



Published by the Connecticut Department of Mental Retardation

Governor M. Jodi Rell | Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara | Deputy Commissioner Kathryn duPree

University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine and Department of Mental Retardation Announce New Partnership

The University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine in partnership with the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) recently announced the Collaborative Dental Fellowship Program that will provide additional services to special needs consumers.

The UCONN Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency Program already manages a significant number of adults with developmental disabilities and with this new fellowship program, the school will be able to provide services for an additional 72 operating room cases and 990

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(left to right) Robert Wood, FORConn, Karen Hlavac, FORConn, Dr. Peter Deckers, Executive Vice-President University of Connecticut Health Center, Dr. Peter Robinson, Dean of University of Connecticut Health Center School of Dental Medicine, Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara, State Representative Peggy Sayers and State Representative Jack Malone.

Bilingual Case Managers Hold Forums for Latino Families

Since January of 2006, the Spanish speaking bilingual case managers, statewide, have come together to provide DMR information in Spanish to support our Latino consumers and families. Several family workshops have been held across the state to address recent departmental changes and to give Latino families a forum to ask questions.

"The collaborative efforts of our case managers is a display of commitment, conviction and inspiration in serving Latino families in a culturally competent way," said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. "Case managers take pride in making sure all of our families receive the guidance they need in understanding our services that enhance their lives."

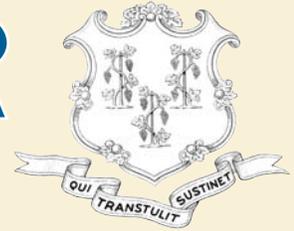


(left to right) Cheryl Sousa, South Region Case Manager; Alex Montalvo, Case Manager Supervisor; Assistant Regional Director Christine Rich; Regional Director Mary McKay; Assistant Regional Director Mayri Caple and Maria Rodriguez-Colon, Case Manager hosted Latino Family Night at the New Haven Office.

Commissioner O'Meara, Regional Directors and staff attended the Family Workshops held in East Hartford, Norwich, New Haven and Waterbury. Another one is being planned for 2007 in Bridgeport. If you would like any additional information, please contact your case manager.

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Private Provider Organizations Advocate for Increased Funding

The Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA) recently held a press conference at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford to address the issue of funding to the private community provider healthcare network.

The CCPA is an association that represents providers who serve consumers from the Department of Social Services, Department of Children and Families, Department of Mental Retardation, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Board of Education and Services for the Blind, Department of Public Health, Children's Trust Fund, Department of Correction and the Judicial Department.

Pam Fields, Executive Director Arc of Meriden-Wallingford, said, "We are dealing with a fragile population who depend on a consistent regime of care to get through each day. Funding patterns that are not predictable have a negative affect on our ability to retain staff, which has a direct impact on client care."

The State Council on Mental Retardation Chairman Stuart Brown said, "The Council has been very concerned with the pay discrepancy private sector nonprofit employees earn in comparison to the wages public employees receive. Connecticut depends upon its private sector nonprofits to care for over 80% of our citizens with mental retardation."

"The Council feels funding local private sector nonprofit agencies is the most cost-effective way to ensure consistency and quality care for our citizens with mental retardation. We have written to the governor and key members of the state legislature urging them to address the inadequacies in pay rates between the public and private sector employees," continued Mr. Brown.

The CCPA, working with other provider associations, is making a two-part request to address funding issues. The first would be budget increases in FY08 and FY09 of 7% and 5% respectively and the second is the creation of consistent funding streams that provide adequate cost of living increases in future years.

A Message From Commissioner O'Meara



Commissioner
Peter H. O'Meara

Certainly, as we review the past year, the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) and our partners take great pride as we review our accomplishments.

Our Waiting List Initiative continues to help enhance

the lives of many of our caregivers over the age of 65 and others with critical needs. In the past 2 years, over 360 families have been served from the list. In addition, we were able to offer additional supports to over 100 families a year.

Respite Services continue to be an important part of our families' lives. We opened our eleventh center this fall and are in the development process for the twelfth. The centers are conveniently located throughout the state and served over 1,400 families this past year.

In June 2006, we embarked on a major Safety Awareness Campaign. The campaign, *Be Aware-Be Safe*, focused on transportation, eating and environmental safety for consumers served by the department. In addition, in September, the department began an employee safety campaign, which emphasizes safety in the workplace for our colleagues.

Out of respect and dignity for the people we serve, the department and the state legislature passed legislation to solicit input regarding the potential name change of the agency. Sensitive to people's feelings on the negative connotation of the term, "mental retardation," we held a

public forum to listen to recommendations from our advocates and consumers. The department will compile all of the findings and will submit a report to Governor Rell and the state legislature in January 2007.

The department continues to be a national leader in our self-directed supports program. This past year, over 500 individuals made choices for their supports and in November, the department was one of only six states presenting its initiative at the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services conference in Virginia.

In late August, Governor Rell signed into law the Autism Spectrum Disorder Pilot Program bill, which will provide a coordinated system of supports and services, including case management for up to 50 adults with autism who do not have mental retardation and are not eligible for DMR services.

The DMR Fiscal Year 2007 budget is over 866 million dollars. This generous commitment from Governor Rell and the state legislature has enabled us to provide service to over 19,000 individuals. Additionally, during the last fiscal year, DMR-operated programs generated \$337 million dollars in federal reimbursement to the State of Connecticut, a 138% increase from the \$141 million generated in Fiscal Year 1995.

Critical to our success are the state and private sector employees who perform thousands of acts of kindness everyday. The level of resources our governor and legislature have made available to us ranks among the highest in the nation. It is our collective responsibility to assure those resources translate into a dignified and rewarding life for those we serve.

Finally, as we begin the year 2007, we look forward to continuing to serve our consumers and their families and consider it a privilege to be a part of your lives.

West Region Update

Focus on Spruce Brook Family Respite Center

Spruce Brook Family Respite Center in Southbury opened in July 2005 and since then has been in high demand by West Region families. The home located on a quiet country road offers a unique setting for our consumers. An older cape with hardwood floors, the center can accommodate up to six guests at a time. The center is wheelchair accessible, however it is not equipped as a Medical Respite Center. A nurse is available for consultations if required by the staff at anytime. Families may apply to Torrington Family Respite Center or Ella Grasso Center in Stratford if a guest has a need for special medical attention.

If you would like to utilize the center, please contact your case manager for a referral or pre-visit. Jean Gorse, Spruce Brook Family Respite Center Supervisor will contact you to arrange your pre-visit. Any questions regarding the West Region Respite Centers you may contact the Respite Coordinator Jacquelyn Quesnel-Fisher at 203-805-7436

Cultural Competence Training

Last October, the West Region Cultural Competence Committee hosted a training entitled, "Multicultural Misunderstanding." The keynote speaker Margaret Steinegger-Keyser is the Executive Director of Conflict Transformation in Hartford. A South African national, Ms. Steinegger-Keyser's training sessions combine an academic and grass roots approach to conflict resolution and peace building. The training session was attended by approximately 90 staff from DMR and the private provider community.

The presentation included various approaches to handling conflict, negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration and litigation. It emphasized the need for "deep listening" and walking "in another person's shoes" in order to change conflicted situations into sustainable, productive relationships.

Self Advocates Conference Held

"The Fifth Annual Self-Advocates Conference on Personal Health and Well-Being" was held in Fall 2006. There were 140 individuals participating in the event held at Sacred Heart Church in

Southbury. The Southbury Training School and West Region has sponsored this conference for the past five years. It provides participants with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of practices, habits and attitudes that contribute to a healthy and happy lifestyle. Participants also gained a better understanding of how to advocate for themselves through various workshops on being a self-advocate. The keynote speaker was Jamie Lazaroff, a self-advocate and an ambassador for Special Olympics.

"Advocates Taking Charge"

by Jossie Torres

The Waterbury Self-Advocacy group is alive and growing! The group meets every other Monday at 250 Freight Street, Waterbury from 5:30–7:00 pm. Recently, the group voted to organize themselves and elect officers for the next two years. We are very proud to have: Bertha Adams, President; Thomas Sapota, Vice President; Steve Marti, Secretary; Janet DeMato, Treasurer; Cheryl Sands, Cheryl Neelton and Beth Noll, Event Coordinators.

The group voted to officially name themselves, "Advocates Taking Charge." One would ask... "What are we taking charge of? – Our Lives!"

If you are interested in learning more about self-advocacy or joining the group, "Advocates Taking Charge," please contact Jossie Torres, Self-Advocate Coordinator at 203-806-8736.

West Region Self Advocate

(20 hrs./wk ~ minimum wage)

Employment Opportunity Out of Norwalk Office

Looking for an individual / consumer who:

- Enjoys advocating
- Enjoys speaking
- Can create and provide training
- Will talk and share their expertise with individuals and families about Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy.

If you're interested, please contact Beth Aura Miller, Self Determination Director, DMR, 250 Freight Street, Waterbury, CT by e-mail bethaura.miller@po.state.ct.us or by phone 203-805-7430.

North Region Update

Using Existing Residential Supports to Help Families Support Their Children At Home

Many families care for their children at home with minimal supports from the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). In today's society, most single or two-parent families have to work in order to make ends meet. Balancing the need to make a livelihood and support a child or adult with a disability can be challenging at best. Many schools and day programs do not have extended hours for parents who are working. This also can create significant challenges to both working a demanding job and providing supports to a loved one.

The North Region of DMR currently funds or directly operates approximately 500 Private and 58 Public Community Living Arrangements (CLA) spanning the Bristol/Canton area on the west to the Thompson/ Killingly area on the east. Group homes generally provide 24-hour supports to individuals, which may include psychological, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy services as well as direct care staff to assist individuals with activities of daily living. Many of the homes are accessible and able to provide supports to individuals who use adaptive equipment. During the day, the majority of individuals who live in group homes attend day programs in the community.

Since most group homes are staffed before and after work/school/day program hours of operation, they present unique opportunities to provide before and after work/school/day program support to individuals who live at home with their families. In order to safely receive such supports, you may be asked to complete a comprehensive respite application in order to ensure the group home has information about medications, adaptive equipment needs, food consistency, behavioral issues, etc. You may also be asked to complete a series of visits with your son or daughter to ensure optimal peer match and comfort with the environment.

Before and after-school respite in existing group homes can present opportunities for both individuals who live home and those who live in group homes to make new friends and engage in fun activities. In some circumstances, the group home staff may be able to provide transportation to or from work/school/day program sites depending on location. Such respite can also present opportunities for parents and caregivers to reduce stress and engage comfortably in full-time employment opportunities. If you would like more information about potential before and after-school respite opportunities in your neighborhood, please call your case manager or contact Brian Dion, Assistant Residential Director for private sector

services at 860-263-2495 or Thomas Dailey, Assistant Regional Director for public services, at 860-263-2570.

Student Interns

The North Region was fortunate to have 6 student interns from colleges such as Springfield College, UConn, Central Connecticut State University and St. Joseph's, who were eager to assist DMR while learning about the individuals we serve. They have participated in numerous activities designed to enhance the lives of our consumers and their families.

Maryrose McCarthy, a first year Masters of Social Work (MSW) student at Springfield College, presented a workshop to families with the help of Ann Tetreault, North Region Education Liaison and Mona Tremblay, North East Regional Coordinator of the Connecticut Family Support Network. The workshop was focused on holistic approaches to rehabilitation and wellness.

Noreen Wallace, an Occupational Therapist with 26 years of experience was the guest speaker at the Connecticut Family Support Network of North East Connecticut Parent's Group on Dec. 7, 2006 at the John Dempsey Center, Putnam, CT. Noreen presented a brief summary of practical ways to support individuals with disabilities including health and well being for learning, playing and resting using well proven methods that are often put aside in our fast paced lives.

Areas of food, water, developmental play activities and rituals for rest were discussed in a way that shed new light on old ideas. Families took advantage of this information right away in taking steps to insure their family's well being. Refreshments were provided by The Harvest Moon Health Food Store of Putnam, CT. If you would like additional information feel free to contact Maryrose McCarthy at 860-630-4006.

Two New Spanish Speaking Case Managers Join the North Region Team

The North Region Private Division has recently hired two case managers who speak Spanish. **Maria Rodriguez** is located at the Willimantic Office and can be reached at 860-456-3642. **Loida Rubin** is located at the East Hartford Office and can be reached at 860-263-2515. Both have been assigned consumers and families who are Latino. This will increase our ability to respond to Spanish speaking families and consumers in private residential services in each area of the region.

South Region Update

Certified Respite Provider and Family Gathering

Despite the wind and rain on November 8th, 2006, many families traveled across the region to Middletown to meet the region's Certified Respite Providers. Information about the program and a directory listing over 30 certified respite providers was handed out. Many of the certified respite providers were on hand to speak directly to families about their services. The region recruits and trains individuals to provide respite care to children and adults in the region. Prospective respite care providers complete an application, which includes a police background check, submitting a certificate of good health from their physician, three references for DMR to contact directly and a review of any current training that the prospective provider has. If there are additional training needs, the Region will assist in meeting those needs. Lastly, a face-to-face interview with the Region's Respite Services Coordinator takes place. Upon successful completion of all of the steps mentioned, the individual is certified to provide respite care. DMR then makes their contact information available to families who may interview and hire respite caregivers for their family member. Families may use DMR funding or private pay for the respite caregivers, who each negotiate their own hourly fees and conditions with families. To receive a directory of the South Region's Certified Respite Providers, contact david.goldner@po.state.ct.us or call 203-294-5050.

Quality Council

The South Region is actively seeking consumers, parents, guardians, family members or interested citizens to serve on the newly-formed Quality Council. This volunteer body will serve an important role in assisting the region to review the quality of services provided by DMR and our many partner agencies, and help us to assure that relevant information is easily available to consumers and families who are making choices about service providers. It is important to DMR that the voices and opinions of consumers and families are actively heard and considered. Our transition to individual budgets and portable resources gives individuals and families the opportunity to select programs and providers that best meets their needs. However, this also means that people need to have accurate information to make informed choices. The Quality Council will

work collaboratively with individuals, families, DMR staff and provider agencies to assist in the process of gathering and communicating important information and serving as a representative group of service recipients to advise DMR administrators on quality issues. Monthly meetings will be held at times and locations convenient to the members and interested parties may contact jadwiga.goclowski@po.state.ct.us or call 203-294-5048.

Hiring Your Own Staff

Choosing to directly hire the people that support you or your family member may seem like both a wonderful opportunity and a daunting task! By taking on the responsibility to recruit, hire, train, supervise and fire staff, consumers and families are exercising real self-direction. However, DMR recognizes that people need assistance in this endeavor and we are developing ways to assist. Some of our private agency partners offer "agency with choice," an option that allows you to interview and select staff while the private agency maintains all of the employment responsibilities. For those choosing to directly hire their own staff, the region will assign a support broker to assist you. The fiscal intermediary is also a resource to individuals and families dealing with employment issues such as payroll and insurance. DMR has recently published a guidebook titled, "An Introduction to Your Hiring Choices," and also joined a web service called www.rewardingwork.org, which contains resumes and job applications of people in Connecticut who are available to be hired as personal caregivers.

Brokers and family members will have access to this resource in order to assist people to recruit experienced and capable caregivers. The South Region will sponsor orientation sessions during the winter 2007 for individuals and families who are currently hiring their own staff or may be interested in this option in the future. Everyone is welcome to attend. Guidebooks will be handed out and DMR staff will review critical aspects of staff hiring and answer questions. To sign up for one of these sessions or get more information about hiring your own staff, please contact gregory.mcmahon@po.state.ct.us or call 203-294-5063.

University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine and Department of Mental Retardation Announce New Partnership

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outpatient clinic visits per year. These enhanced services will dramatically reduce the waiting time for dental care.

"Our partnership with the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine is a giant step towards helping our consumers and others with their dental needs," said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. "We are extremely grateful to Dr. Peter Deckers, Executive Vice-President University of Connecticut Health Center (UCHC) and Dr. Peter J. Robinson, Dean of the School of Dental Medicine and the Residency Program for their commitment to provide such quality services."

In fiscal year 2006, the School of Dental Medicine provided health care services to over 2,500 outpatient special needs patients, and 37 emergency and 79 operating room cases.

"The School of Dental Medicine is delighted to expand this opportunity of care to this most vulnerable population of patients who require highly skilled and knowledgeable clinicians to meet their needs," said Dean Robinson. "It is our hope that through this partnership that Connecticut will become a 'best practice' model for the rest of the nation in providing dental care for adult special needs patients."

In addition to the creation of the Dental Fellowship Program, DMR will hire a Coordinator of Dental Services who will work closely with UCONN and community providers to help increase accessibility to oral health care services, and recommend standards of dental care for consumers with mental retardation.

Advocacy... What is it?

Advocacy is a way for Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) families and guardians to have a voice in the agency's budget, programs, supports and services. Your voice is an important tool in determining the direction state government and the agency may take on various issues.

How can your voice be heard? There are a number of ways for families to advocate. The first is by offering "citizen input" at any of the following regularly scheduled meetings: DMR's Regional Family Advisory Councils; the Council on Mental Retardation; the Camp Harkness Advisory Committee; the Southbury Training School Board of Trustees and Home and School Association as well as many other boards associated with DMR private providers. For additional information, including meeting dates and times, visit the DMR website at; www.ct.gov/dmr or contact DMR regional offices listed on the back of Direct to Families.

An additional way to advocate is through the State Legislature starting with your state

representatives and state senators. You can identify who your elected officials are by visiting the website www.vote-smart.org/index.htm and entering your address. The blue pages of your telephone directory also lists state legislators.

Another useful resource for learning about state government and how it operates is the General Assembly website www.cga.ct.gov. You can learn how a bill becomes a law in Connecticut, track legislation, contact a legislator, determine a legislator's committee assignments and find details about public hearings and committee meetings.

Finally, remember the most persuasive and effective advocate is one who conveys his or her message in an honest, accurate and prepared way. Who better than you, a family member or guardian of an individual with mental retardation, to start advocating? Our commissioners and your state legislators appreciate hearing directly from you regarding what programs are working well in state government and those that you may feel need enhancing.

Direct to Families

Department of Mental Retardation
460 Capitol Ave
Hartford, CT 06106

*We Walk Together
Over the Span
of a Lifetime...*

DMR and Partners in Protection Host Conference

Connecticut's Department of Mental Retardation (DMR), Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (OPA) recently held the first "Partners in Protection" Conference in Meriden.

Working in unison since 2002, the three state agencies have collaborated over the years to investigate abuse and neglect allegations for individuals with mental retardation served by the DMR.

"We appreciate all of our partners and what they give to our families," said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. "We have been so fortunate to have the support of both the Connecticut State Police and the Office of Protection and Advocacy who place a high premium on the protection of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens."



(left to right) department of Mental Retardation (DMR) Director of Investigations State Police Captain Michael Woodson; Dr. Henry Lee, Chief Emeritus, Connecticut Department of Public Safety (DPS); DPS Commissioner Leonard C. Boyle; Connecticut Chief Medical Examiner Dr. H. Wayne Carver; Chief State's Attorney Kevin Kane and (DMR) Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

Over 250 abuse and neglect investigators from DMR and OPA, their supervisors and representatives from all of the state's social service Departments, law enforcement agencies, self advocates, the State Council on Mental Retardation and private agency administrators attended the day long seminar.