

DDD Today

A Publication of the Division of Developmental Disabilities

Chris Christie, Governor
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor

Vol. X, Issue II March - April 2011
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Jennifer Velez, Commissioner
Dawn Apgar, Deputy Commissioner

Today's Quotes: "Placing one foot in front of the other, I've climbed to higher lengths. Reaching beyond my own limitations, to show my inner strength. No obstacle too hard, for this warrior to overcome. I'm just a man on a mission, to prove my disability hasn't won." Robert M. Hensel, disability advocate with spina bifida

DDD Surpasses Halfway Point in DDS Caseload Transition

After over two years of planning, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) launched a collaboration with the Division of Disability Services (DDS) in an effort to better serve individuals with developmental disabilities by streamlining their access to information about available resources.

By placing a call to the Office of Information and Assistance Services (OIAS) at DDS, DDD-eligible individuals and their families should find it easier to have their questions answered and to find information about community-based assistance. The partnership was also created to reduce the caseloads of case managers so they can focus more on individuals with intense needs.

The process of transferring consumers to OIAS officially began in July of 2009 and, to date, almost 11,000 consumers have been switched over.

Joe Amoroso, Acting Director of DDS shares his viewpoint with DDD on the current state of the transition process:

What is the role of DDS' Information and Referral Service (I&R) within the Office of Information and Assistance Services in New Jersey?



Joseph Amoroso, featured above, is the Acting Director of the NJ Division of Disability Services.

The service was founded to be the single point of entry into the Human Services system. We handle a wide variety of matters, from access issues to the need for utility assistance.

When did DDS' I&R Service begin and why was it created?

In 1997, a group of advocates came together to discuss the lack of access to services. They wanted to be able to have a central number to call where they could speak to someone to obtain the information they needed.

As a result, the Information and Referral Unit was officially established in August of 1999.

I understand that DDS' I&R Specialists have special training. Can you explain?

Our I&R Specialists are unique in that they hold a national cer-

tification through the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS).

(Note: According to their website, AIRS is a credentialing authority that offers an accreditation program that measures an organization's ability to meet AIRS Standards as well as a certification program that evaluates the competence of I&R practitioners.)

I&R Specialists also complete a one-year apprenticeship after passing a comprehensive exam and then they continue their training under a Specialist with Advanced Standing.

The great part about AIRS is that it exposes I&R Specialists to the workings of other Human Services systems, such as agencies that address issues involving domestic violence. This is vital because disability-related matters can intertwine with other issues, like abuse. After becoming AIRS certified, our specialists are able to better serve people as Human Services clients and not just as people with disabilities.

Moreover, our Specialists are trained to delve into the heart of the matter at-hand since there are times when a problem is actually more involved or has

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Regional News from DDD

At the end of January, DDD hosted a unique conference called Exploitation to Prosecution. The conference was sponsored by the Office of the Public Guardian/Adult Protective Services (APS) in an effort to help staff protect our consumers' finances.

According to Maureen Pathe, who presented a number of statistics, about 16 percent of the cases reported to APS between 2007-2009 involved financial abuses. Three presenters also spoke on the topic, including:

- Alexandria G. Khalil, of the Office of the

Public Guardian, who discussed how the Social Security Administration investigates exploitation of funds;

- Detective Robin Morante, from the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office, who addressed how

exploitation is criminally prosecuted; and

- Special Agent Robert Glantz, of the Internal Revenue Service, talked about how they prosecute cases.

About 75 people from DDD and the Department of Human Services attended the event.

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multi-layers than what the caller originally states.

Your staff is very busy, but families are concerned when they have to leave a voicemail message. How does your staff handle those calls?

Voicemail is an inevitable reality on days when our Specialists get an influx of calls. We see voicemail as tool and can assure families that their calls will be returned. We strive to return calls in a timely fashion and even go over a list of messages

each morning to ensure this is done.

DDS is now serving more than 11,000 DDD-eligible individuals and their families. How do you explain to DDD-eligible individuals and their families the benefits of working with DDS, rather than with a DDD case manager?

The benefit is knowledge across the Human Services system. A DDD case manager knows about DDD services, whereas DDS staff possess

knowledge that spans across other areas, such as Medicaid and Social Security. So, in essence, you can say at DDS, our expertise goes beyond DDD services. However, we will send someone back to DDD, if that is where he or she will be better served.

How frequently do families assigned to I&R typically call for assistance?

It varies. Sometimes, families call just one time; others might call daily for a while if we're working on a complicated issue. No matter what, our goal is to be as accessible to the public as possible.

How does the process work when you receive a call from a DDD family?

Depending upon the situation, some people call and can be helped instantly. With others, it may require some research and, therefore, more time on our end to provide an answer. In those cases, we ask that families be patient while we look into the matter. As an aside, we

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also appreciate those opportunities to conduct research in order to expand our knowledge base.

We also hope families realize that the value of I&R services shouldn't be based on the outcome alone. For example, due to certain processes that are in place, an individual in need of specific services may still be denied once we refer him/her to a provider. In that case, we encourage the family to reach out to us again so we can explore other avenues for them to pursue.

Can you give some examples of families you have helped because you were able to direct them to other types of services and assistance, when they may have thought only DDD could help them?

One example of this was when the family of a 16 year old girl with Autism called us. The family, who was from Monmouth County, had contacted DDS to initiate a Family Support application in order to cover the cost of counseling services. During the interview, the Information and Referral Specialist discovered that the client was covered by NJ Medicaid and then arranged for her to get the needed mental health services through Medicaid instead of through DDD. Her father told the I&R Specialist that he never received any explanation of Medicaid coverage and, therefore, did not know that mental health services were included in the coverage.

Another example involved a two year old boy from Middlesex County who has a genetic dis-

order. His father contacted DDS to begin a Family Support application in order to get help with paying for some old and ongoing medical expenses that were proving to be a hardship. The Information and Referral Specialist explained to the father that all the expenses were tax deductible on the family's Federal Tax Return. The family was coached on the completion of



the required paperwork and also referred to the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund Commission to complete an application to get assistance with paying the outstanding medical bills.

Before DDS became responsible for DDD's individuals, it was already receiving as many as 8,000 calls a year from people with disabilities who were looking for assistance. How has DDS managed the additional

responsibilities it has acquired through its new relationship with DDD?

DDD families are typically not new to DDS. Many do call in seeking other services. With the caseload transition, it is a work in progress. There have been some issues along the way, but we have done our best to resolve them as quickly as possible. Overall, we feel we are serving families well.

Families assigned to DDS sometimes say they are worried about not being able to get services from DDD if they develop a need for them. Can you explain how you and your staff respond when you encounter an individual with a need for a DDD service?

Any issues that we feel should be handled by DDD are referred back over to DDD, with one of our professionals explaining the reason for the transfer.

We have also worked with DDD to establish an Interim Case Manager Unit that provides an assessment and triage to aid in the situation. Many of these cases end up with DDS again. It is our goal to then find answers or solutions to help families, whether it be on a State or local level or through another Division or non-profit agency. Most families do not mind where the solution comes from, just as long as assistance is provided.

For more information on the Division of Disability Services, see their website at: www.state.nj.us/human_services/dds or call 1-888-285-3036.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2011 Transition to Adult Life Workshop

Offered by the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), this presentation will provide information on post-secondary education options, employment opportunities, and adult service systems for individuals with disabilities. Parents and young adults will learn how to access the information, resources, and support needed to plan for a successful future at home, school, and in the community.

Register online at www.spanworkshopregistrations.eventbrite.com or contact Vivian DeWitt at 973-642-8100, ext. 116. To learn more about SPAN, visit www.spannj.org.

NJ Travel Independence Program Offers Training for Those with Disabilities

A local non-profit organization, **NJ TIP Inc.** is dedicated to increasing the independence and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities and older adults by empowering them to use the public transit system safely and independently. Programs vary by County and available funding sources, but currently include:

Passaic County Travel Independence Program (PCTIP)

This is a new program that will start in April. It will offer small group travel training and one-on-one travel instruction to persons with disabilities who are seeking or have obtained employment. It will also offer Train-the-Trainer Seminars on public transportation and travel training to vocational rehabilitation counselors and job coaches.

One-on-One Travel Instruction for Access Link riders

NJ TRANSIT funds this program for Access Link applicants and riders who live in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Somerset and Union Counties.

This is one-on-one, on-vehicle instruction which teaches participants one or two specific routes to destinations such as a worksite or training program, a shopping mall, or a medical office.

MCTIP

Small group travel training in Middlesex County. The travel instructors go to a location such as a group home and teach two travel training classes and lead two trips on a county shuttle, bus and/or train. This is appropriate for groups of 5-10 individuals with disabilities.

In-School Travel Training

We work with high school transition programs to teach basic traffic safety and public transit skills to students in the last year or two of high school. Some schools utilize our services throughout the year; others choose a shorter program of 3-4 classes and 1-2 trips.

For more information or to schedule a training, call 973-533-1662.



ANNOUNCEMENTS *(continued)*

Spring 2011 Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series

The Spring 2011 Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series is a community and continuing education activity of **The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Department of Pediatrics.**

There is no registration fee, but advanced registration is required. Sessions are held from 9:30 am – 12:30 pm. For more details and to register, visit our website at: <http://rwjms.umdj.edu/boggscenter>

- Friday, April 8 *Augmentative Communication: A Parent's View***
 Julia Pearce
 Hilton-Woodbridge
- Friday, April 15 *Community Building, Friendships, & Social Relationships***
 Angela Amado, Ph.D.
 Hilton-Woodbridge
- Friday, April 29 *Realizing Better Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities***
 William Kiernan, Ph.D.
 Doubletree Guest Suites, Mt. Laurel
- Friday, May 6 *A Personal Approach to Quality***
 Tina Campanella, M.A.
 Doubletree Guest Suites, Mt. Laurel



2011 Sprout Film Festival

Organizers of the 2011 Sprout Film Festival are inviting the general public to experience film and video related to the field of developmental disabilities. According to the film festival's website, "People with developmental disabilities as subjects and performers remain marginalized in the media. The Sprout Film Festival aims to raise their profile by showcasing works of all genres featuring this population.

By presenting films of artistry and intellect, the festival hopes to reinforce accurate portrayals of people with developmental disabilities and expose the general public to important issues facing this population. The goal is an enjoyable and enlightening experience that will help breakdown stereotypes, promoting a greater acceptance of differences and awareness of similarities."

This year, organizers will be screening 50 unique films from 16 different countries between **Friday, April 29 and Sunday, May 1, 2011.**

The location is:

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Ruth and Harold D. Uris Center
 For Education at 81st St. & 5th Avenue in New York City**

For additional information or questions, contact Anthony Di Salvo at 1-888-222-9575 or at Anthony@GoSprout.org. Also, through www.sproutflix.org, people may purchase many of the memorable, entertaining, and important films screened at the festivals over the years.

ANNOUNCEMENTS *(continued)*

UMDNJ Launches 24-Hour Helpline for Moms (or Dads) of Children with Special Needs

“Mom 2 Mom” is a 24-hour helpline for mothers of children with special needs that was recently launched by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The women who serve as peer counselors when answering calls have their own children with special needs.

Mothers with special needs children are at-risk for depression and related disorders (Reuters, 4/18/2008). Studies show parents of special needs children have significantly higher divorce rates than those with typically developing children. Medical illness, financial stressors, faith based issues, and employment struggles often accompany the challenges of being a primary caregiver of a special needs child.

When you become a mother it is often a miraculous experience in your life. When your child is identified as having special needs, it is potentially the most devastating experience of your life. As the primary caregiver, mothers try to “fix” everything for their child. Some challenges cannot be fixed, but rather adapted to. The “MOM 2 MOM” Peer Support Helpline Program answers the need.

An abundance of resources for children with special needs have been established with a focus on advocacy, education, and financial support for those loved ones. The missing link, however, has been the recognition for the needed services for the primary caregiver’s mental health and wellness, specifically a service for mothers.

By dialing **1-877-914-MOM2 (1-877-914-6662)**, a mother of a child with special needs will receive the following services:

Mom 2 Mom Peer Support

M2M Peer Supporters will be available to provide telephone peer support to callers in need. Moms of special needs children trained in peer counseling and crisis support will offer peer support, explain resources, and explore your needs. Mom 2 Mom peer support is also available through our website for a live chat experience.

Mom 2 Mom Clinical Assessment

M2M Clinicians will be on the helpline as part of the team of clinical professionals available to do telephonic assessment and gauge the depression, anxiety, and family and marital issues, and so forth, that may be impacting your life.

Mom 2 Mom Network

A M2M database of specially trained service providers will be available for referrals for your mental health needs.

MOM 2 MOM Support Groups

Within your communities, Mom Peer Supporters will be available every month for Mom 2 Mom support groups.



The link to their brochure is: <http://www.njarch.org/images/M2M%20brochure.pdf>

ANNOUNCEMENTS *(continued)*

NJACP 2011 Workshop Series Schedule

The New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP) assists member agencies in providing quality supports and services for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Throughout the year, NJACP will host various workshops. For registration information or a list of future workshops, go to www.njacp.org.

Rutgers Conference on Transportation Options for Individuals with Autism and Related Developmental Disabilities

Date:	April 20, 2011	Location:	Busch Campus Student Center Rutgers University 604 Bartholomew Road Piscataway, NJ 08854
Time:	8:00 AM – 3:00 PM		
Fee:	Free Event		

Purpose:

Designed for educators, transition coordinators, and adult support staff, this one-day conference will introduce a range of transportation options that can be embedded in current educational and life skills programming. The goal of this conference is not only to help facilitate technology transfer, but also promote a dialogue between service providers and the needs of the developmentally disabled community, who are often under-utilizing existing transportation infrastructure.

Topics to include:

- NJ Community Transportation Services
- NJ Travel Independence Program
- NJ Transit and Accesslink
- Driver evaluation program for individuals on the spectrum
- Utilization of smart phones and assistive technology for independent travel

To register*, go to:

<https://www.cvent.com/EVENTS/Register/IdentityConfirmation.aspx?e=d5f144c8-4004-4ffc-9a79-7c165185701d>

* Continental breakfast and lunch are included in the program.

For questions, contact:

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Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Phone: 732-445-3632, ext. 155



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**DDD Information and DHS
Central Registry Hotline:
1-800-832-9173**

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) was created in response to the need for better and more effective services for state residents with developmental disabilities. Advocates for those services included many parents and other family members who wanted community-based alternatives to the institutional care that had been their only option for many decades.

Today, more than 40,000 individuals are eligible to receive services funded by the division, including a growing number who are under the age of 22. Most DDD-eligible individuals live in the community, either with family or in a community residence such as a group home or supervised apartment or in a Community Care Residence with a family caregiver. Almost 2,700 individuals reside in one of the seven developmental centers now administered by DDD.

Visit us on the Web at: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd