million in the second)

- Increases HUSKY enrollment through requiring parents to inform schools every year whether children have health coverage. (cost of additional enrollment - \$5.4 million in the first year; \$8.4 million in the second)
- Enrolls all uninsured newborns in HUSKY with no premiums for 2 months. (cost: \$2.7 million in first year; \$4.6 million in second year)
- Maintains Medicare Part D wraparound for ConnPACE and Medicaid participants. (cost: \$5 million in each year)
- Provides funds to maintain current enrollment in Care4Kids. (cost: \$18.8 million in first year)
- Eliminates the cost of living adjustment (COLA) for Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) and State Supplement recipients (cost: \$6.1 million in first year; \$10.2 million in second year)
- Reverts back to the state's previous practice of reducing the amount an individual receives in State Supplement income assistance by the amount that the individual receives in the federal SSI cost of living increase (COLA). The result is that State Supplement recipients receive no COLA. Last year, for the first time in many years, the federal COLA was passed through to State Supplement recipients. (cost: \$1.2 million in first year; \$2.3 million in second year)
- Eliminates funding for SAGA Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, which was partially restored in January of this year (cost: \$1.4 million each year)

Democratic leaders have proposed a number of initiatives focused on strengthening health care access, quality and affordability that were not part of the Governor's budget. Advocates will be working to include these issues in the Appropriations Committee budget and subsequent negotiations.

State Health Care Proposals

This year, proposals to reform Connecticut's health care system have been advanced by most of the policy leaders at the state legislature.

- The Senate Democratic caucus: would increase provider rates, expand Medicaid, HUSKY and SAGA coverage, and develop a blueprint for universal coverage based on a system similar to Medicare.
- The Governor: has proposed that insurance companies develop a coverage package costing between \$175 and \$250 a month for individuals who do not have coverage through employers or public programs.
- The Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut: has developed two models for achieving universal coverage in Connecticut. These proposals are outlined in the report "Health Care in Connecticut, Three Routes to Recovery", which is available on their website, www.universalhealthct.org. This report shows that two of the three options studied lower health care costs, have a small positive effect on

the state economy, and provide opportunities for improving quality and reducing health care costs.

The Bush Budget

President Bush's budget proposal for FY 2008, which was released to Congress on February 5th, deals one blow after another to low income residents of America, including many people with disabilities. The budget reduces vital low income support programs on all fronts from healthcare to food stamps.

SCHIP- The Bush budget would reduce federal funds to states under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) for children whose families have an income twice that of the poverty level. This plan would also discourage states from covering children aged 19 and over, resulting in fewer children with health insurance.

Medicaid- Through legislative and non-legislative action, Medicaid would be cut a total of \$25.7 billion over the next 5 years. The cuts would likely result in fewer benefits and eligibility, which would be especially devastating to the low income population.

LIHEAP- Despite a rise in the cost of heating and cooling, the budget cuts home energy assistance roughly 18 percent below this year's expected levels. The President's budget will dramatically reduce the number of people served by the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), leaving more people out in the cold than in years past.

Food Stamps- In a proposal rejected by Congress the last two years, the Bush budget would deny Food Stamps to around 300,000 low-income working families. This will constitute a loss to Food Stamp recipients of more than \$600 million over five years.

Rental Vouchers- The proposed increase of federal funding for rental vouchers for low-income tenants by only one-half of one percent over FY 2007 levels would result in the loss of at least 40,000 vouchers due to inflation. However, the number of lost vouchers could be as much as double that amount depending on how many vouchers the housing authorities utilize this year.

More information about Bush's budget and the issues facing low income people is available from the Coalition for Human Needs (CHN) on their website www.chn.org. If you want to be part of advocacy work in Connecticut on federal budget issues, contact Jane McNichol at LARCC by e-mail at jmcnichol@larcc.org or by phone at (860) 278-5688 ext. 15.

Do You Know Who your State Legislators Are?

If you want to become active in legislative advocacy, you will need to know who your local legislators are. So check out: www.cga.ct.gov/maps/townlist.asp and click on your town. If more than one representative is listed in your town, call your local town or city hall and give them your address so that they can tell you which representative is yours.

You may also reach your legislators (toll free) at the State Capitol:

Senate Democrats: (860) 240-8600 or (800) 842-1420

Senate Republicans: (860) 240-8800 or (800) 842-1421

House Democrats: (860) 240-8500 or (800) 842-1902
House Republicans: (860) 240-8600 or (800) 842-1423

Use of Restraints in Public Schools

The Connecticut Developmental Disabilities Network is sponsoring a legislative forum on the use of restraints and seclusion in schools on Thursday, March 8. The event will be held from 10 am to 12 noon in the Old Judiciary Room (3rd Floor) of the State Capitol in Hartford.

The forum will feature presentations by Angela Spino, Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Pat Amos, Pennsylvania Council on Developmental Disabilities & the Alliance to Prevent Restraint, Aversive Interventions, and Seclusion.

Please consider sending the information about this event to your state legislators and encouraging them to attend. To find your legislators' email addresses or phone numbers, visit www.cga.ct.gov/maps/townlist.asp and click on your town. For more information or to view the flyer for this event, visit <http://www.uconnucedd.org/>.

Also on March 8 - New Meet and Greet Date

The Legislative Meet & Greet sponsored by the Family Support Network has been rescheduled due to a snowstorm in February to Thursday, March 8 from 9:00 am to 10:30 am in the second floor Atrium of the Legislative Office Building. If you have any further questions, please e-mail Karen Zrenda at Karen.zrenda@yale.edu or call 203 785-7176.

Navigating Your Child's Path through Special Education Law

On Saturday, March 10, 2007 from 2:30-4:00 pm Attorney Phillip J. Cohn and Michael S. Cohen, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist with a practice for children and young adults with neuro-developmental disorder, will conduct a special education workshop at the Shelton Public Library, 65 Wooster Street, Shelton. All interested persons are welcomed. Check www.mychildsrights.com/Seminars.html for updates. All programs are subject to change.

To make a reservation, call Phillip J. Cohn, Esq. at (203) 984-5513 or email him at phillip@mychildsrights.com.

Support Group for Parents Raising Children with Disabilities

When: Tuesday, March 13, 2007

Time: 10:00 am - 12 noon

Note new location - Central Park - Inside Kids' Play Gym
74 Central Avenue (side entrance of Salvation Army) - Waterbury

Topic Presentation & Speaker: Emergency preparedness for children with disabilities during state or national emergencies. Speaker: Cynthia Stramandinoli, Family Resource Coordinator, Yale Center for Children with Special Health Care Needs.

Attend the meeting and you will:

- Meet other parents who share similar experiences
- Get more information about family services, supports & resources
- Learn more about child development & parenting
- Socialize in a relaxed environment
- Workshops on transition, respite, & other shared concerns
- Light refreshments for parents/caregivers & children

The event is co-sponsored by the Connecticut Family Support Network-Northwest Region and the Connecticut Lifespan Respite Coalition. Advance registration is appreciated. For information contact: Alice B. Buttwell (860) 350-6025 e-mail: alicemmbb@aol.com or Joy C. Liebeskind (203) 272-9058 e-mail: SJSJL@cox.net .

Manchester Initiative for Supportive Housing

How Supportive Housing Can Permanently End Homelessness in Manchester!

When: Wednesday, March 14 • 7:00 p.m. Light food will be served from 6:15 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Where: Manchester Community College - SBM Charitable Foundation Auditorium

For more information, call David Blackwell at (860) 432-0676 or Professor Tim Woods at (860) 512-2761. This event is free and open to the public. It is sponsored by the Manchester Initiative for Supportive Housing and Manchester Community College.

Live, Learn, Work: The Journey to Inclusion TASH New England 2007 Conference

When: Friday, March 16, 2007

Where: Hogan Campus Center - College of the Holy Cross - Worcester, MA

Keynote Address: Fredda Brown, Ph.D., Professor, Queens College CUNY, editor of TASH journal, Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, and nationally known advocate for positive behavior supports

The following strands will be offered:

- Strand 1: Employment Supports
- Strand 2: Inclusive Community Living
- Strand 3: Inclusive Education
- Strand 4: Other topics
 - Positive Behavior Supports in School Settings

- Success for Learners Through Inclusion

For a brochure, directions, and registration materials go to:
www.rammlerandwood.com/trainings.html . For more information, email
markrwc@comcast.net, call 978-758-9359, or go to
www.tash.org/chapters/newengland/index.htm .

NEAT and DRC/FC to Hold Open House

The New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Center and the Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County have announced the opening of its new assistive technology equipment restoration and demonstration satellite office in Fairfield County. The event will be held at the DRC – 80 Ferry Blvd. – Suite 210 – Stratford on March 16, 2007 from 10 am – 3 pm. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to 203-378-6977, TDD – 203-378-3248, or by e-mail: info@drcfc.org.

Latino Conference on Mental Illness

A Latino Conference on Mental Illness will be held on Saturday, March 24 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm at Norwalk Community College. The conference is conducted entirely in the Spanish language and registration is free. The conference counts for 8 hours of continuing/licensing certification. To register, please contact Paloma Dee, NAMI-CT, tel: 860-882-0239 or toll free at: 800-215-3021.

Working with Parents with Cognitive Limitations Workshop

A training workshop for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing persons will be held Tuesday, April 10, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) - Gallicchio Training Center - 125 Maxim Road - Hartford. The training will offer American Sign Language Interpreters and C. A. R. T. translation of the oral presentations.

Training Topics Include:

- Implications of limitations in functioning
- Behavior and assessment
- Impact on children
- Ways to help families

NASW CEU's will be available. Lunch will be on your own. Register online at www.ctclearinghouse.org/registration. For more information contact: Connecticut Clearinghouse at 800-232-4424 (TTY and Voice). For accommodations contact Connecticut Clearinghouse at least two weeks in advance.

The event is sponsored by the Connecticut Parents with Cognitive Limitations Workgroup, and co-sponsored by the State of Connecticut Commission on the Deaf and

Hearing Impaired. Funding has been provided by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

Update on the MIG

In its first year, the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) has made substantial progress toward its objectives of identifying and reducing barriers to employment for people with disabilities and aging workers.

Step 1 was to ask the stakeholders (employers, people with disabilities who were working, people with disabilities who were not working, elders, service providers, and policymakers) what the barriers were from their perspective. By partnering with Chambers of Commerce and advocacy organizations throughout Connecticut, the MIG research team received input from 286 focus group participants; gathered information from 642 mail, telephone, and in-person surveys; completed 36 key informant interviews; and received 653 mail surveys from employers. This information was compiled into a report which identified 12 major barriers to employment. (To view this report, go to <http://www.brs.state.ct.us/StrategicEmployment.htm>)

On June 7, 120 stakeholders attended the first Annual Employment Summit at the Hartford Convention Center. Among the attendees were the CEOs of several Chambers of Commerce, Superintendents of school districts, and the Commissioners of 11 state agencies. There were some brief presentations, but the purpose of the morning was to study the 12 barriers and answer the question “Where would you begin?” Four key barriers emerged: the transition from school to work; low expectations; recruitment, hiring, and maintaining employment; and transportation. This information was synthesized into the MIG's strategic plan for the first year, which was not only accepted but held up as a national model by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Parallel with this process has been the creation of a state level technical assistance center to promote systems change and to assist local initiatives. Various methods are being considered, including the development of toolkits to assist in breaking down barriers and teams of experts made available to address tough issues.

Workgroups have been developed to address the first four barriers. A decision was made to link the state level infrastructure change with local level infrastructure change. Therefore, a main task of the workgroups has been to give significant input into a Request for Applications which will be made available to communities across Connecticut in the next several months. The RFA will further advance the goals of the grant by focusing communities' attention on the initial barriers, and promoting the creation of local partnerships geared toward the ongoing removal of barriers faced by employers, people with disabilities, and elders who want to work. The MIG is looking forward to seeing how local communities can turn MIG dollars into systems changes that will permanently improve the employment landscape for people with disabilities, elders, and employers throughout the state.

Current activities are focused on development of the second Annual Employment Summit, scheduled for June 27 at the Hartford Convention Center. By then, the Request

for Applications should be out, and a groundbreaking marketing campaign should be underway.

Contact person for the MIG is Amy Porter at amy.porter@ct.gov or 1-800-773-4636.

Sinianian Gets Award!

Chad Sinanian of Danbury has been selected to receive the Grace Award from the American Red Cross of Western Connecticut for his advocacy work on behalf of persons with disabilities. Kim Bragoli, the Community Relations Manager at Ability Beyond Disability recommended Chad for the award. Chad will be honored at an American Red Cross ceremony and breakfast on April 12th.

New AT Opportunities

The Connecticut Tech Act Project, in collaboration with the other New England states, has developed online classifieds to help get Assistive Technology (AT) devices into the hands of people who need them. Visit www.getATstuff.com to look for and post Assistive Technology devices for sale or donation. If you have AT devices that you are not using or no longer need you may register at this site and post your item. Your unused AT could help someone out there who needs AT and can't get it any other way.

Connecticut State Independent Living Council Meeting Schedule

Each state has a State Independent Living Council (referred to as "the SILC"). The goal of the Council is to insure provision of community-based, consumer-controlled, cross-disability services in compliance with requirements of the Title VII of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and in accordance with Independent Living Philosophy. It is also charged with developing and then monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the State Plan for Independent Living (referred to as "the SPIL"). The Connecticut SILC is chaired by Tom Connors and its Director is Thom Condon.

The Connecticut State Independent Living Council meeting schedule is as follows:
March 28, 2007 – 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Center for Disability Rights, West Haven;
May 30, 2007 – 1:00 – 4:00 pm, New Park Office and Conference Center, Hartford;
July 25, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Center for Disability Rights, West Haven;
September 26, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Annual Meeting: To Be Determined, and
November 28, – 1:00 – 4:00 pm, 151 New Park Avenue, Hartford.

Save the Date!!

What: Focus Unplugged --A panel comprised of youth and young adults on the Autism Spectrum telling their stories.

When: April 18th, 2007 - 7:00-9:00 pm

Where: (to be announced at a future date).

The presenters are articulate, brilliant, and very open and honest about their journey with their disorders. Hear firsthand about their experiences and how they impacted their lives at home, school and in the community. They want to let you know that they have suffered, but they have not given up and have grown to accept and embrace their "peculiarities" and channel them into something useful, without changing "who" they are. Learn what strategies have helped them become the successful people they are today.

For more information contact Cathy Adamczyk at cathya@ntplx.net.

Reminders of Important Events (from February Bulletin)

Estate Planning for Individuals with Disabilities: United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern Connecticut, Families United, and The Arc of New London County are hosting an informative estate planning session with Anthony Recck, MetDESK Specialist, on March 8 at 7:00 pm at UCP of Eastern CT, 42 Norwich Rd. (Route 32) Quaker Hill. Call Cheryl at 860-443-3800, ext. 11 to reserve your seat.

PBS Documentary Explores 200 Years of Life for Persons Who are Deaf: "Through Deaf Eyes," a two-hour PBS documentary exploring nearly 200 years of Deaf life in America, will air nationally on PBS on Wednesday, March 21 at 9 p.m. ET (check local listings). The film was inspired by the exhibition, "History Through Deaf Eyes," curated by Jack R. Gannon of Gallaudet University. A comprehensive Web site, found at <http://www.pbs.org>, accompanies the film.

Tube-feeding At Thirty-thousand Feet: The Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Social Role Valorization Implementation Project (SRV/IP) will sponsor a one-day workshop on people with developmental disabilities and complex medical conditions to be held on Thursday April 12 from 10 am to 4 pm at the Institute of Technology and Business Development, Central CT State University, 185 Main Street, New Britain. Presentors will be Cathy Ludlum of Manchester, and Adam Hildebrand and Jo Massarelli, SRV/IP. This workshop is free and includes lunch, parking and handouts. Contact Ed Preneta to register: ed.preneta@po.state.ct.us .

NEAT Marketplace Expo: On April 27, the New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Marketplace will host its 2007 Expo entitled "Total Access for Everyone". The event showcases new and existing technology from a variety of manufacturers and distributors. Beginning at 9:00 am, there will be demonstrations, opportunities for hands-on-training and conversations with the professionals who make AT devices and the people who use them. Go to their website at neatmarketplace.org to get more information.

IDEA Regulations: The Klebanoff Institute of Special Education at the University of Connecticut and the University of Connecticut A.J. Papanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities are sponsoring a workshop on the IDEA regulations on May

9 at the Connecticut Grand Hotel in Waterbury. Alexa Posny (Invited), the Director of Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education, and Jeanne M. Kincaid, J.D. will be presenting. More detailed information will be available at www.uconnucedd.org.

“We Belong” to Hold Second Gala: “We Belong” of Fairfield County will be holding its second annual Gala Celebration on May 17, honoring those in their community who demonstrate excellence in the promotion of inclusion. They are looking for nominations of individuals to be recognized, including educators, service providers, administrators, youth group leaders, recreation providers, and social service workers. Nomination should be sent no later than March 11 to Eva Greenwald at evagreenwald@sbcglobal.net. You may also reach her by phone at 203-554-4462.

“We Belong” will be holding the following monthly meetings, all at the Westport Library from 6:30-8:30 pm (call 203-291-4840 for directions):

- Tuesday March 27: Update on the New Federal and State Guidelines and Regulations with Terri DeFrancis from the Bureau of Special Education of the Connecticut Department of Education.
- Wednesday April 11: Inclusion Success Stories featuring a panel of parents, educators, administrators, service providers and students.

Reaching Home

Reaching Home is a campaign to create 10,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 10 years across Connecticut . For more information about Reaching Home please go to www.ctreachinghome.org or contact Kate Kelly at kate@ctpartnershiphousing.com, 1-860-244-0066.

PATHS Update — March 2007

The UCONN Center on Disabilities, under a grant from the DD Council, is continuing to encourage individuals with disabilities to participate in the Connecticut Department of Transportation regional planning organizations across the state. ConnDOT is conducting a new community planning process for federally funded transportation of older adults (60+), persons with disabilities and individuals with low incomes. The Connecticut plan will determine how the funds allocated under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A legacy for Users (also referred to as SAFETELU) will be spent in Connecticut. The plan will be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private and nonprofit human services transportation providers and participation by the public. For more information contact the Department of Transportation at dotadmin.ctrides@po.state.ct.us or the Transit Administrator, P.O. Box 317546, Newington, CT 06131 and they will direct your inquiry to the right place.

The Connecticut Developmental Disabilities Network is planning a transportation summit to be held in June, 2007. For more information contact Jayne Kleinman, jkleinman@uchc.edu or jjk1009@hotmail.com.

A Useful Resource

Connecticut Families United for Children's Mental Health is now distributing a newsletter. Contact them at 860-537-6125 ext.104, by cell at 860-303-6170, toll free (families only, please) 866-439-0788 ext.104, or go to <http://ctfamiliesunited.homestead.com/SoutheastPages/SoutheastNewsletter.html>

Keep your Utilities On! Statewide Legal Services Sponsors Utility Days

Are you worried about a utility shut-off this Spring? Are you facing utility payments that you can't afford? Statewide Legal Services (SLS) may be able to help you. Once again, SLS is offering Utility Days where legal advocates will try to come up with a workable payment plan for both you and the utility company. Please Note: Budget counseling is provided, but there is NO direct cash assistance. If you have any questions regarding utility days, please call Statewide Legal Assistance at 1-800-453-3320.

Utility Day Dates & Locations

March 10, 2007

Waterbury – Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., N.O.W., 232 North Elm Street
(for customers of Northeast Utilities & Yankee Gas)

March 17, 2007

Hartford – Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., South Congregational Church, 277 Main Street
(for customers of Northeast Utilities/Connecticut Natural Gas)

March 31, 2007

New Britain – Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Connecticut Bar Association, 30 Bank Street
(for customers of Northeast Utilities/Connecticut Natural Gas)

April 14, 2007

New Haven – Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Hall Of Records, 200 Orange Street
(for customers of United Illuminating/Southern Connecticut Gas)

Career Expo for People with Disabilities

A Career Expo is being held for entry-level college graduates and professionals with disabilities on Friday, March 23 from 10 am to 3 pm at the New Yorker Hotel, 481 8th Avenue, New York City. All job candidates should pre-register for the Career Expo at: www.eop.com/exporegistration. Resumes will be included on a CD disk that will be distributed to all participating recruiters after the expo. Job candidates who are unable to attend the Expo can post their resume online so that it will be included on the CD disk.

The Expo has a strong diversity of companies and government agencies that have signed up to participate including Bloomberg, Defense Logistics, the Department of the Army (civilian), HSBS Bank, Home Depot, the IRS, the Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department HHS Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. For more information call 1-631-421-9421, ext. 20 or go to www.eop.com.

Name Change Welcomed!

After almost five decades of being called Mental Retardation, this influential journal in special education changed names to Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities under the leadership of Editor Steven J. Taylor. The journal's name change is a microcosm of society's ongoing struggle to find a socially acceptable way of addressing persons with an intellectual disability. The new name comes close on the heels of the name change of its publisher, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, formerly AAMR, the world's oldest organization representing professionals in developmental disabilities.

Founded in 1876, AAIDD promotes progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To learn about AAIDD, visit www.aaid.org.

Tax Return Resources

- IRS Publication 907—“Tax Highlights for Persons with Disabilities” – can be obtained online at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p907.pdf.
- IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers - your source for personal tax help when you believe your tax issue cannot be handled online or by phone and you want face-to-face assistance. Hours of operation: Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (subject to change). Multilingual assistance is available in every office.

City	Street Address	Telephone
Bridgeport	915 Lafayette Blvd.	(203) 384-5818
Danbury	131 West St.	(203) 840-4195
Hartford	135 High St.	(860) 756-4505
New Haven	150 Court St.	(203) 781-3195
New London	2 Howard St.	(860) 439-7963
Norwalk	24 Belden Ave.	(203) 840-4195
Waterbury	14 Cottage Pl.	(203) 596-4727

- If face-to-face assistance is not a priority for you, you may also get help by phone by calling toll free at 1-800-829-1040. You can also call the Taxpayer Advocate

- Service at 860-756-4555 in Hartford or 1-877-777-4778 elsewhere, or see IRS Publication 1546 (can be seen online at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1546.pdf).
- Federal and State Tax Assistance from AARP—AARP's Tax-Aide Program, a partnership between the AARP Foundation and the Internal Revenue Service, provides free tax counseling and preparation services to middle-and low-income taxpayers, with special attention to people age 60 and older. Click on the Tax-Aide Site Locator at www.aarp.org/money/taxaide which will take you to the AARP site for information on locations and hours.
 - Federal and State Tax Assistance from VITA—The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free tax help for low-to moderate-income (under \$35,000) people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. If you need assistance from VITA, see the list of Connecticut VITA Sites. (www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=107626,00.html).

Are Your Social Security Benefits Taxable?

How much, if any, of your social security benefits are taxable depends on your total income and marital status. Generally, if social security benefits were your only income, your benefits are not taxable and you probably do not need to file a federal income tax return. If you received income from other sources, your benefits will not be taxed unless your modified adjusted gross income is more than the base amount for your filing status. Your taxable benefits and modified adjusted gross income are figured in a worksheet in the Form 1040A or Form 1040 Instruction booklet. For additional information on the taxability of social security benefits, see IRS Publication 915, Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits. Publication 915 is available on the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

Supreme Court Hears Education Case

On February 27 the United States Supreme Court heard oral argument on whether parents may, without a lawyer (pro se), file a lawsuit to enforce their child's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The case of *Winkelman v. Parma City School District* addresses a split among circuit courts, one circuit deciding that there are no limitations on the parents' ability to prosecute pro se an IDEA case in federal court, several circuits ruling that under IDEA parents can only represent pro se their own interests and not those of their child, and one circuit said that parents cannot represent themselves or their children in court under IDEA.

EEOC Releases New Publication

Naomi C. Earp, Chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), has announced the issuance of a new question-and-answer (Q&A) fact sheet on the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to job applicants and employees in the health care industry. The new publication, part of a series of Q&A documents about specific disabilities in the workplace and specific industries, is available

on the EEOC's web site at http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/health_care_workers.html.

Eligibility Crisis at SSA!

People with severe disabilities who apply for Social Security disability benefits (SSDI) or for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits may wait months for an eligibility decision and, if it is necessary to appeal an unfavorable decision, may wait years to get benefits to which they are entitled. As revealed in Congressional hearings and news articles, some people lose their homes and families while they wait for decisions. Others use up all their resources and cannot afford critical medications and treatments, resulting in increased disability and even death.

The President's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2008 indicates that average waiting times will continue to grow, even if the Social Security Administration (SSA) is funded at the level of his request (\$9.6 billion). The solution: the SSA must be given enough funding to get disability decisions made in a timely manner. As required by law, the Commissioner of Social Security submitted a budget request separate from the President's request. This request indicates that the agency needs \$10.44 billion in administrative funding for FY 2008 for its administrative expenses, known as SSA's Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE). If SSA is going to receive the funds it needs to reduce the backlogs of disability decisions and improve other services, it is imperative that the House and Senate Budget Committees include enough funding for SSA in the FY 2008 Budget Resolution.

The House and Senate Budget Committees will mark up their Budget Resolutions in early to mid March. It is important that every Member of Congress urge the Chairman of their respective Budget Committee to include sufficient funding in the Budget Resolution to appropriate funds for SSA's Limitation on Administrative Expenses at the level requested by the Commissioner of SSA: \$10.44 billion for FY 2008. Take action now! Please write your Senators and House Member.

Senate Health Committee Approves Mental Health Parity Bill

On February 14, by an 18-3 vote, the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee approved legislation (S. 558) requiring business with 50 or more workers to offer the same medical benefits for mental health care as they do for other medical conditions. The proposed Mental Health Parity Act of 2007 would not require businesses to offer mental health benefits, but if they do, such benefit packages must embody parity with other medical benefits in the areas of patient deductibles, co-payments, and annual and lifetime coverage limits, as well in covered hospital days and visits.

The legislation is modeled after the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program, which covers members of Congress and other federal workers and dependents and which implemented parity in 2001. The Mental Health Parity Act (view it at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:s.00558>;) expands the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 by prohibiting group health plans from imposing treatment or financial limitations

on mental health benefits that are different from those applied to medical/surgical services. The legislation applies only to group health plans already providing mental health benefits and exempts plans sponsored by small businesses of under 50 employees.

Fact sheets on parity, and the roster of over 100 organizations backing S. 558, may be found at <http://www.mhlg.org/page18.html>.

Assessing the Impact of Katrina on People with Disabilities.

Building on prior the work of investigators from the University of Kansas and the University of New Mexico, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) has addressed a critical gap in a recent federal report that investigated the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina. Despite its comprehensiveness, the report paid inadequate attention to the unique challenges associated with ensuring that the needs and priorities of persons with physical and mental disabilities are met before, during, and after a disaster. The research project identified major barriers faced during Hurricane Katrina by centers for independent living (CILs) and emergency managers. Through a combination of surveys, focus groups, and interviews in six research sites in the Gulf Coast states, investigators gathered information on the experiences of respondents and developed recommendations for future policy, planning, and practice to address identified gaps.

To obtain a copy of the NIDRR report contact Dr. Glen W. White, Principal Investigator at 785-864-4095 (phone), 785-864-5063 (fax), 785-864-0706 (TDD), or glen@ku.edu .

Qualifying for Extra Help under the Medicare Drug Plan

People with Medicare with limited income and resources may qualify for extra help paying for Medicare prescription drug coverage costs. If they qualify, they will get help paying for their drug plan's monthly premium, yearly deductible, and prescription co-payments. The amount of extra help people qualify for is based on their income and resources. For more information, view a recent tip sheet published by CMS at: www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/downloads/11236P.pdf

1 In 3 Australian Doctors Would Hasten Death Of Disabled Infants

A paper published in February in the Archives of Disease in Childhood revealed the results of a survey in Australia which shows that one in three Australian neonatologists says they would use painkillers or sedatives to hasten the death of babies born with severe disabilities.

The survey, which was conducted anonymously, examined how doctors' attitudes toward their own mortality can affect ethical principles. The survey showed that those who fear a slow and painful death for themselves were more likely to hasten the death of sick infants in their charge.

So how do people with disabilities do on a whole in Australia? Interestingly, a separate report commissioned by a bipartisan parliamentary committee recently showed that only 48 out of 1000 people with “significant disabilities” under age 65 receive any government-funded support and that in some parts of Australia, as many as 4500 people are on waiting lists for support.

Oracle Sued for Failing Blind Users

On February 5, 2007 the National Federation of the Blind took up the fight against database giant Oracle claiming their Human Resources software is not accessible to blind users. The lawsuit was filed against Oracle in a bid to enforce the provision of Texas law requiring all IT purchased by the state to be accessible to blind employees. The legal attack came after the State authorities bought Oracle to replace another software package that had, in large part, been accessible to blind users. Dr. Marc Maurer, president of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "Access to IT is critical to success on the job for everyone in the 21st century, and this is no less true for [people who are] blind...The National Federation of the Blind is committed to improving access to all IT, and we will take all steps necessary to do so, including litigation”.

Technology Standards under Review by Federal Committee

The Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee (TEITAC) has now met three times in Washington, D.C. and will meet again in May and July 2007. The Committee is charged with providing recommendations to the U.S. Access Board for standards for electronic and information technology under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and guidelines for telecommunications products under Section 255 of the Communications Act. Well-known disability groups on the Committee include the American Association of Persons with Disabilities, the American Council of the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind, Association of Tech Act Programs, Communication Service for the Deaf, Easter Seals, Hearing Loss Association of America, National Federation of the Blind, and Paralyzed Veterans of America, among others.

A valuable offshoot of the Committee's work are the relationships built between disability representatives and representatives from industry, government and other entities. The TEITAC meets in plenary sessions and between sessions meets via teleconference and through circulation of information through list serves and the committee's interactive website at <http://www.teitac.org>. Members of the public are encouraged to offer recommendations about accessibility and to attend the full committee meetings. As a federal advisory committee, there is always time set aside for public comment and questions. For further information, please contact Jenifer Simpson at aapdjenifer@aol.com or the TEITAC website.

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 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.

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

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