

Family Support Program

DDD's Family Support Task Force is comprised of family members of people with developmental disabilities and individuals with developmental disabilities who serve on the New Jersey Regional Family Support Planning Councils. The first task force meeting was held December 12. We discussed developing a statewide system of family support services and supports that would be equitable, accountable and consistent across the regions. Each of the nine regional Family Support Councils is represented on the task force, and each council's chair, co-chair/vice-chair, and statewide representative has been invited to serve as members.

Partner Profile: The Elizabeth Boggs Center

Dr. Deborah Spitalnik is the Executive Director of the Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey - Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Department of Pediatrics, where she is also a Professor of Pediatrics. Dr. Spitalnik recently participated in DDD's Partner Profile Series:

"I am pleased to be able to discuss ways to continue to forge our relationship," Dr. Spitalnik said. "We have created a special and unique relationship in terms of what our shared interests are." The Boggs Center focuses on services as well as on research. It provides community trainings and technical assistance, interdisciplinary preparation of medical students, and disseminates information and educational materials.

The Boggs Center's annual funding is \$3.2 million and these funds are received from DDD as well as from the DHS Division of Disability Services, the state Department of Education and the federal Centers for Disease Control. Research efforts at the center include a full spectrum of concerns regarding developmental disabilities as well as a variety of other related topics, including evaluating the changing demography of New Jersey, the influx of persons newly immigrating to our state, and the increase in the number of low birth-weight babies.

Dr. Spitalnik reports that nationally, 2.9 percent of children are in special education while in New Jersey, that figure is 8.9 percent. The Boggs Center is actively involved in attempting to determine why the state percentage is much greater than the national percentage. Although the center is based in the Department of Pediatrics at the medical school, Dr. Spitalnik explained "Our charter is all about serving both children and adults. We have a lifespan perspective. We help families embark on a path that

expands life's choices." The center also produces curricula for schools, which are distributed free of charge, and provides trainers to the schools to teach how to properly use the materials.

The Boggs Center offers a wide array of other education and training opportunities. Not only does it regularly produce the Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series (that began in 1984 and recently presented its 190th lecture), it also provides regular training opportunities in a variety of topics such as Supported Employment and Positive Behavioral Supports. As part of the Rutgers School of Social Work's Continuing Education and Professional Development Program, a certificate program in developmental disabilities is also offered. The Boggs Center also has a Direct Care Basic Skills Curriculum (developed in partnership with the Council on Developmental Disabilities and other peer agencies) for personnel in the state's Developmental Centers.

A series of courses for direct care workers, courses dedicated to creating an attractive career path of providing support services to people with developmental disabilities, is also offered by the Boggs Center. Dr. Spitalnik added that they are currently seeking grants to fund a literacy training program for employees, and pointed out, "Many Americans need help in this area and now, many new immigrant workers are entering the disabilities field."

As the mission of the Boggs Center is to build capacity in organizations, systems and communities in a culturally competent manner, Dr. Spitalnik summarized: "No one needed another program that only did research. We wanted to develop a program to enhance people's lives, and we wanted to do it through collaboration. In these ways, we weave the connections more closely."

News Alert

Community Care Waiver - AMENDMENTS

DDD submitted proposed amendments of the Community Care Waiver (CCW) to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on December 28, 2007. CMS will be reviewing the document for approval, which is a 90 day review process. The proposed amendments will update waiver language in keeping with national terminology and improve/expand service options for individuals.

With a focus on self-determination and DDD's Path to Progress, DDD held meetings this past fall with stakeholders to gather meaningful input for these amendments. DDD would like to thank those who worked so hard to bring this project to fruition.

2008 Brings DDD's Organizational Table Closer to Fruition

Assistant Commissioner Ritchey recently announced three significant personnel actions within DDD's administrative leadership. Frank Kirkland, Lee Berkey, and Roger Puente have accepted positions within DDD:

- ◆ Roger Puente, Assistant Division Director with DDD, will take another step up the ladder in his long career with DHS as he will become the Chief of Staff for Direct Services, responsible for the seven Developmental Centers and Community Services operations. Mr. Puente's appointment as Chief of Staff will officially begin on Tuesday, January 22, 2008.
- ◆ Lee Berkley, joining the Central Office staff of DDD, will be the Division's Chief of Staff for Support Services. Mr. Berkey brings a wealth of experience and expertise to DDD from working at facility, division and department levels within the Department of Human Services. In accepting the position, Mr. Berkey returns to the Division where he began State Service in 1984. As the Division's Chief of Staff, Mr. Berkey will be responsible for Budget and Finance, Information Services, Quality Management & Planning, the Legal Unit, and Human Resources. He will begin work with the Division on Tuesday, January 22, 2008. Mr. Berkey currently serves as Executive Assistant to Kevin Martone, Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Mental Health Services.

- ◆ DDD and New Jersey will also welcome Frank Kirkland as the new Assistant Division Director(ADD) for Southern and Lower Central Regions, following James Evanochko, who retired in the summer of 2007 after 37 years of State Service. Mr. Kirkland comes to DDD from West Virginia where he served as Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities since September 1999. Mr. Kirkland is scheduled to begin work with the Division as the Assistant Division Director effective Tuesday, February 19, 2008.

We look forward to their substantial experience and knowledge being applied to the Division's goals, programs and needs. Their support will be integral as we work through challenges facing the division, including implementing the Path to Progress, the proposed amendments to the Community Care Waiver and other initiatives. Congratulations Roger, Lee and Frank!!!

