



COMMUNICATIONS

Joan C. Barnish
Director of Communications
Phone: (860) 418-6044
Cell: (860) 250-7596
joan.barnish@ct.gov

DDS Launches New Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness Training for Staff and Connecticut Families

(Hartford) - The Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) recently unveiled its new Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness Video Training Program. The first of its kind in the country, the training is designed to standardize the education of 15,000 public and private employees as well as assist over 20,000 families and consumers in the state with fire prevention and safety procedures.

The Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness program was made possible through an Assistance to Firefighters "Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program" administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This was developed in cooperation with the Connecticut Fire Academy and the University of Connecticut Health Center. The video training was designed to train staff through an on-line video course that is accessible on the DDS website at www.ct.gov/dds and through the department's on-line College of Direct Support Training Curriculum.

"This program is designed to advance awareness and educate all of the stakeholders whose health and safety depend on a practical understanding of the dangers of fire and other hazardous emergencies," said DDS Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. "The program enhances our consumers', families', staffs' and first responder' awareness of assisting individuals with disabilities during emergencies. We are extremely grateful to have the support of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program through FEMA."

Over the past nine months, DDS Director of Quality Management Daniel Micari, DDS Fire Chief Timothy Baldwin and Ct. Fire Academy Public Education Coordinator Alan Zygmunt developed the six-part course from the department's newly revised Fire Safety Guidelines. The training focuses on Fire Prevention, Utilizing Local Resources and Fire Emergencies, Other Emergencies such as hurricanes, development of Site Specific Plans and Evacuation Drills and Practical Skills which provide examples of assisting individuals with a disability during an emergency.

In addition to the employee training videos, DDS unveiled a Fire Safety Training for individuals and families served by the department. Also, available on the DDS website, the video assists consumers in basic fire prevention, preparing for an emergency and using R.A.C.E., Remove, Alert, Confine and Extinguish. As part of the program for families, over 10,000 DDS consumers will be

receiving a “File of Life” magnet for their refrigerators. The “File of Life” is a voluntary program designed to help local first responders to quickly obtain in an emergency, necessary medical history, support needs, and emergency contact information about the occupants in a family home or individual apartment. Included in the file, is a medical form that can be updated every six months with the most important information.

Both the employee and family Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness Videos are available to view through all public libraries and fire departments in Connecticut as well as through the Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) regional offices.

For more information or to view the video training, please visit the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) website at www.ct.gov/dds or for any questions, please e-mail the DDS at dds.firesafety@ct.gov.