

## News

The 2012 Connecticut General Assembly convened on February 8 and adjourned on May 9. Highlights of the 2012 session included:

The **budget for DDS** did not suffer the significant midterm budget reductions that had been proposed late last year. The budget passed by the legislature maintains funding for our community based residential and day programs and it includes a 1% COLA for private, nonprofit service providers. Connecticut is still facing significant budget deficits so we may still see rescissions in the coming year.

The General Assembly failed to pass legislation that would have implemented recommendations from the **Program Review and Investigations Committee** investigation of the Provision of Selected Services for Clients with Intellectual Disabilities.

The General Assembly voted to authorize the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the State of Connecticut to negotiate a binding collective bargaining agreement for the workers whom we hire for self-directed services from DDS. The Governor signed this legislation as Public Act No. 12-33. The new law covers self-directed Personal Support, Individual Home Supports, Individual Day Supports, Respite, Adult Companion, and Transportation among others. All these **workers are now represented by the SEIU**. If you self-direct these services then you are now represented by the Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council.

News from DDS:

In January 2012 DDS implemented new **LON-based individual budgets and fee for service billing with uniform rates**. Some individuals' budgets will decrease over the next seven years as a result of this new system. Others will have their budgets increased. DDS is planning to implement the same sort of system for residential services in January 2013.

**Read the DDS Five Year Plan at:**

<http://www.ct.gov/dds/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=501242>

Other news:

A new nonprofit organization has been created to serve as fiscal agent and to provide administrative support to the FETF. The name of the new organization is **Raising Voices for Action, Inc.** and you can read a little more about it at their beta website: <http://raisingvoicesforaction.weebly.com/> (Please understand that the website is still a work in progress.) If you have any questions about this, please email to [family-empowerment@comcast.net](mailto:family-empowerment@comcast.net)

In our **on-line communities**, families are engaged in many interesting threads of discussion. Please visit our on-line discussion groups for the latest news and opinions.

## Events

We hold **local meetings** for families where we share information about the FETF and DDS. You may request an informational meeting near to you by email to [family-empowerment@comcast.net](mailto:family-empowerment@comcast.net).

April 2, 2012, at 7:00 pm, FETF at the Mansfield Public Library, 54 Warrenville Road, in Mansfield Center.

May 17, 2012, at 6:00 pm, Family Advocacy Night at Ability Beyond Disability, Leir Pavilion – Room 115. 4 Berkshire Boulevard, Bethel, CT 06801

June 9, 2012, FETF presentation in the Family Hospitality area during the Special Olympics Connecticut Summer Games at Southern Connecticut State University.

September 2012, the Family Empowerment Task Force 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Conference at the Capitol. Stay tuned for details.

For more information about upcoming events, check our website and our groups on Yahoo or Facebook – or email to [family-empowerment@comcast.net](mailto:family-empowerment@comcast.net)

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## 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](mailto:family-empowerment@comcast.net)

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## Support the FETF

You may support the FETF with a donation to our new 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, c/o Raising Voices for Action, Inc., 17 C Woodland Street, Vernon, CT 06066.

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## 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.