

Family Empowerment Task Force Newsletter Summer 2014, Vol. 3, No. 4.

This year the Connecticut General Assembly allocated funds to provide residential services to 100 individuals on the DDS Waiting List. If your primary caregiver is over the age of 70 and you are currently on the DDS Priority 1 Waiting List then you may now choose from a variety of residential services that include Community Living Arrangements (CLA), Continuous Residential Supports (CRS), In Home Supports (IHS), Community Companion Homes (CCH), Shared Living and other creative living arrangements. **This summer, your case manager should contact you to learn your individual needs, explain ALL these options, and discover what type of residential setting you would prefer.** We can help you to understand the full spectrum of options that are now available. Contact us by email to family-empowerment@comcast.net.

The Department of Housing will open the waiting lists for the state Rental Assistance Program and the state Section 8 housing program for a two-week period, beginning August 4 and ending August 18. The waiting lists for these programs have been closed since 2007, so the reopening of the lists is a major event. Eight thousand names will be chosen by lottery for placement on the lists. Read the notice here:

http://www.ct.gov/doh/lib/doh/pre-notice_sec.8-hcv_and_rap.pdf

The pre-application form will appear in area newspapers for three consecutive days starting August 4, 2014. The form will also be available at the Connecticut Department of Housing Website on August 4, <http://www.ct.gov/doh/site/default.asp>

In response to families' advocacy in the 2014 legislative session, Governor Malloy has created an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Service Improvement Working Group to study solutions to the DDS residential waiting list. Meeting agendas, minutes and other materials are here: <http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/cwp/view.asp?a=3997&q=547086>

DDS is amending the Comprehensive Support waiver, the Individual and Family Support waiver and the Employment and Day Supports waiver effective July 1, 2014. The amendment makes technical changes to comply with new Medicaid rules and adds several new waiver services including Prevocational services, Assistive Technology, Shared Living, Peer Support and Informal Caregiver services.

In response to a request from the federal government, the State of Connecticut confirmed that **empty buildings at Southbury Training School are not fit for human habitation.** According to Patrick M. O'Brien, assistant director of OPM's Bureau of Assets Management, "The property is in a state of disrepair to the point where a certificate of occupancy would be difficult to obtain. ... Indeed, many existing structures are beyond salvage and require environmental remediation and demolition."

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act changes the disability programs of the Rehabilitation Act and the Assistive Technology Act. The Act prohibits individuals age 24 and younger from working jobs that pay less than the federal minimum of \$7.25 per hour unless they first try vocational rehabilitation services, among other requirements. The legislation also requires the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) to provide pre-employment

transition services to all students with disabilities.

Self-Directed Personal Support, Individual Home Support, Individual Day Support, Respite, and Adult Companion workers will not be required to pay agency fees under Public Act No. 12-33 after a ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States. Those fees were originally scheduled to be deducted from approximately 4,000 non-union members.

With no public announcement, no press release, nor any consultation with the community, Governor Malloy appointed a long-time local politician as the new Executive Director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A). The new Executive Director has no experience in civil rights litigation or disability law. This appointment has raised serious concerns about the future independence, integrity and effectiveness of P&A.

Our Families Can't Wait (OFCW) is surveying families on the unmet housing and support needs of individuals with I/DD. Join OFCW for a phone bank at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, August 11 at 77 Huyshope Ave. in Hartford. Call 860.251.6048 or email lshepard-blue@seiu1199ne.org for more info. "Like" OFCW on Facebook at "CT DDS Our Families Can't Wait." Please join us for two upcoming OFCW Family Forums:

Saturday, August 23rd, 10 a.m.-noon

Community Room, Montville Public Safety Building

911 Norwich-New London Turnpike (Rte. 32), Uncasville

Saturday, October 4th, 10 a.m.-noon

Community Room, Cos Cob Library, 5 Sinaway Rd, Cos Cob

The Arc Connecticut Families for Families campaign is mobilizing families and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to prevent harmful changes, as well as promote helpful changes, to the DDS private system of support. For more information contact Shannon Jacovino via email sjacovino@thearcct.org.

Commissioner Macy created a Self-Advocate and Family Advocate Groups Leadership committee to improve communication between DDS and families. This group includes representatives from FETF, Families for Families, OFCW and many others. Discussion has focused on the new DDS service paradigm, the Waiting List and ways to improve communication between DDS and consumers. For more information email 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

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.