

FYI

Staff Update • Institute on Community Integration
College of Education and Human Development •
University of Minnesota

January 15, 1997

RRTC Policy Forum Debates Tough Issues

What is the impact of budget considerations on the deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities who are expensive to serve in the community? How should providers best address sexuality issues with individuals who have disabilities? In what ways does political correctness influence the disabilities field? These are just three of the over 60 topics that have been addressed in the Community Services Public Policy Forum series sponsored by the Institute's Research and Training Center on Residential Services and Community Living (RRTC).

The forum, which began in 1992, provides opportunities for lively debates on legislative issues and public policies affecting services for persons with disabilities. The four specific objectives the forum organizers seek to accomplish are: (a) to present topics that are relevant and interesting to participants, (b) to increase participant knowledge of policy issues, (c) to provide participants with a broader perspectives on issues, and (d) to give participants the opportunity to freely express their opinions. On a monthly basis individuals from provider agencies; state, county and local government; advocacy organizations; the Institute and other University units; as well as family members of persons with disabilities come together for the 90-minute discussions. At each meeting upwards of 30 attendees debate a policy issue, sometimes after a presentation by a subject expert. Topic selection is based on participant input and timeliness of issues in the disabilities field, with special effort made to select subjects around which there is disagreement and a need for further discussion and understanding in the movement toward possible consensus. Recent topics have included ICF-MR versus Waiver, finding and keeping direct support workers, and impacts of federal SSI reform.

Sherri Larson, one of the three people who started the series (along with Bob Prouty and Troy Mangen) sees it as an important link between the RRTC and the broader community. "Part of the RRTC's mission is to facilitate the dissemination of information, specifically regarding policy issues for community services. The forum is one tool we use to share information and perspectives. It also allows us, as researchers and shapers of policy, to hear the concerns, priorities, and views of people outside the University."

Feedback from participants has been very positive. Responses to the question, "What were the major strengths of this meeting," have included:

- For myself – a relative newcomer to this field – an opportunity to know some of the other persons, agencies, and providers. Hopefully building better and stronger networks.
- It brings people together from all groups of persons concerned about bettering environmental and social conditions for people with developmental disabilities. Many perspectives and ideas can be expressed and hopefully some understanding can be gained of the obstacles we face in provision of services.

The next forum will be February 12, 10:15-11:45, at the Ramsey County Public Library. It will be a follow-up discussion on ICF-MR versus Waiver. To learn more about the forum, contact Sherri Larson at 624-6024.

Staff Update

- **Staff Arrivals:** Wendy Ringer, Coordinator for the Yes I Can social inclusion project; Jessica Mooney, Office Manager for the Publications Office; Martha Low, Research Assistant for the RRTC; Andrea Thompson, Research Assistant for the Behavioral Momentum Project; Rachel Traver, Research Assistant for the Cognitive Intervention Project; Stephanie Langseth, Student Secretary for the National Transition Network; Michele Gaddy, Research Assistant for Minnesota Kindergarten Follow-up Project; Tim Atchley, Accounts Specialist (during Traci Woollums' maternity leave); and Shauna McDonald, Coordinator for the School-to-Work Project.
- **Bill Latimer and Veronica Suetaz** pilot-tested Spanish-language versions of two adolescent drug abuse assessment instruments in Argentina during December. They also met with drug abuse treatment center directors and hospital clinics to discuss plans for collaborative research projects.
- The Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) has been chosen by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning to coordinate a feasibility study on an Infant Mental Health Treatment Framework for Minnesota. Principal investigators are Christopher Watson, CEED Program Manager, and Mary McEvoy, CEED Director and Co-Director of ICI's Early Childhood Research Institute.

Dates to Remember . . .

- **January 17, 29 & February 5: Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Sessions, Noon, 118 Pattee Hall**

From the Front Office

News from ICI's Administrative Staff

- **Parking Permit Policy.** A reminder that the Institute's parking permits are intended for short-term (30 minutes - 2 hour) use by people coming to the Institute for meetings or to make deliveries. They should not be used for all-day staff parking.
- **Vacation Records.** Civil Service and P & A staff, please complete and turn in to Beth Nelson your vacation records through December 31, 1996.
- **ICI Outreach Training.** The Institute's Outreach Training activities include the upcoming series for trainers of paraprofessionals, which begins January 31. Presentations include:

Transition: The Role of the Paraprofessional. Presented by Teri Wallace and Pam Stenhjem, Institute on Community Integration. January 31, 1-4pm and February 1, 9am-3pm.

Working with Individuals Who are Medically Fragile or Have Physical Disabilities. Presented by Carla Lagerstadt, St. Cloud Technical College, and Cheryl Smoot, Minnesota Department of Human Services. February 4, 9am-3pm, and February 5, 9am-12pm.

The Paraprofessional: An Introduction. Presented by Joyce Evenski, Ridgewater College. February 7, 1-4pm and February 8, 9am-3pm.

Providing Cross-Cultural Supports to Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families. Presented by Amy Hewitt, Institute on Community Integration. February 12, 1-4 pm and February 13, 9am-3pm.

Early Childhood: The Role of the Paraprofessional. Presented by Andi Upin, Ridgewater College. February 14, 1-4pm and February 15, 9am-3pm.

Positive Behavior Strategies for Paraprofessionals. Presented by Kathie Wolff, Institute on Community Integration. March 10, 1-4pm and March 11, 9am-3pm.

Promoting Self-Advocacy and Facilitating Friendships and Socialization Skills for Individuals with Disabilities. Presented by Marijo McBride, Institute on Community Integration. April 2, 1-4pm and April 3, 9am-3pm.

All sessions are held at St. Cloud Technical College and space is limited. FFI on these sessions contact Kathie Wolff at 624-2380.

Miscellaneous

- **Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Sessions.** Everyone is invited to attend these informal learning sessions held from noon-1 p.m. in 118 Pattee: January 17, *Facilitating Reflective Practice and Collegiality in an Urban High School*, with Jennifer York-Barr and Jo Montie; January 29, *Finding Strengths in Families: Two Studies to Support Literacy Development*, with Scott McConnell and Christina Sheran; February 5, *Student Moderated Focus Groups at the High School Level* with Lynn Walz. FFI contact the session facilitator directly, or Jo Montie at 624-9858.
- **Birthdays.** Patricia Merrill (2/10), Linda Schaefer (2/8), Christina Sheran (1/27).
- **Births:** Nicholas Lee born December 20 to Traci and Greg Woollums; Emmet O'Neil-Myer born December 16 to Susan O'Neil and Kurt Myer.

Bits and Pieces

Information from the Institute's Research and Technology Consulting Group (RTCG, 110 Pattee, 4-7337) and the Publications Office (109 Pattee, 4-4512).

- **Driving the Infobahn, New Publications**
- **What Kind of Car Are You?** If you were a car on the Information Superhighway, what kind of car would you be? If ICI were a car on the Information Superhighway, what kind of car would it be today and what should it be in the future? In thinking about our individual reactions to new technologies, these questions can help individuals understand why they might feel that the world is changing far too fast while a colleague feels like it's not changing fast enough. Four of the many options for car imagery could be: Volkswagen Beetle, Honda Accord, Lexus, and Porsche. Each moves at its own particular speed and represents a distinct set of priorities and values. So, what are you?

- **New Publications.** Recent arrivals include the following:

On a Collision Course? Standards, Discipline, and Students with Disabilities. A Policy Research Brief based on the research of ICI's Check and Connect Dropout Prevention and Intervention Projects

Communities of Vision & Action: Systems Change Through Minnesota's Community Transition Interagency Committees. A resource guide profiling Minnesota demonstration projects funded to improve transition services and supports for young people with disabilities. By Pam Stenhjem, Gonzaga da Gama.

Helping Hand: An Introductory Video to a Career in Direct Service. A 30-minute video that provides a realistic industry preview for direct support workers. Produced by Amy Hewitt, Susan O'Neil, Sherri Larson.