

## News

The **2014 Connecticut 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 is forecasting a \$500 million surplus for the current fiscal year. Last year the General Assembly adopted \$23 million of rescissions from the annual budget for DDS which came mostly from residential services.

Over the past year, groups of parents at **Creative Housing Forums** have been discussing new sustainable housing solutions for their adult children who live with intellectual disabilities. At meetings in Groton, Meriden, Norwalk, Danbury, Bristol, Willimantic and Hartford about a hundred parents have contributed their ideas, their concerns and their inspirational housing solutions. Through this process, a picture is beginning to emerge. It is a varied landscape of highly individualized solutions. Generally, people are living in their own homes. These homes may be private residences or rented apartments. Some with live with 24-7 care - others with occasional supports. Where more than one individual shares the residence, there are generally less than five individuals in the home. Some use staff that are managed by an agency and many hire their own staff. These solutions are financed by a combination of sources that include the DDS Continuous Residential Support and Individual Housing Support Waivers, DDS rent subsidies, Special Needs Trusts, and federal, state and local housing programs. It is clear that we have come a very long way from the one-size-fits-all institutional solutions of the past.

For the past year, a Cross Disability Alliance has been meeting to create a common platform for groups that advocate for individuals who live with physical, intellectual and behavioral disabilities. The Alliance strives to ensure that decisions made by legislators, business leaders and other policy-makers result in greater access, inclusion, and support of people with disabilities. The group is presently focused on transportation, and employment. You may request more information via email to [family-empowerment@comcast.net](mailto:family-empowerment@comcast.net)

Did you know that the Affordable Care Act requires that individual and small group plans sold on the health insurance marketplaces cover habilitative services? Habilitative services help a person learn, keep, or improve skills and functional abilities that they may not be developing normally. Most of our adult children who live with developmental disabilities now receive habilitative services from DDS through one of the Medicaid waivers. We do not yet know how this requirement for commercial health insurance will be implemented in Connecticut or its impact on our families. Read more at <http://www.disabilitycoop.com/2014/01/14/health-adds-coverage/19016/>

## Events

**January 16** – World Café for Creative Housing from 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm Sponsored by Horizons at the Kerri Art Studio and Gallery on 861 Main Street in Willimantic.

**February 5** – The 2014 Connecticut General Assembly convenes at the State Capitol in Hartford. Bills and public hearings will be posted at <http://www.cga.ct.gov>.

**February 7** – Informational Forum for Families of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Contact Shannon Jacovino at The Arc Connecticut, [sjacovino@thearcofct.org](mailto:sjacovino@thearcofct.org), for more information.

**February 13** – World Cafe for Creative Housing at Opportunity Works Connecticut, 156 River Road in Willington. Email [family-empowerment@comcast.net](mailto:family-empowerment@comcast.net) for more information.

**February 25 & 26** – System Change to Support the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities. For more information go to <http://www.ccpa-inc.org/documents/Final%20Flyer%201.23.14.pdf>

For more information about upcoming events, check our groups on Yahoo or Facebook – or send an 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 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.

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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.