The August 2012 issue of Project Bridge includes project updates from the past few months and events that will take place in September. Please send news and events for the September issue to msands@udel.edu by August 10.

**PROJECT UPDATES**

- The Health and Wellness Unit at the Center for Disabilities Studies received a $900,000 grant (#FOA DD12-1204) to continue its Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities (HDWD) project over the next three years. The grant, titled *Improving the Health of People with Disabilities Through State-Based Public Health Programs*, will develop and strengthen health-related disability programs in Delaware. It was awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. Delaware is one of 18 states receiving this funding, effective July 1, 2012, to promote health, prevent chronic disease and increase the quality of life among people with disabilities.

HDWD has received funding from CDC since 2007 to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. The project has acted as a catalyst for systems change in order to make health and wellness services and programs more accessible and inclusive. Eileen Sparling, project director for HDWD, highlights the importance of using a portion of the funding for the planned statewide public health needs assessment of the target population. “This assessment will provide the first comprehensive description of the target population in terms of demographics, health disparities and barriers to receiving high-quality health care. We will integrate available health data, assessments of the environment in terms of accessibility, and community input to create a portrait of disability and health in Delaware.” A three-year strategic plan will be developed to guide CDS and its partners, including the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, in creating inclusive policies, effective interventions and comprehensive surveillance. CDS also is collaborating with the University of Delaware’s College of Health Sciences and the Delaware Education Research and Development Center.
CDS has been selected to be Delaware’s certified entity to distribute communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind through the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). This program is funded by the Federal Communications Commission, which is mandated by Section 105 of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act to provide funding for local deaf-blind programs. CDS partnered with the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired and the Delaware Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind to apply for the funding, which totaled $69,696 for the state. The Center will coordinate the program and procure equipment for distribution.

Brian Freedman, Wendy Claiser and Debbie Bain, staff members of the Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program, presented a poster at the annual Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) Director’s Meeting in New Orleans in July. Their presentation was called “Career and Life Studies Certificate: Campus Connections.” Brian also participated in a panel discussion for TPSID Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and presented updates on the “Family Transition and Engagement” SIG, which he oversees.

Brian Freedman is a co-author of an article that was published in the June 28, 2012 issue of Journal of Child and Family Studies. “Relationship Quality as a Moderator of Anxiety in Siblings of Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders or Down Syndrome” is available for download online.

CDS and Delaware have again been recognized for successfully promoting text4baby, a free service using evidence-based materials from the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition that helps pregnant women and new moms get information about caring for themselves and their children through weekly text messages. This year’s State Enrollment Contest separated participating states into three groups based on the overall distribution of live births. Delaware has been the weekly winner in its category for two separate weeks. The Coalition’s July 2 “Text4baby Tuesday” e-newsletter noted: “Delaware, who came in first in the 2011 Text4baby State Enrollment Contest, lead group 3 this week with an enrollment rate of 65/1000! Last month, Delaware’s state lead [Karen Zalewski] attended the Breast is Best 2012 Conference and connected with the Bayhealth Lactation Program Coordinator from Lewes, Delaware. Delaware continues to be a leader in outreach by promoting the service at conferences, and with continued support from Senator Tom Carper. Thank you for all of your hard work, Delaware!”

CDS is looking for original artwork for its 2011-2012 Annual Report/2013 Calendar. Each month the calendar showcases a different piece of art and one of the Center’s activities or projects. This year, artwork will be selected from works submitted by Delaware artists with disabilities and those produced at Artfest—the Center’s annual art workshop for people with disabilities. This year’s Artfest will be on September 22 (see item in the Events section for more information). If you are an artist with a disability interested in submitting artwork or know someone who may be interested in this opportunity, please see flyer or contact Michele Sands at msands@udel.edu for more information and submission guidelines before the September 21 deadline.
CLSC held an orientation for new students and their families on June 25. The class of 2014 has seven students, who will attend the program’s one-week summer session August 13–17, along with the second year students (class of 2013). Fall semester for both cohorts of CLSC students begins on August 28.

Alisha Boyd has “retired” from the Center’s domestic violence project to await the birth of her third child. CDS thanks Alisha for her work on the project and wishes her and her family well.

Congratulations to CDS Director Beth Mineo and TEEM staff member Chelsea Claiser on their recent marriages! Beth and Gary were wed on July 7 and Chelsea and Alex’s wedding took place July 20. Best wishes to both happy couples!

Autism Delaware has awarded its Daniel and Lois Gray Memorial Scholarship to three University of Delaware students—Allison Heimler, Stephen Kanefsky and Elizabeth Watson. Allison works as a research assistant on the Customized Language Representation project with CDS staff members Chris Barthold and Beth Mineo; Elizabeth is minoring in the disabilities studies. See the UDaily article for more information about the scholarship and its recipients.

The Summer 2012 issue of delAware has been published. The focus of this special six-page issue is self-advocacy. If you don’t receive a copy in the mail in the near future, please send an email to msands@udel.edu to request a copy.

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Center Convenes Autism Summit to Receive Input for State Plan

On September 1, 2011, CDS was awarded a two-year planning grant to support the development of a comprehensive state plan to improve services for children and adults with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, the grant activities to date have focused on gathering information from families and self-advocates and bringing stakeholders together to develop a plan for services for individuals with ASD across the lifespan.

CDS is facilitating this process, under the leadership of Annalisa Ekbladh, program coordinator in the Health and Wellness Unit. The Center held focus groups with parents and caregivers and developed three separate statewide needs assessment surveys to target school age, adult and adult self-advocate populations. The surveys were based on a Pennsylvania needs assessment survey; the Act Early Team revised the survey and customized it to suit Delaware’s issues and priorities. They were widely distributed through the Department of Education (DOE), Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Autism Delaware and the POWR program, Parent Information Center, Delaware Family Voices and other groups. In total, 286 school-age, 77 adult and 15 adult self-advocate surveys were completed. This was the first time the adult self-advocate group has been singled out as its own population of respondents.
In June, equipped with data from the needs assessment and focus groups, CDS, DOE and Autism Delaware convened a summit for all stakeholders to share their concerns and goals for the state. Mary Ann Mieczkowski, director of the Delaware Department of Education’s Exceptional Children Resources, and Theda Ellis, executive director of Autism Delaware, joined Annalisa in welcoming the nearly 100 attendees to the day-long event.

The goal of the summit was to initiate the process of developing a statewide plan for improving and coordinating services and support to Delaware’s individuals with autism. The expected long-term outcome of both the summit and the state plan is to assure that all Delawareans with ASD have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to live independent and interdependent lives within the community.

Summit facilitator Jerry Petroff, associate professor of education at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) and associate director of the Center for Autism at TCNJ, asked participants to share their goals for Delawareans with ASD and for the future of services for those with ASD. After discussing “what is working, what we think is working and what we would like to know,” parents and family members shared their unique perspectives on successful programs and areas of improvement in the state. Participants then formed three break-out groups to focus on specific areas: healthcare, education and employment/independent living. Family support and partnerships were included as topics across all three focus areas.

At the end of the day, each workgroup shared its recommendations with all summit participants. These recommendations included a streamlined network of healthcare services for individuals with autism, centralization of autism resources, and capacity-building activities such as increased trainings for school and medical professionals.

Moving forward, participants were given the opportunity to join a workgroup that will meet in July and August or a consultant group that will serve as a resource to each workgroup. CDS will continue to support the workgroups and provide data that will help to guide the process. A completed draft of the group’s plan is due September 15, 2012 with the proposed state plan to follow by September 30.

For more information about the autism state plan or planning process, contact Annalisa Ekbladh at annalisa@udel.edu.

RESOURCES

- The 2012-13 Guide to Services for Older Delawareans and Persons with Disabilities is now available online and in print. It is published every two years by the Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Disabilities (DSAAPD). To request a copy, contact the Delaware Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) at 1-800-223-9074 or DelawareADRC@state.de.us. You may also pick up a copy of the guide at CDS.
CDS still has copies of “Voting in Delaware: A Guide for Citizens with Disabilities,” a resource guide about voting and voter’s rights, with particular focus on voters with disabilities. It includes sections on political parties, different methods of voting, and information about absentee ballots and voter registration. Please contact Jamie Wolfe at jlw@udel.edu if you are interested in receiving one or more copies of this resource.

Residents of Delaware may qualify for a free window air conditioner through the 2012 Summer Cooling Program. Applications are accepted at the Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, Inc. in Wilmington on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays from 7–9 a.m. or 5–7 p.m. The program is sponsored by the Delaware Energy Assistance Program (DEAP). Visit the DEAP website for more information about where and how to apply in each of the three counties.

**EVENTS**

Visit the CDS website calendar at [http://www.udel.edu/cds/index_calendar.html](http://www.udel.edu/cds/index_calendar.html) for more events.

- **September 13–14. 19th Annual Mid-Atlantic ADA Update Conference**, Baltimore. Presented by the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center, this conference provides the latest information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Representatives from federal agencies join experts in the fields of accessibility and design, employment and other ADA issues in providing attendees with information about current government and regional practices, policies and programs. Phyllis Guinivan, project coordinator of the Emergency Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities project at CDS, will be presenting at this conference. Registration is available online.

- **September 15. 2012 Families Day at the Beach**, Cape Henlopen State Park, Lewes. Special Olympics Delaware holds this annual event as an opportunity for families to gather and enjoy a relaxed day at the beach, including a fishing tournament, barbecue and ride on the Cape May-Lewes Ferry. For more information, contact Brenda Zullo at bzullo@udel.edu or visit the Special Olympics website.

- **September 20. Direct Support Professionals Day Celebration**, Executive Banquet & Conference Center, Newark, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. This annual event is designed to promote the valued role Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) play in supporting people with disabilities as well as to provide networking for DSPs. Three DSPs from Delaware will be honored at the event for their outstanding service.

- **September 21. Community Advisory Council meeting**, Center for Disabilities Studies, Newark. This quarterly meeting of the Center’s advisory council begins with an orientation for new members from 12 noon–1 p.m. The business meeting will take place from 1 to 3 p.m.

- **September 22. Artfest**, New Castle County Absalom Jones Community Center, 310 Kiamensi Road, Newport, 10 a.m.–12 noon. This workshop is for artists with a disability and others with a disability
who want to create artwork for the 2011-2012 CDS annual report. Lisa Bartoli of Art Therapy Express, Inc. will lead participants in projects that will be part of the design of the annual report. See flyer or contact Michele Sands at msands@udel.edu or 302-831-3038 for more information.

- **October 5. Delaware Educator Fall Symposium**, Dover Downs Hotel and Conference Center, 8 a.m. –4 p.m. “Shifting Perspectives: A New View on Accessing the General Education Curriculum for Students with Intellectual Disabilities” is a symposium for teachers, administrators, speech and language pathologists and other professionals who work with students with significant disabilities. It is hosted by the ACCESS (Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Success) project at CDS.
  - An afternoon panel discussion will include Beth Mineo and MaryAnn Mieczkowski, Delaware Department of Education, and other administrators discussing the impact of these issues on our schools in Delaware.
  - Registration information will be posted on the ACCESS website when it is available.

- **October 17. Disability Mentoring Day**, Newark, 8 a.m.–2 p.m. As part of a national effort to promote career development for students with disabilities through hands-on career exploration, on-site job shadowing and ongoing peer mentoring, CDS is sponsoring the fourth annual **Disability Mentoring Day** on October 17. On this day, the University of Delaware, Newark businesses and CDS will join together to offer adults with disabilities the opportunity to explore their roles in the workforce and cultivate professional interests. Disability Mentoring Day is held in October in conjunction with National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

- **Save the dates** for these annual conferences:
  - January 17, 2013. LIFE Conference.
  - March 14, 2013. Inclusion Conference.

**ADVOCACY CORNER**

This section is dedicated to informing you about advocacy efforts and new or pending legislation or policies that relate to individuals with disabilities. If you would like to suggest information to share in upcoming editions of Project Bridge, contact msands@udel.edu.

- During the 146th General Assembly, Delaware’s disability community worked together to educate legislators about issues that are important for people with disabilities. A number of bills were passed that will have positive long-term results for people with disabilities, their families and the professionals who support them. Information about these bills is listed below, as compiled by CAC member and State Council for Persons with Disabilities Director Kyle Hodges and CDS Disabilities
Specialist Jamie Wolfe. Many of the bills have been signed into law by Governor Jack Markell.

- **H.B. 202**—This bill makes it an offense to use an accessible parking plate or placard issued to another person unless that person is also in the vehicle. The bill aims to curb the use of accessible parking spaces by persons who do not actually need them. The State Council for Persons with Disabilities offered an amendment that clarified the following: drivers other than the owner of a vehicle with a special plate may transport a qualifying person with a disability; a violation occurs only upon unauthorized "parking" in a defined space or zone rather than "use"; and a violation would not occur if parking to pick up a qualifying person with a disability who is not yet present in the vehicle.

- **H.B. 245**—This bill amended disability-related references in many civil statutes to delete pejorative language and adopt a **“people-first” language**. It affects similar amendments within the criminal code.

- **H.B. 319**—All persons with disabilities, including veterans with service-connected disabilities, have a right to the opportunity for competitive employment. To promote the realization of this right, this bill creates the **Employment First Act**. The Act requires that state agencies that provide services and support to persons with disabilities shall consider, as their first option, competitive employment in an integrated setting for persons with disabilities. It further establishes an Employment First Oversight Commission as part of the State Council for Persons with Disabilities. *(The bill was signed at a special event at Bank of America on July 16; see [article](#) on the governor’s website.)*

- **H.B. 365**—This bill allows parents and guardians who successfully challenge the denial of services to their children with special needs to recover the costs of expert witnesses that they needed to hire to advocate for their children. Only parents and guardians who prevailed in their appeals of service denials would be entitled to recover the costs of their experts.

- **S.B. 248**—This bill is intended to provide persons with hearing loss and/or speech disabilities with telecommunications service for analog communications devices. The service is known as Captioned Telephone, or **CapTel**. Delaware had been the only state that did not provide such service. The bill also creates a funding mechanism for Relay Service for persons who have hearing loss and/or speech disabilities.

- **H.B. 348**—The most significant feature for individuals with disabilities is the “long-overdue” removal of a restriction on voting assistance and substitution of the federal standard. As background, effective January 1, 1984, the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 was amended
to authorize voter assistance in federal elections. Voters requiring assistance due to blindness, disability or illiteracy may opt for such assistance from an individual of their choice who is not affiliated with their employer or union. Current Delaware law is more restrictive (e.g. it disallows assistance based on illiteracy and only permits another adult voter to provide accompaniment). In practice, the State Commissioner of Elections has promoted compliance with the federal law. The bill brings the Delaware statute in line with federal law.

- **S.C.R. 34**—This resolution creates a **State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs** (the “Task Force”) within the Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) with research support from CDS and the Catalyst Center. The Task Force will study the transitional needs of children and youth with disabilities and special health care needs, develop strategies to ensure successful transition from children and adolescent services into adult services, and present a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

- **S.B. 234**—This bill establishes the offense of Child Abuse. These new statutes combine current statutes and redefine physical injury and serious physical injury to reflect the medical realities of pain and impairment suffered by children. A new section provides special protection to infants, toddlers and children who have disabilities. The statute also expands the state of mind necessary for certain offenses against children allowing for more effective prosecution of parents who subject their children to abuse by others and fail to protect their children.

- **H.B. 311**—This bill updates the laws under which an adult can be held involuntarily for up to 24 hours for a **mental health evaluation**. In place of the current system where a person is transported in handcuffs by police to a hospital emergency department, the bill allows a psychiatrist or credentialed mental health screener to evaluate a person anywhere and then transport that person to the most appropriate location for evaluation or treatment in the most appropriate and least restrictive manner.

- ** HB 261**—This bill amends the current **utility medical certification program** that protects customers with a medical certification from termination of utility services. This bill clarifies the parameters for a utility medical certification and grants protections to customers who need to be on the program. In addition, it expands the class of medical professionals able to certify a condition to include both advanced nurse practitioners and physician assistants and allows for medical professionals from other states that have similar accreditation to Delaware to be able to provide certification.

- **S.B. 22**—The bill provides for insurance coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of **autism spectrum disorders**.
If you have any questions or comments, please contact Jamie Wolfe at jlw@udel.edu. To find further information about the bills listed above and other state legislation, visit the Bill Tracking page on the state of Delaware website.

CONTACT US

The University of Delaware’s Center for Disabilities Studies is located at 461 Wyoming Road, Newark, Delaware, 19716. Please call us at 302-831-6974 or 302-831-4689 (TDD), send an email to ud-cds@udel.edu or visit our website at www.udel.edu/cds.

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Core funding for the Center for Disabilities Studies originates from Grant #90DD0688/01 from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD), which is part of the Administration for Community Living, a new branch within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HSS). AIDD was formerly known as the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, which was part of HSS’s Administration for Children and Families.