



August 13, 2004

## RTC Awarded Grant to Help Illinois Stabilize DSP Workforce

How do people with disabilities create fulfilling lives of interdependence and connection in their communities? For many a key part of the answer is direct support professionals (DSPs). DSPs are the personal care attendants, direct care providers, residential counselors and other staff who support the daily community living of many persons with disabilities. But, high turnover (45-78%) and high vacancy rates (15-20%) plague the DSP field, and finding and retaining qualified DSPs is one of the biggest challenges to providing community supports for people with disabilities.

Creative solutions to this challenge are being developed by the Institute's Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC). Their newest project in this area is the Illinois Comprehensive Workforce Development Initiative to Achieve Improved Individual Outcomes for Citizens with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, a three-year, \$900,000 grant from the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Initiative began work July 1, 2004.

The goal of the Initiative is to improve the lives of persons with disabilities by stabilizing the workforce that supports them in their daily living. This goal is being pursued by a variety of strategies. First, the Initiative established a statewide planning committee to develop, implement, and refine a comprehensive workforce development plan for Illinois. Second, the initiative will provide information and training (including train-the-trainer sessions) on staff recruitment, retention, and training interventions to committee members and project participants. Third, the project will provide technical assistance to 15 entities in Illinois to demonstrate at least one new research-based recruitment or retention strategy based on an assessment of their needs. Taken together, these strategies aim to cut DSP turnover by at least 20% and vacancy rates by at least 15% within three years in the demonstration entities; their strategies can be shared statewide.

Amy Hewitt, project director, explains the significance of this project in this way: "Imagine if every year more than half of the people you depended on to bath you, help you get dressed, eat, take medications and treatments, et cetera, were gone. For people with disabilities, this means poorer health outcomes, fewer choices, and fewer opportunities to do things in their communities. If their DSPs are more stable and competent, then their lives will be better. DSPs will really get to know the people they support and improved competence will help them offer more choice and facilitate more empowerment for the people with disabilities they support."

Other RTC staff on the project are Sherri Larson, John Sauer, Susan O'Neil, Nancy McCulloh, and Charlie Laken. They are collaborating with many individuals and organizations in Illinois, including people receiving supports, family members, advocates, providers, policymakers, and representatives of the demonstration entities. Participating organizations include the University of Illinois Institute on Disability and Human Development (the UCE in Illinois), the Human Services Research Institute, MC Strategies and others.

For further information, please contact Amy Hewitt at (612) 625-1098 or hewit005@umn.edu.

## Staff Update

- **Staff Arrivals:** **Shari Leighton**, Coordinator, Transition. **Staff Departures:** **Jennifer Holcomb**, Student Secretary, Adult Services; and **Heidi Triezenberg**, GRA, Transition.
- Four hundred participants from 40 states attended the Reinventing Quality conference in Philadelphia in early August. The conference was cosponsored by the Institute's Research and Training Center on Community Living, along with the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, the Human Services Research Institute, and a number of Pennsylvania organizations. Presenting at the conference from the RTC were **John Smith**, **Jerry Smith**, **Amy Hewitt**, **Sherri Larson**, and **John Sauer**.
- **Pat Salmi** recently received a \$2,000 scholarship from the American Society of Interior Designers Foundation. It will help fund research on her interior design Ph.D. dissertation, "Identifying and Evaluating Critical Environmental Wayfinding Factors for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities."
- **Jane** and **Kevin Fields** had a baby girl, Katherine Leigh Fields, on August 7.

## Dates to Remember...

- **August 27: Pizza Forum** (if there is no CBC picnic), 12-1, 118 Pattee
- **September 6: University Holiday**
- **September 13: ICI Council**, 10-11:30, 118 Pattee

## From the Front Office

News from ICI's Administrative Staff

- **ICI Resource Guide.** A desk copy of the new ICI Resource Guide is now available in each program area. This informational tool for supervisors and both new and veteran staff has been given to primary support staff in each program area. It contains information on places to eat on/around campus, FAQs from the HR and Administrative offices, useful University Web sites, CEHD travel policy, campus maps, and the list goes on. Feel free to copy the information. Questions or comments? Contact Beth Nelson, HR Workgroup Chair, (6-8042, nelso106@umn.edu) or Marijo McBride, Co-Chair (4-6830, mcbri001@umn.edu).
- **GRA Appointments for Fall.** It's time again to plan for Graduate Research Assistant appointments for Fall. Memos were sent to GRA supervisors and Program Area Coordinators on August 11. Supervisors of GRAs who will be continuing should work with your Senior Accountant by August 24. For those hiring new GRAs, please contact Beth at 6-8042 ASAP. Also, please notify Beth or Amy (4-2380) of any GRAs whose appointments will be ending.
- **Parking Guidelines.** Important ICI parking information was put in all staff mailboxes on August 11. Please refer to it for information on parking options for guests, official vehicle permit guidelines, and general parking information. Questions? Call Rachel at 4-6300 or Amy at 4-2380.
- **CSBU Luncheon.** An informal luncheon was held for ICI Civil Service Bargaining Unit clerical staff on August 3. It provided the opportunity to meet newly hired staff and to re-connect as a group. The group will decide if they have any interest in holding meetings on a regular basis as in the past. Beth Nelson served as the facilitator of this informal luncheon and questions can be directed to her at 6-8042.
- **New Staff Orientation.** The HR Workgroup hosted an orientation brown bag session on July 21 for new hires and their supervisors. This session was well-attended and gave staff the opportunity to meet each other and share aspects of their new jobs. A similar session will be scheduled sometime this fall. Questions? Call Beth at 6-8042.
- **Attention P&A Staff.** Your vacation forms for July-August are due at the end of this month to Beth in 107. Please make every effort to turn these in on time each 2-month period. Questions? Call Beth at 6-8042.

## Miscellaneous

- **Guide on Workforce and Disability for Youth.** The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth has released a new guide, *Career Planning Begins with Assessment*, which is available online at [http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources\\_&\\_Publications/assessment.html](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/assessment.html). CD-ROM versions will be available soon. Please contact Joe Timmons at ICI (4-5659) if you would like more information about the CD-ROMs.
- **Birthdays.** Sandra Christenson (8/19), Kristi Oeding (8/19), Martha Thurlow (8/19), Christopher Johnstone (8/20), Laurie Grant (9/2), Dennis Olson (9/5), Gretchen VanGetson (9/10), Cliff Poetz (9/12), Jean Klein (9/13), and Jerry Smith (9/14). Did we miss your birthday? Let us know! Call 4-2380 or e-mail kuro0008@umn.edu.

## Bits & Pieces

Information from the Institute's Web

Development Team (11 Pattee, 6-8649) and Publications Office (109 Pattee, 4-4512)

- **New Publications.** The following new Institute publications are available through the Publications Office and/or online:
  - *DD Data Brief: Response Patterns Among Adult Respondents with Mental Retardation in the National Health Interview Survey, 1997-2002.* Published by the Institute's Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC).
  - *Residential Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities: Status and Trends Through 2003.* Published by the RTC.
  - *RIPM Brochure.* The informational brochure describing the Institute's newest center: The Research Institute on Progress Monitoring.
  - *NLTS2 Data Brief: The Characteristics, Experiences, and Outcomes of Youth with Emotional Disturbances* (August 2004, Vol. 3, Issue 2). Published by the Institute's National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) and available at [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org).
  - *Research to Practice Brief: Increasing School Completion: Learning from Research-Based Practices that Work* (August 2004, Vol. 3, Issue 3). Published by NCSET and available at [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org).
- **ICI at the Fair.** ICI will be featured in the College's booth at the state fair on Monday, August 30, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Volunteers from ICI will be staffing the booth, so stop by and say "hi." The booth is in the U of M building on Dan Patch Avenue, one block west of the intersection of Dan Patch and Snelling Avenue.
- **FYI Deadline.** Items for the next FYI should be submitted to Tom in 109 Pattee Hall or e-mailed to donag003@umn.edu by Friday, September 10.