

On Target

Informing Indiana About
Disability Issues

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On Target is a monthly publication of the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities.

We welcome your suggestions for newsletter content and ideas concerning the actions of the Council. *On Target* is made available in accessible formats upon request.

Suellen Jackson-Boner
Executive Director

Christine Dahlberg
Associate Director

Paul Shankland
Grants Manager

2007 Disability Policy Seminar focused on opportunities

The 2007 Disability Policy Seminar, "New Congress, New Opportunities," took place March 4-6 in Washington, D.C., with 18 attendees from Indiana. Participants heard from leading public policy experts, disability advocates and association leaders about key policies and legislative initiatives important to Indiana, and put the seminar sessions into practice by visiting Capitol Hill to meet with Indiana legislative representatives.

Among 17 areas of focus, two key issues at the seminar included restoration of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

During the 109th Congress in 2006, H.R. 6258, or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Restoration Act of 2006, was introduced to clarify that Congress intended the ADA to be like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination "on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, and sex." However, the bill was not passed before the session ended.

No new ADA legislation has been introduced in the 110th Congress, but ADA supporters in the

Senate - Sens. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) - and in the House - Reps. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wisc.) and John Conyers (D-Mich.) - continue seeking support among their colleagues for legislation that will restore the ADA's integrity and Congress' intent. Once approved, the ADA Restoration Act will add new language to the ADA to prohibit discrimination "on the basis of a disability," focusing on the discrimination that people experience rather than focusing on their ability to prove that they have a disability.

The second area of discussion was SCHIP, which was established in 1997 to cover children who live in families with incomes above Medicaid eligibility levels, but who can't afford traditional insurance. Approximately 6.1 million children are currently enrolled in the SCHIP program or in SCHIP-financed Medicaid programs. However, census data shows that approximately 9 million children remain uninsured. To close this gap, Congress needs to complete reauthorization of SCHIP by Sept. 30, 2007, or no new federal funds will be made available to states. Since that would mean the loss of coverage for thousands of children, SCHIP reauthorization is the top health care priority for both the House and the Senate.

Michele Robb, a parent of children with disabilities and member of the current Partners in Policymaking class, was one of this year's seminar attendees. "During Partners in Policymaking, we were instructed on how to prepare and talk to our elected officials," said Robb. "When we visited Rep. Baron Hill at his office, he was genuinely interested in understanding the impact Medicaid waivers and special education services have on my children. He wanted to hear our opinions and asked us how we would solve these issues. I now understand how important it is for me to do my

part and help my elected officials make wise decisions that will affect the lives of individuals with disabilities."

To view the PowerPoint presentations for each session and issue-specific fact sheets, visit www.thearc.org, click on Public Policy, then click on 2007 Disability Policy Seminar.

Indiana workers need higher education to fight poverty

Hoosiers are hard workers, but still have trouble staying above the poverty line, according to a new study by the Indiana Institute for Working Families and the Indiana Coalition on Housing and Homeless Issues. Twenty-five percent of working families qualify as low-income - earning less than what it takes to support a family. This report suggests a link between the state's poverty level and poor education and workforce training.

Indiana's growing economy requires workers with knowledge of technology and postsecondary education. However, 55 percent of adults in low-income working families either failed to finish high school or only have a high school diploma or GED. Only 31 percent of Hoosiers between ages 24 and 54 have an associates degree or higher.

The lack of education results in fewer employment opportunities. Approximately one-third of Indiana workers lack the workforce literacy skills needed to succeed in today's economy, and about 21 percent are in low-wage jobs. Many Hoosiers receive inadequate benefits, with 30 percent of working families having at least one parent with no health insurance.

The Coalition recommends several state action steps for bettering education and employment opportunities. Visit www.ichhi.org for the full

report.

Indiana's legislative session nearly complete

As the second half of the legislative session continues, the following progress had been made on a number of bills affecting people with disabilities.

The most important piece of legislation, House Bill 1001, is the state's biennial budget bill. The bill recently received a hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee. Disability advocates are requesting that the budget passed by the House be changed to include a 5 percent increase in Medicaid funding. Discussion also included the 15,000 people waiting for services or Medicaid waivers and that funding must be made available to move these people into services. The savings from the closure of the Silvercrest and Fort Wayne centers was also mentioned as critical to helping fund more home- and community-based services.

Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Bob Meeks (R-LaGrange) stated that Medicaid funding would be increased by 5 percent as the Governor requested. He also supports having the money from the closing of Fort Wayne and Silvercrest remain in the system for people with developmental disabilities. Once the Senate Appropriations Committee releases its version of the budget bill, it will move to the Senate floor for a vote. If passed, the bill will move back to the House, where the differences between the two bills will be reconciled.

Senate Bill 94 would change language throughout Indiana statutes that refers to individuals with disabilities to "people-first" language. Introduced by Sen. Sue Landske (R-Cedar Lake), and now sponsored by Rep. Trent Van Haften (D-

Evansville), the bill was passed by the Senate, voted unanimously out of the House committee and has moved to the House Floor for consideration.

Senate Bill 503 was passed by the Senate and heard by the House Public Health Committee on March 28. SB 503 establishes the Healthier Indiana Insurance Program, which will provide more affordable health care coverage to Hoosiers, including those who are uninsured. The mental health community is currently lobbying that mental health parity be a priority in the bill. Mental health parity requires that if a group health plan has a maximum dollar limitation for mental health benefits, it cannot be lower than the plan's dollar limitation for medical and surgical benefits.

House Bill 1428 would require every school corporation police officer to successfully complete training on autism and Asperger Syndrome. Introduced by Rep. Mike Murphy (R-Indianapolis), the bill was amended on second reading to allow a governing body to adjourn its schools to allow teachers, school administrators or paraprofessionals to participate in a basic or in-service course of education and training on autism. The bill passed unanimously out of the House and has moved to the Senate where it is being sponsored by Sen. Teresa Lubbers (R-Indianapolis).

Visit the General Assembly Web site at www.in.gov/legislative/session/draft_man.html to research bills of interest, view committee schedules, and watch videos of the House, Senate and key committees, including House Ways and Means.

Indiana cities recognized as disability-friendly

Indianapolis and Bloomington were honored as disability-friendly cities in the nationwide 2006 Accessible America Contest, sponsored by the National Organization on Disability. Both cities were top-10 finalists, recognized for offering people with disabilities ideal access to community life and services. This is Indianapolis' third year to be recognized.

"The city of Indianapolis has a lot to be proud of when it comes to inclusion," said Mayor Bart Peterson. Last year the city offered networking opportunities and a job fair for people with disabilities and helped pass an ordinance that promotes contracting opportunities for business owners with disabilities.

Indianapolis has several items on this year's agenda to advance disability services:

- The Mayor's Summit on Inclusive Employment is scheduled for fall 2007 and will include a job fair and disability networking day.
- The Mayor's Advisory Council on Disabilities will work with businesses and jobseekers to produce an employer resource guide that provides disability resources information.
- The Mayor's Office of Disability Affairs will include people with disabilities in city-wide emergency planning.
- Other efforts include working with the Marion County Clerk to promote voter accessibility, and producing a video to educate construction contractors on using ramps that conform to ADA standards.

Bloomington is also disability-friendly. "Bloomington is totally committed to facilitating the comprehensive involvement of citizens with disabilities in community life. Not only are we committed to our own citizens, we are also committed to sharing and demonstrating our

successes," said Mayor Mark Kruzan. "We are proud that our community promotes accessibility, communicates a welcoming attitude and promotes participation."

In the past year, Bloomington has promoted programs for Disability Awareness Month and Accessibility Awareness Month, as well as an Inclusive Recreation Program, which saw an increase in participation in 2006. Bloomington has published two books - "Hiring and Supporting People with Disabilities" and "Making Places of Public Accommodation Accessible to All" - which are available for free at www.bloomington.in.gov/accessible. The city also works with Ivy Tech Community College to conduct site inspections of existing businesses to ensure they are accessible.

Indiana receives grant for long-term care

Over the course of the next five years, a \$21 million federal grant will help senior citizens and people with disabilities in Indiana move out of nursing homes. The grant was awarded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to support home care, assisted living and other services needed to keep people in their homes and communities. The Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) received the grant to mark the success of a Division of Aging Program called Options, created to provide senior citizens and others with long-term care alternatives to nursing homes.

Decreasing the use of nursing homes is one of the major transformation goals for FSSA. In June of last year, FSSA announced it was implementing a 2003 Indiana law that required home- and community-based care be made as accessible as nursing-home care. Implementation of the law was delayed until last year because of

the high upfront costs.

The Options program was created in consultation with legislators, consumer advocates and the long-term care industry to offer senior citizens and people with disabilities equal access to all alternatives and raise public awareness of the variety of options. The program is intended to help these citizens choose the best long-term care alternatives for their specific circumstances. Long-term care options include home care, assisted living, congregate living, adult foster care and adult day services.

Visit www.in.gov/fssa/elderly/options for more information.

Second Vision Expo to be held at Indiana State Library

On April 28, the second annual Vision Expo will be held at the Indiana State Library, 140 N. Senate Ave., in Indianapolis. Co-sponsored by the Talking Book and Braille Library and Easter Seals Crossroads, the expo will showcase adaptive equipment available to people who are visually impaired. Persons with vision loss, their friends and families, service providers, educators, healthcare professionals, librarians, and other consumers interested in products and services designed to promote independent living are encouraged to attend.

The event, which is scheduled for 10 a.m.-4 p.m., will feature representatives from companies that offer adaptive equipment, as well as service and resource information from non-profit and state agencies. Visitors can gather information, see demonstrations and gain hands-on experience with various products.

Also, several vision-related topics will be discussed. At 11 a.m., Richard Windsor from The

Low Vision Centers of Indiana will present "Breakthrough Technologies in Low Vision: Present and Future." At 1:30 p.m., a panel of speakers, including representatives from Easter Seals Crossroads and Bosma Industries, will present "Real World Employment Issues . . . A Panel Discussion."

For more information, call (317) 232-0609 (voice), (800) 622-4970 (toll free) or visit www.Indianavisionexpo.org.

Vote May 8

Remember to cast your ballot in Indiana's primary election May 8. For a listing of polling places near you, visit www.indianavoters.com and click on Find Polling Place. Or, call the Indiana Secretary of State's Office at (317) 232-6531 (voice).

Of Note

Updated Medicaid waiver guide available

The "Consumer Guide to Indiana Medicaid Waivers - Home and Community Based Waiver Services Programs, Fourth Edition: March 2007" is now available. This recently revised version contains 46 pages of information to help people with disabilities and their families understand Indiana's Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Waiver Program, as well as a variety of other services funded by programs in Indiana. The services available, application process, how to choose a provider, what to do if there are problems and additional resources are all topics covered in the guide. If you would like a print copy, send your name, address and quantity desired to bwade@gpcpd.org, call (317) 232-7770 (voice) or fax the information to (317) 233-3712. To download a copy, visit

www.in.gov/gpcpd and click on Publications.

Last chance to submit DAM evaluations

If you ordered disability awareness month materials or participated in an activity, please submit your completed evaluation form to Kim Dennison at (317) 631-6499 (fax) or 47 S. Pennsylvania St., Suite 500, Indianapolis, IN, 46204. Those returned by April 15 will be entered into a prize drawing.

FSSA names new Medicaid director

Dr. Jeff Wells has been named director of the Office of Medicaid Policy and Planning by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA). Wells, who previously worked with FSSA Secretary Mitch Roob on health information technology, will oversee a budget of \$5.2 billion that funds medical services to more than 800,000 children and pregnant women from low income families, the elderly and people with disabilities.

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Indiana Governor's
Council for People with Disabilities
150 West Market Street, Suite 628
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

(317) 232-7770 voice
(317) 232-7771 TT
E-mail: GPCPD@gpcpd.org

Web site: www.state.in.us/gpcpd