

The **2013 General Assembly** did not give us any budget relief. The the biennial budget for FY2014 - FY2015 annualized the Governor's cuts to DDS services. The capital bond bill provides Grants-in-aid, not exceeding a total of \$20,000,000, for private, nonprofit health and human service organizations for alterations, renovations, improvements, additions and new construction. The bills that would have interfered with DDS operations or infringe the civil rights of individuals who live with intellectual disabilities did NOT pass, thankfully.

The **2014 General Assembly** will convene on Wednesday, February 5, 2014. This will be short midterm session with likely adjustments to the current budget. The State Comptroller has expressed concern that sales tax revenues are falling short of projections while the current budget is balanced with a thin margin of less than 1% - so we should be prepared, again, for midterm budget cuts. As in previous years, the Comptroller will probably not reveal any deficit until after the elections in November. ***NOW is the time to meet your state legislators*** - before they are in session. Meet for coffee sometime and introduce your state legislators to your family member who lives with intellectual disabilities.

DDS has unveiled the **new uniform rate setting methodology for Individual Home Supports** (IHS). You can view it at: http://www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/operations_center/2013/ihs_presentation_5_14_13.pdf In the new system, an individual's Level of Need (LON) will determine the maximum number of hours to be provided to the person, and providers will be paid uniform rates. If you have questions about how this will affect your individual plan and budget, contact your DDS caseworker. Stay tuned for announcements of more new Residential Rates.

The Family Empowerment Task Force and other groups have organized several **Creative Housing Forums** where parents and guardians can gather to share ideas and information about residential solutions for our family members who live with intellectual disabilities. The DDS South Regional Advisory Council has sponsored a series of such forums and you can learn more about them through April Dipollina or the South RAC at (203) 294-5053. The DDS North RAC held a **World Cafe for Creative Housing** in May and the Connecticut Down Syndrome Congress hosted a World Cafe for Creative Housing in September. All types of housing were discussed: apartments, single-family homes, self-contained communities, integrated housing, cottage and farming industries, assisted living – to name a few. **Creative housing ideas** included: connecting and partnering among families; combining finances and sharing staff and expenses; housemates; using social media and technology to make connections among families; using natural supports; interns; peers; support from civic organizations, and parent groups. All the notes and summaries were shared with the North Region Director of DDS. There was also a call from several participants for all parents to be more visible to the legislature especially during the budget process. A description of the events and notes that were gleaned from them are posted on our website at <http://family-empowerment.weebly.com/projects.html> .

DDS has created a Shared Living Committee from discussions that began in the rate setting committee. A Shared Living service would provide personal care and support services to one or more individuals who reside in a private home by a principal caregiver who lives with them in the home. The service could be provided through a qualified agency or self-directed, i.e. the individual may hire their own qualified individual practitioner. For more information contact Amy Blazawski in the DDS North Region.

The **Personal Care Attendant Workforce Council** has been meeting regularly since December 2011 to implement Public Act 12-33, which requires private personal care attendants to collectively bargain with the state. (Read the history at <http://qualityhomecareworkforce.weebly.com>) For several months the Council has met in Executive Session for collective bargaining with no votes taken and no action. The next meeting is scheduled for October 18, 2013. Minutes are posted at <http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/cwp/view.asp?a=3997&q=499272>

For more information about upcoming events, check our groups on Yahoo or Facebook – or send an email to family-empowerment@comcast.net

Join us on the Internet

Website: <http://family-empowerment.weebly.com>

Facebook: CT DDS Family Empowerment Task Force

Yahoo: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/family-empowerment/>

Email: family-empowerment@comcast.net

Support the FETF

You may support the FETF with a donation to our fiscal agent, Raising Voices for Action, Inc. Make your check payable to Raising Voices for Action, Inc. and please note on the check that it is for the FETF. Mail your donations to the FETF, 17 C Woodland Street, Vernon, CT 06066.

About the FETF

The Family Empowerment Task Force (FETF) is an informal, unincorporated, organization of parents, siblings, guardians, caregivers and self-advocates that works to sustain, enhance and grow the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) that are offered by DDS through its private provider network by: 1) Developing a supportive network of families and individuals who receive services; 2) Educating families about DDS services; and 3) Educating legislators and public officials about the needs of families.