



Winter 2006

Council Connection

FIVE-YEAR STATE PLAN GUIDES COUNCIL'S WORK

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

"I simply posted my concern on the Family NET Works list serve and quickly heard from people who had all the information I needed."



After several attempts to get an adaptable swing for her son at a local park, Jennifer Bishop turned to the Family NET Works list serve.

(read more on page 7)

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, which is 100% federally funded, is required by federal law to develop a State Plan every five years to guide our work. The Council completed its 2007-2011 five-year State Plan this summer and received approval from the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities to implement the plan.

The State Plan was developed after the Council solicited and reviewed public input through forums, key informant interviews and surveys. The plan is comprehensive and reflects the Council's commitment to building inclusive communities that welcome and support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Goals in the plan represent the priorities the Council intends to focus its staff and members' time on and invest its financial resources in. The goals include systems change, capacity building and advocacy activities that will result in measurable outcomes in these areas: inclusive education and child care; self-advocacy, community supports, health, transportation, employment, housing, and recreation.

To review the entire plan, visit the Council's website at www.md-council.org.



The MDDC came together for its 2006 Annual Retreat and finalized the State plan for 2007-2011. The attending members and staff each brought in an object to represent what qualities they bring to the group. An array of creative and unique items was gathered mirroring the diversity of the Council.

NEW LEADERSHIP WELCOMED BY THE MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Hello, my name is Liz Weintraub and I am writing this not only to introduce myself as the new chair of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, but to tell you what I hope to help the Council accomplish over the next two years. I would like to acknowledge and thank Jeff Rives for his wonderful leadership since 2004.

I am very proud of the Council because they have selected me, a person with a developmental disability, to be the chair. They have also selected Tom Webb, who has a developmental disability as well, to be the vice-chair.

There have been a lot of exciting things happening in the state, although there are many things that need to be worked on. For example, I would like to see the state of Maryland encourage all schools in Maryland to include all students in school life, that means both educational and after school activities.

One of the things that I am proud to say is that I have never lived in a place like Rosewood or the Holly Center, although that's not the case for some of my friends. Like the Council, it's my hope by the end of my term, that at least one of the centers will be closed. Of course I would be thrilled if Maryland would have no institutions open. Like the Council, I believe that all people regardless of their disability *can* and, *should* live in the community. I believe this because everyone deserves the right to live, work and play with everyone else in the community.

I am active in self advocacy both in the state and on the national level. I have just completed several terms in various officer positions with People on the Go, the statewide self advocacy organization. In the nineties, I was the vice president of Self Advocates Becoming Empowered, the national self advocacy organization. When I became



Liz Weintraub
Council Chairperson



Thomas Webb
Council Vice-Chairperson

involved in SABE, I strengthened my self advocacy skills.

The Council funds many projects with a focus on self-advocacy. Projects such as the Youth Empowerment Alliance — teaches youth and young adults about self-determination and leadership so that people with developmental disabilities will learn to advocate for themselves at an early age and eventually lead lives of their choosing.

I work for the Council on Quality & Leadership (CQL) as a quality enhancement specialist. My duties include training and consultation to different agencies around the country that support, people with disabilities, on how to include people in all areas of life. I also participate on accreditation reviews to make sure services are how people with disabilities would like them to be.

My husband and I have been married since the spring of 2005 and both of us are very committed to living the life we choose.

It is my hope that I can help the Maryland DD Council help other people understand that all people,

regardless of their disability, should get the support that they want and need to live in the community.

I look forward to the next two years of working with the Council and the community to make Maryland a great state for people with disabilities.

The Council recently revised its policies and procedures for applying for:

- **Unsolicited grant funds**
- **Small grants (\$2500 or less)**
- **Funds to attend conferences**

To view the policies visit,
www.md-council.org/funding.

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUES...

The Council has continued its efforts to improve inclusive child care opportunities for children with developmental disabilities and special health care needs. In early spring, a focus group was held with key organizational personnel from MSDE, the Office of Child Care, Maryland Committee for Children, and our local partners who are experts in caring for children with disabilities and special health care needs: Project Act (*All Children Together*), and PACT (*Parents and Children Together*).

As the focus group discussed the need for additional resources, on-site training, and mentoring of child care providers the lack of available child care for children with disabilities and special health care needs on the Eastern Shore became more apparent. While inclusive child care continues to be a statewide issue, the need for child care was thought to be particularly acute in this rural region of our state based upon input from both professionals and parents.

The Council in partnership with stakeholders in Wicomico County, Project Act and PACT designed a funding initiative to target the particular need and population of the Eastern Shore. In November of this year, the Council approved two years of funding for an inclusive child care initiative, titled "Project Include Me," that will support child care providers in Wicomico County in caring for children with developmental disabilities in typical child care settings. A typical child care setting is defined as center based or home based care, a before and/or after-school program, a summer camp or anywhere that a child without a disability would attend.

This initiative will allow the Wicomico County Local Management Board to act as the lead agent in administering funds to support child care providers



with specialized training, on-site consultation, and/or equipment, modifications and adaptations. A Project Coordinator will help initiate and facilitate collaboration among resources, and help allocate funds necessary for providers to successfully include children with developmental disabilities in their child care settings.

The process of developing "Project Include Me" has already garnered interest and excitement among a variety of child care stakeholders in Wicomico County including: the regional Developmental Disabilities Administration, the local Infants and Toddlers Program, the Wicomico County Board of Education, Wicomico County Parks and Recreation, several local child care directors, and child care licensing staff.

"Project Include Me" will start in January 2007 with an informational kick-off session to bring stakeholders and resources together, and to inform and engage area child care providers about the initiative.

For more information about "Project Include Me" please contact Michelle Hart at **410-767-3786** or michelleh@md-council.org or Lori Thompson from Wicomico County Board of Education at **410-677-5250** or lthompso@wboe.org.

The Council released a RFP in the area of Education entitled, *Transition Model for Students with Developmental Disabilities*. The intent of the RFP is to develop and demonstrate an effective, meaningful transition process that maximizes self-determination for students with disabilities who are exiting public schools. This process is expected to lead to greater access to opportunities that exist in the community and the adult world for those exiting high school. The Council is currently in the process of reviewing proposals for the project that is scheduled to begin some time in September.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE (YEA)

New Website / Mini-Grants Update

The YEA, a project of the Council, promotes various projects that encourage independence and leadership skills in youth and young adults with disabilities throughout the State.

YEA IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE ITS NEW WEBSITE!



The website can be accessed through www.mdtransition.org. Just click on the YEA logo and you will enter the *youth friendly site*. The focus of the website is to provide information for youth to help them make informed choices about their future.

The home page of the website features stories from five youth/young adults describing how they deal with everyday life issues while transitioning from school to the adult world. The stories are from the youths' point of view, they are short, to the point and easy to relate to. The website also features conference information, training announcements and engaging social activities occurring in the community.

Look for our newest newsletter entitled *“Assistive Technology: Big Words, But a Simple Idea”* on our website under **Things to Read** (www.mdtransition.org).

YEA MINI-GRANTS UPDATE

The YEA project has funded three additional mini-grants to promote the inclusion of youth and young adults with developmental disabilities in support groups, organizations and leadership programs in Baltimore, Montgomery and Howard Counties.

Commitment to Service Initiative (CSI) – CSI is an innovative, teen-led service project offered through the Jewish Volunteer Connection (JVC). The project funded by YEA joined 16 teens into 8 mentorship pairs; each pair consisted of a youth with a disability and a youth without a disability. The pairs provided support and training to each other as they participated in volunteer projects of the CSI. The grant project also developed materials and provided training for additional youth and staff members involved in the volunteer projects. The mentorship will continue into next year, sponsored by the JVC.

Youth, Government and Leadership Grant – In Maryland the YMCA offers a leadership program for teens, entitled “Youth and Government.” The local Howard County YMCA and its grant partners are currently in the process of modifying the Youth & Government curriculum to meet the needs of staff on how to incorporate youth with disabilities into the program. The goal is to pilot the new curriculum for the 2007 Youth and Government Legislative Session held in Annapolis. The modified curriculum will then be made available to all YMCA’s participating in the Youth & Government Program throughout the State for the 2008 Legislative Session. (Grant Partners: YMCA-Howard County, Howard County Down Syndrome Resource Network, the Howard County Autism Society, and Shared Support, Inc.)

Arts on the Block (AOB) – The AOB is an apprenticeship program for youth provided by Montgomery County Career Transition Center, Inc., in collaboration with Montgomery County Public Schools. The YEA mini-grant provided an opportunity for youth with disabilities to be included in this unique six-week program by providing training and support for the instructors. The instructors, who are highly skilled in art and business practices, guided the youth in creating a commissioned mosaic and developing a business and marketing plan for their product. The program promotes self-advocacy skills through teaching communication and presentation skills, problem solving, critical thinking and team building skills. The AOB will continue to promote the inclusion of youth with disabilities in this one of a kind apprenticeship program.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE (YEA)

Training Opportunities

YEA-LEADERSHIP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The YEA has developed a forty-hour Leadership Training Program to enable youth to successfully transition from school to the adult world. The program uses a peer-to-peer training team, which consists of a professional, a youth with a disability, and a youth without a disability. The trainings use a hands-on approach which keeps participants engaged in the learning process.

The Leadership Training Program has 4 modules:

Self-advocacy/Self-determination, Employment, Finding & Accessing Community Resources, and Increased Involvement in the IEP Process.

TWO opportunities for youth to participate in the Leadership Training Program:

Module 1: “Self-advocacy/Self-determination” will be offered at the “*New Tools; New Connections*” conference on January 20, 2007. Space is very limited, so register early! For more information visit, www.ddamaryland.org/training or www.thearcmd.org/events.

Module 4: “Increased Involvement in the IEP Process”

will be offered at Harford Community College as part of their Non-credit class schedule. (The class will run from February through April 2007)

Contact Ann Marie Lane for more information at **410-937-4957** or email AnnMarieL@md-council.org.



Sponsored by a grant from the YEA, The Arc of Baltimore in collaboration with Baltimore City Public Schools and local colleges will develop a mentorship program for 10 youth with disabilities. For more information contact **Joseph Anastasio at The Arc of Baltimore** at **410-296-2272** or Janastasio@arcofbaltimore.org.

FAMILY NET WORKS - Spreading the word about inclusion!

Family NET Works, a project of the Council, is replicating an inclusion speaker series titled, “Journey to Inclusion.” The series began in September 2006 and will be running through the spring of 2007. The development of the series was a collaborative effort between Family NET Works, (F.O.C.U.S) For Our Children and Ourselves, and the Arc of Northern Chesapeake along with parents from Frederick and Montgomery counties. National and local speakers will be addressing an array of inclusive issues that cover an individual’s lifespan. The goal is to spread information on how to make inclusion a reality in all aspects of community life regardless of disability or age. Starting in January the inclusion topics will include: Strategies for Challenging Behaviors, Writing Inclusive IEP Goals, Transition, College and Employment. For more information or to locate a series near you please visit, www.family-networks.org.

Project Ride



“Project Ride has given me the opportunity to travel places where I have never been before...the chance to meet new people and be around others in my community.”

- Robert Finkbinder -

Transportation that is both accessible and reliable continues to be one of the major barriers for people with developmental disabilities. Project Ride is addressing these barriers—one successful person at a time. Project Ride is a statewide initiative designed to increase public transportation opportunities for people with developmental disabilities, cognitive disabilities and communication impairments. The project is administered by SEEC and funded by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council with support from the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriot Foundation. An advisory committee composed of transit providers, service agency staff, people with developmental disabilities, family members and government agencies is overseeing the project.

During its first year Project Ride developed a detailed travel training curriculum to train people with developmental disabilities on how to safely use fixed route systems. Project Ride also conducted “Train the Trainer” workshops for service providers giving them the comprehensive tools they need to support people with disabilities in achieving their individual transportation goals. In addition, Project Ride provided sensitivity and support trainings for transit personnel and station attendants from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Project Ride has also made disability specific improvements to the employee training manuals and programs for Ride On, a transportation service for Montgomery County, and WMATA. Project Ride is looking forward to incorporating its curriculum into many other transit programs across the state, increasing rider ship for people with developmental disabilities, as well as supplying transit personnel with natural supports to foster inclusion in and among transportation systems.

Project Ride’s comprehensive website includes information on various transportation meetings throughout the state of Maryland, current resources and “Train the Trainer” opportunities for service agencies. To participate in a transportation survey, join an interactive forum or simply download transportation programs and supports please visit, www.freedomtransit.org.

“ONE Person Makes a Difference for Many”

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



(Nathaniel playing at Linkwood Park with his brother Theo.)

“I like the fact that making a fuss over the Linkwood playground ended up in getting adapted swings in other playgrounds too...bringing Baltimore City up to speed.”

**- Jennifer Bishop -
(parent)**

Jennifer Bishop wanted the opportunity to take both of her children to play at Linkwood Park, a community playground within walking distance from her home. However, her youngest son Nathaniel was in need of an adapted swing which was not available. When Jennifer contacted Recreation and Parks she was told that adapted swings were a safety hazard and that it would be impossible to have one placed at Linkwood Park. Next she turned to a representative from a local construction company. The representative had a similar response but could not cite a specific code that would keep the swing from being installed. Jennifer was told, “Special needs swings belong in special needs playgrounds” and was advised to take her son to a playground specifically for disabled children.

Unwilling to accept these answers Jennifer posted her problem on the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council’s Family NET Works list serve. Other members of the list serve quickly put her in contact with two Therapeutic Recreational Specialists who helped her advocate for Nathaniel. A list serve member also provided a contact for the Mayor’s Commission on Disabilities and Jennifer submitted a request for the swing in writing. As a result of Jennifer’s advocacy, Recreation and Parks placed not only one, but two swings at Linkwood Park. Jennifer now enjoys walking her whole family to the park where they can play together.

The Mayor’s Commission on Disabilities not only thanked Jennifer and the Recreational Specialists for making them aware of the playground issue, they will be installing more adaptable swings throughout Baltimore City parks. Jennifer Bishop’s persistence, with the help of other parents and advocates she reached through Family NET Works, created a lasting change within the Recreation and Parks system for many families to come. Proving that one person really can make a difference.

The Maryland

Developmental

Disabilities Council

advocates for

public policy and

supportive practices

and opportunities

that promote the

full inclusion of

all people with

developmental

disabilities in

community life.





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NEWS YOU CAN USE

New Tools: New Connections Conference

Learn more about Self-determination, waiver programs and much more!!!

When: January 19-20, 2007 Where: Holiday Inn, College Park, MD

For more information visit, www.ddmaryland.org or www.thearcmd.org or call **1-888-272-3449**.



For help with the most frequently asked questions about employment as it relates to individuals with disabilities, visit The Maryland WorkFORCE Promise website at www.mdworkforcepromise.org/businesses.html. You will find a series of fact sheets developed by The National Education Center for businesses on accommodations in the work place.



Maryland's State Department of Education recently released a new LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) Workgroup Report, aimed at improving LRE practices among local school systems.

To view the report, visit MSDE's website at www.marylandpublicschools.org.
If you need assistance in obtaining a copy of the report, please contact MSDE's Division of Special Education/Early Intervention & Preschool Services Branch at **410-767-0858**.