

**Today's Quotes:***"Doing things for others always pays dividends...."*

Claude M. Bristol 1891-1951, American Author of "The Magic of Believing"

## MOU to Shore Up Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

The Departments of Human Services (DHS) and Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) have agreed on a plan for better serving individuals with disabilities who would like to work. Under this agreement, individuals eligible for DDD services who want to work will be referred first to Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) for an assessment, which will be utilized to help individuals with vocational rehabilitation, supported employment services and job referrals. Once this process is completed, DDD's goal is to provide individuals with additional day services and supports up to a total of about 35 hours per week.

The plan, outlined in a memorandum of understanding (MOU), was developed through the efforts of DDD, the DHS' Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and DVRS. The MOU, signed by DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez and LWD Commissioner David Socolow on October 1, is another step by both departments in ongoing efforts to help increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including developmental disabilities.

DHS and LWD also renewed an agreement regarding "supported employment" services. Supported employment provides participants with the assistance they need to secure and maintain a job. It may include an on-site

job coach; crew work, in which an individual works as part of a peer group; arrangements in which a participant can sample different jobs to find a good employment match; as well as follow-along services that help a person maintain hold a job.



DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez said, "New Jersey state agencies and disability organizations, advocates and family members, have been working together to develop ways to support people with developmental disabilities in gaining and maintaining employment. This renewed employment partnership builds on the Department of Labor's state public employment program and the network of support services that DHS provides; together we can better connect

people with employment opportunities, as well as increase longevity on the job."

Labor Commissioner David J. Socolow said, "Every New Jersey citizen benefits from employment and deserves equal access to employment opportunities. Recognizing the abilities of each individual and building on each person's personal strengths in the workplace is the goal of this renewed partnership." Commissioner Socolow said he was pleased about the partnership between his department and DHS.

### Upcoming Conference

To help address economic issues affecting New Jersey, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development will host a conference, "**A Competitive Economy for the 21st Century: 2008 Governor's Conference on Workforce and Economic Development,**" **December 1 – 3, in Atlantic City.** More information about the conference is available at: [www.state.nj.us/labor](http://www.state.nj.us/labor) .

Note: In October 2007, the DHS Division of Disability Services (DDS) hosted "DiscoverAbility, the First New Jersey Governor's Conference on Employment." DDS released a statewide plan in February called "*Discover Ability New Jersey's Strategic Plan to Create a Comprehensive Employment System for People with Disabilities.*" The plan, a guide for developing a comprehensive, state-wide employment system, was developed through a Medicaid grant and is available at: [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/publications/NJ%20CES%20Plan\\_Final.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/publications/NJ%20CES%20Plan_Final.pdf).

# “Self-Directed Day Services”

## New name for day services program

DDD has changed the name of the Real Life Choices Transition day services program to “Self-Directed Day Services” in order to better reflect the program’s true nature and end some confusion for families.

When the program was known as Real Life Choices Transition, participating families often assumed incorrectly they were enrolled in another program known as “Real Life Choices”; although both programs allow participants to self-direct and use an individual budget, they are fundamentally different.

**Self-Directed Day Services** was developed so that recent school system graduates could have a means for creating their own day services, in line with their personal preferences. This is an alternative to traditional, Monday through Friday day programs operated by agencies through contracts with DDD.

“Real Life Choices,” on the other hand, was developed for individuals who are on the residential placement waiting list and able to benefit from additional in-home supports that will allow them to remain in the community. These supports include, but are not limited to, day services.

# Self-Directed Day Services

## Real Life Choices

**Self-Directed Day Services** is increasingly playing a more important role in New Jersey’s effort to eliminate its day program wait-

ing list. It is being offered not only to recent graduates, but also to individuals on the waiting list and individuals enrolled in traditional day programs that are at capacity. As individuals elect to self-direct and move out of traditional day programs, space is created for others who prefer that option over self-direction.

## A Bittersweet Goodbye

*This story was contributed by Lori Watson, Olmstead Point Person, at Vineland Developmental Center. As a result of the experience described in this story, Lori and Vineland’s Transitional Case Manager, Brenda Brown, are working on a plan to help alleviate some of the concerns and sorrow staff feel when residents leave the developmental center to move into the community. Lori promises to share that plan in a future story for DDD Today.*

The staff of Donahue Cottage at Vineland Developmental Center (VDC) had cared for Tina R. for more than a decade. One day, as part of the Olmstead initiative, it was determined that she would be able to move into a lovely home in the community where she

would have her own bedroom, and would share the home with only three other individuals.

Hooray! This is what everyone wanted for Tina.

The cottage staff excitedly assisted Tina as she prepared for her move. There were visits to the new home. The staff of her new home made visits to Tina at VDC in order to become familiar with all that Tina can do, prefers to do, and has the potential to do. The process was gradual, with plenty of mini-victories along the way.

Finally, moving day arrived. Her new staff arrived in an empty van, ready to be loaded with all of Tina’s belong-

(continued on page 3)

## A Bittersweet Goodbye (continued from page 3)

ings, and, of course, Tina. Everyone was happy for Tina and she was happy. Her new staff was happy. The Donahue staff was not only happy for Tina, they were quite proud at how well she accepted, even anticipated, her move into the community.

There were farewell hugs galore and final waves as the van drove off into Tina's future.

But then, within moments after the van had passed out of sight, the Donahue Cottage staff lost their elation. They returned to their usual duties. For the remainder of that day, the atmosphere in the cottage was subdued.

The next day, the Donahue Cottage staff would occasionally remember one thing or another about Tina, smile at that remembrance, and then continue with their duties.

A few weeks later, I was one of twenty employees in a class in which the support coordination process was



explained. The instructors were great. People asked question after question. The instructors gave convincing, and valuable, answers to each question.

An employee from Donahue Cottage, who had known Tina R. for more than ten years, was in the class. She told the instructors about how she felt. She said it seemed unfair to move individuals away from the only family they have ever known and that she has felt sad about saying goodbye to ladies she has cared for over many years, knowing she would never see them again. She said she worries that after the move, those she has cared for may not receive the same quality of care she provided in Donahue Cottage and she is concerned about their safety. She also said it seems no one is concerned about the sadness and loss staff feels when an individual they have cared for moves away.

Of course, the instructor responded to the employee's concerns. But many in attendance, including myself, could see that the responses, no matter how good, were not enough. That is why Brenda Brown, the Transitional Case Manager at VDC, and I have dis-

cussed how we can alleviate some of the unease around this and future moves into the community. *They have plan. And they will keep us posted on how it works out.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**New Jersey Protection & Advocacy, Inc.** has changed its name to **Disability Rights New Jersey**. Please visit their new website for more information at: <http://www.drnj.org/>.

The Arc of New Jersey is pleased to announce an important seminar for Staff and Families! **THE IMPACT OF UPCOMING CHANGES IN THE MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT ON DUAL ELIGIBLES WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.**

Beginning on January 1, 2009, there will be significant changes in Medicare Part D, the federal drug benefit that is used by all dual eligibles (persons who have both Medicaid and Medicare) to obtain their prescription medications. This seminar is for employees of DDD provider agencies, DDD case managers, family members and health care professionals who care for dually eligible consumers. **THERE IS NO CHARGE, BUT PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.** The 1st seminar is Thursday, November 6th in Scotch Plains, NJ. For more information, please contact Diane Flynn at The ARC of NJ, at [dflynn@arcnj.org](mailto:dflynn@arcnj.org) or by phone at 732-246-2525, ext. 28.

**New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP) 25th Annual Conference & Pre-Conference Symposium**

"Building Upon Our Successes, Embracing Our Future"

Pre-Conference – Thursday, November 20, 2008 1:30 PM – 5:30 PM

Conference – Friday, November 21, 2008 8:30 AM – 3:45 PM