

## Partner Profile: The Brain Injury Association of New Jersey

The Brain Injury Association of New Jersey (BIANJ) visited DDD in December, as part of the division's ongoing 'meetings with key stakeholders' series that increases information sharing. BIANJ's executives, Barbara Geiger-Parker, President and CEO, Barbara Podgorski, Family Support Specialist, and Christine Hines, Community Resource Specialist, offered a very interesting and enlightening presentation.

The BIANJ is a chartered, state affiliate of the Brain Injury Association of America and it is funded by state grants and private contributions. Since the early 1980's, the BIANJ has been assisting families and victims of brain injury.

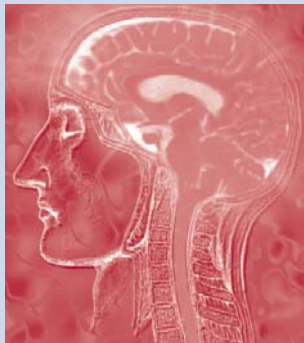
There are two types of brain injury, an insult to the brain causing damage, and three classifications (mild, moderate and severe) of severity:

**Traumatic Injury** - due to external events (accidents, sports injuries, etc.)

**Acquired Injury** - internal physical disease that is not hereditary, congenital or degenerative/occurred after birth (stroke, tumor, etc.)

Over the years, the number of cases of brain injury recorded yearly among children and adults has remained nearly the same.

However, the number of cases of those who survive brain injury has steadily risen. This is a testament to the work of the Brain Injury Association and the ever evolving education and treatment being offered to victims of brain injury. Approximately, 8,000 children and adults in New Jersey are hospitalized each year because of brain injury; and, more than 20,000 people are treated each year in doctor offices or emergency rooms.



**How many people have recently moved to the community from developmental centers?**

July 2006 - June 2007 = 86  
July 2007 - December 2007 = 43

**“Brain injury happens in an instant, it affects a family for a lifetime”**

Education and prevention are the only ways to survive or prevent a brain injury. The BIANJ provides education outreach, prevention and advocacy and support services to all persons affected by brain injury and to the general public. There are 16 affiliated support groups throughout the state, with training sessions on brain injury basics for families, persons with brain injuries, and professionals.



Along with family support services, a myriad of other supports are offered, including a one-week camp for individuals (16 and older) that is held during the summer at Camp Ockanickon and a Mentoring program that matches trained mentors to people with a brain injury and family members in need of support. A library of free resources and hotline offer families and people with brain injury much needed information to help find the resources and services available to them.

- The BIANJ will be hosting six free sessions for families, throughout the state, to learn more about brain injury. The first for 2008 was held on:

Date: **Wednesday, January 23, 2008**

Time: **7:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

Location: **Southern Ocean County Hospital, Family Resource Center at the Ocean Club Bldg, 4th Floor Conference Room, 700 Route 9 South, Stafford Township, NJ 08092.**



For more information and future dates, visit their website at [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org).

# The Bureau of Guardianship Services Now Reporting to New Assistant Commissioner

Last November, DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez welcomed the newest member of her management team, Assistant Commissioner Frederick Cohen, to oversee the Offices of Legal and Regulatory Affairs and Equal Employment Opportunity. Now, the Bureau of Guardianship Services (BGS), formerly under the auspices of DDD, is also overseen by Assistant Commissioner Cohen and the BGS staff report directly to him on all matters regarding guardianship services.

This change in reporting for BGS was recommended by Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Ritchey and supported by DHS Commissioner Velez. The goal is to create greater autonomy for Guardianship Services in order to protect the guardian's role in advocating for individuals, and avoiding any potential conflict of interest if the positions on a case vary between the guardian and DDD.

BGS guardians make decisions and advocate for individuals who have been determined to lack either partial, or full capacity, to make their own decisions. The services offered by BGS will not change. BGS will continue to serve individuals in need of guardianship who receive services from



DDD, including preparing the court papers necessary to file for guardianship.

Assistant Commissioner Ritchey expressed, "Although the Bureau of Guardianship Services will no longer report directly to me, I look forward to continuing the positive relationship that has been developed with Kim Friend and her staff, as they continue to advocate for those individuals who also receive services from DDD."

The reporting change ends a 32-year relationship between the BGS and DDD; however, guardianship services will continue to be housed within DDD. In addition, when the division's central office relocates to Hamilton, BGS' central office and central regional office will be part of that move.

## Agency News: Training

- ❖ **New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP):**  
[A Conversation on Self Directed Supports](#) - 1/29/08  
[Leading Deep Change](#) - 1/30/08
- ❖ **EmployME January 2008** - The **EmployME** Class started January 7, but applications are still being accepted. Students can begin up to two weeks into the class. Personalized teaching assistance and coaching are provided to bring any student who starts late up-to-speed with the class. They have launched a new web site <http://www.myemployme.org>  
For more information, please contact Ms. Cindy Harden 973.596.3064
- ❖ **Neighbours, Inc.:** *Hold the Date* - [April 5, 2008](#), The Real Life Choices Conference will be held from 8:30 AM until 3:30 PM at the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick.
- ❖ **The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center of Developmental Disabilities:** *Hold The Date* - [May 10, 2008](#) - [The Sixth Annual Self Directed Supports Conference](#) "Getting Great Support Staff: The Skills You Need For the Life You Want"