



CREATING CHANGE THAT IMPROVES THE LIVES OF ALASKANS WITH DISABILITIES

1
STATE COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

2
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY
PANEL

3
INTERAGENCY COORDINATING
COUNCIL FOR INFANTS AND
TODDLERS WITH DISABILITIES

4
GOVERNING BOARD OF THE
SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE
AGENCY

BENEFICIARY BOARD FOR THE
ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST
AUTHORITY

State of Alaska
Department of Health & Social Services
**Governor's Council on Disabilities
& Special Education**

3601 "C" Street, Suite 740
Anchorage, Alaska 99524-0249

Toll Free: 1 (888) 269-8990
From Anchorage: (907) 269-8990
Fax: (907) 269-8995

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITIES &
SPECIAL EDUCATION

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES & SPECIAL EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2013-SEPTEMBER 2014

Council Mission

Creating change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities.

Advocacy and Leadership

Advocacy on behalf of Alaskans with disabilities and their families is one of the primary responsibilities of the Council and 2014 can be counted as one of the best years in terms of accomplishing our advocacy agenda. With the support from Representative Charisse Millett, the Council worked toward the passage of HB 211: The Employment First Bill, which relates to the education and employment of individuals with disabilities. Under this act, gainful employment in an integrated setting at or above minimum wage must be considered the first and preferred outcome in the provision of services for individuals with disabilities. The legislation will result in an alignment of policies and services across multiple state departments. The Council is also pleased to report the passage of HB 361 Licensing of Behavior Analysts. One of the most important elements in successful autism treatment is a well-trained behavioral therapist. The nationally-recognized credential for behavioral therapists is a Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst, or BCBA. Prior to passage of this bill, Alaskans with the BCBA credential could not bill health insurance companies or Medicaid for their services at a rate that reflected their professional skill because they were not licensed. HB 361 addresses this situation by providing for those holding the BCBA or BCaBA credentials in Alaska to be licensed by the Division of Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

The Council continues to support Peer Power Alaska, a statewide self-advocacy organization for individuals with disabilities. Peer Power has 49 members, 7 board members, and 25 supporters. Peer Power members have also been working on their presentation skills as self-advocates by presenting at the Full Lives Conference for direct support professionals this past April with 25 individuals in attendance. This is assisting members to hone their skills so that they can also be speakers at similar events in the future. The Council's employment initiatives have intersected with Peer Power at six job fairs across the state, either via co-sponsorship or participation, where workplace incentive and self-advocacy resources were offered. Peer Power has worked during this past fiscal year to secure

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additional grant funds along with 4 other states which will create a regional self-advocacy network, called EPIC (Equal Partners Interstate Congress), and will serve as a significant force to further the progress towards holding a statewide conference and advocacy award program.

Community Choice and Supports

The Council was successful in advocating for \$525,000 in base funding for the Complex Behavior Collaborative (CBC). The CBC provides



intensive support and intervention to individuals at risk of being removed from their community or institutionalized outside of Alaska. The Division of Behavioral Health identified experts knowledgeable in behavior interventions for individuals with developmental disabilities, mental health diagnoses, brain injuries, and seniors with dementia. These experts provide individualized training and consultation to local providers and families, increasing their knowledge of behavior management.

The Council also works with several partners to administer mini-grants. In collaboration with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and Stone Soup Group, the Council helps to grant out up to \$2,500 per individual, per fiscal year for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities who need services or equipment to improve their quality of life. In 2014, 206 individuals received grants totaling \$227,496. The Council also began work with the Alaska Brain Injury Network and Links to administer mini-grants to individuals with traumatic and acquired brain injuries who need additional supports. In 2014, 120 applicants received a total of over \$180,000 in needed services and supplies. And finally, the Trust funds a Microenterprise program to encourage beneficiaries to develop their own businesses. Trust beneficiaries are individuals with intellectual/

developmental disabilities, mental illness, traumatic brain injuries, Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, and those experiencing chronic alcoholism and/or substance abuse. The Council receives \$125,000 in funding from the Trust and a legislative general fund increment of \$25,000. Trust beneficiaries are able to apply for grants of up to \$10,000 and receive consultation from a small business advisor. In FY14, \$88,263.60 was disbursed to 17 beneficiaries.

Transportation

Last year a massive rewrite of the Anchorage Municipal code around taxicab and limousine services began. The issues that were of most interest to the Council were the number of accessible cabs on the street, reports of discrimination against people with disabilities, and disability awareness training of cab drivers. The Council helped form a coalition of advocacy groups around these issues, which included the Alaska Mobility Coalition, the Disability Law Center, Access Alaska, and the Statewide Independent Living Council. In collaboration with these partners and advocacy groups, the Council helped to get new taxicab and limousine service ordinances into place that we expect will result in more accessible cabs available to the public and less discriminatory acts by transportation companies and dispatchers.

Employment

The Governor's Council has continued to support four Project SEARCH sites in Alaska, including Providence Alaska Medical Center (Anchorage), Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Central Peninsula Hospital, and the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center. This past year, 19 students graduated from the four programs and 14 have secured employment, to date. Both the Mat-Su site and the Central Peninsula site were recognized at the national Project SEARCH Conference and received the 100% Employment Outcomes Award. Anchorage and Fairbanks were also recognized and given the 60-69% Employment Outcomes Award. For the coming year,



Executive Director, Patrick Reinhart



Christie Reinhardt, Program Coordinator



Kristin Vandagriff, Program Coordinator



Rich Sanders, Project Coordinator



Brittney Howell, Research Analyst



The Council is looking to expand Project SEARCH to additional industries and communities and is also enhancing the Business Advisory Councils at each of the four existing sites to further broaden the opportunities for interns and businesses alike.



The Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI) grant was in its second year in FY14 and seeks to improve the employment outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities

over the five-year life of the grant. The AIEI Policy & Regulations Team has submitted 4 policy recommendations to the Divisions of Senior and Disability Services (SDS) and Public Assistance. The team focused primarily on updating the Employment Services Continuum Matrix which better defines the path to services within SDS and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). This document is almost complete and will form the basis of a Memorandum of Agreement between SDS and DVR. AIEI staff have also worked as subject matter experts with SDS on their data system enhancement project, the automated service plan, to build in an employment data monitoring tool. This tool will create a solid baseline of employment data and thus allow for better data measurement of employment outcomes; capturing annual competitive and integrated employment data for all participants age 16+. Through the AIEI grant, training in customized employment, self-employment, and PASS Plan creation are now offered monthly, both face-to-face in Anchorage and via distance delivery.

The Employment First movement of competitive (at or above minimum wage for 20 hours or more per week) and integrated employment (in the community including people without disabilities) as the first and preferred outcome in the provision of services to individuals with disabilities has been growing in momentum across Alaska. The Employment First Law requires the Departments of Labor and Workforce Development, Health and Social Services, and Education and Early Development to report on their progress

towards this goal to the Trust annually. The Trust Beneficiary Employment and Engagement Initiative will help to lead the way in the implementation of the Employment First Law and an Alaska Chapter of the Association for People Supporting Employment First (APSE) has been newly created, as well.



Lastly, the Disability Employment Initiative, which was started by the Council, has now fully transferred over to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development where six Alaska Job Centers (Midtown, Muldoon, Fairbanks, Juneau, Mat-Su & Peninsula) continue to serve as Ticket to Work Employment Networks with disability resource coordinators at each site to serve individuals with disabilities. Currently, 35 tickets are assigned to these job centers, which generate income that helps to sustain the program beyond grant funds.

Early Intervention

The Council worked to help expand Infant Learning Program (ILP) eligibility by researching tools to help ILP programs optimize their financial resources so that they could expand participation to infants and toddlers with a less than 50% delay. Lack of information and technical assistance were identified as obstacles for ILP programs to optimally bill Medicaid, private insurance, and families for ILP services. The Council researched the development of a Medicaid guideline manual to include tips, assistance, and mentoring from larger programs. The Council participated in the ILP conference where, with assistance from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the state determined co-pay limits



Lanny Mommsen, Health Program Manager



Tracy Golly, Peer Power Advisor



Michelle Jenkins, Administrative Assist.



Ian Miner, Office Assistant

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for Alaskan families participating in programs. The Council has also participated in the Leadership Team for the Development of the Early Intervention State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) focused on improving the social and emotional ratings of infants and toddlers in the program.

This Council researched the hearing screening and evaluations by the State Early Hearing and Detection Intervention (EHDI) program and the referrals and reasons behind loss to referral to ILP. The Council took a close look at the information given to parents of newborns and at the subsequent information given at referral to ILP. In particular the Council was interested in how accessible and comprehensive the information was for parents of newborns, including communication and education choices available to parents. The Council is a member of the EDHI board and the Deaf Education Board (DEB).

Education

The Council worked with the Department of Education and Early Education (DEED) to identify ways to increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities. The Council was involved in multiple efforts to help achieve this. The Council has, and will continue to, participate in the State's Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) which has a focus on graduation. We also advocated for the development of a pilot high school transition course that will provide a person-centered employment plan for students with disabilities. This course will involve co-teaching with school staff and DVR contractors. The Council also formed a workgroup which researched and advocated for the removal of the decade old High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE), which was a graduation barrier for many students with disabilities. The Council celebrates the passage of HB 278: Alaska's Education Opportunity Act, which repealed the HSGQE as well as outlined several other important educational issues. Not only is the exam abolished but it is also retroactive, so that students can request their high school diplomas if they had failed to pass the examination in the past. The Council was present at the State Board of Education meeting in September where the HSGQE was officially repealed and is working to help find students who did not receive a diploma but completed their required coursework. Nearly two-thirds of those are estimated to be students with disabilities. The Council also gave comments to the Board on early literacy assessments, challenge courses, and guidelines for participation in state assessments.

The Council focused on working with our legislative liaison to craft a bill on restraint and seclusion. The Council worked closely with our Representative, helping with drafts of the bill, gathering comprehensive stakeholder input, and arranging for public testimony. House Bill 210, The Restraint and Seclusion Act, passed unanimously and was signed into law in July, making Alaska a state with one of the most comprehensive and thoughtful school safety laws in the country. The Council has been working with the state and with districts to help with the implementation of this new legislation.

The Council assisted with planning the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC) and presented the Inclusive Practice Award to educators who actively work to include students with disabilities in the school community. This year's winner was an Intensive Needs team from Homer. A little advance notice to the Homer school district meant that most of the team was able to come to the award ceremony and yet the team was still unaware of the honor until the event.

Health

Collaborating with the University of Alaska Anchorage's Center for Human Development, the Council completed significant work on the Alaska Safety Planning Empowerment Network (ASPEN) project. ASPEN is a statewide partnership invested in helping Alaska community providers serve the needs of people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In 2014, the ASPEN strategic plan was implemented and a satisfaction survey was administered. Project coordinators have implemented this project in a new community this year and plan to work with another Alaskan community in FY2015. Plans are underway to conduct focus groups, key informant interviews with agency staff, needs assessment, and strategic planning that will pave the way for future work on this important project.

The Council also partners with the Division of Public Health's section of Women's, Children's, and Family Health on the Alaska Health and Disability Program (AHDP). In 2014, AHDP created the "Get Ready!" emergency preparedness toolkit for people with disabilities as a guide that gives step-by-step instructions on how to make a plan and prepare for a disaster. A total of 2,137 copies of the Get Ready toolkit have been distributed in Alaska this fiscal year and 15,000 more have been ordered. In addition, AHDP created a starter emergency kit called a SKIP kit (Safety Kept in Place). In FY14, 926 of these kits have been distributed to Alaskans and 5,000 more have been ordered for distribution.