PROJECT BRIDGE

OCTOBER 2014

Project Bridge is the periodic newsletter of the Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) within the University of Delaware’s College of Education and Human Development. This issue includes project updates from the past few months and events taking place in August and September.

Please send news and events for the next issue to Ben Szmidt at bszmidt@udel.edu by November 15.

CDS IN THE NEWS

The News Journal, NPR and 6ABC cover Artfest

More than 100 participants, volunteers and family members took part in this year’s Artfest in Newport on Oct. 25. Hosted by CDS and Art Therapy Express, the creative workshop and community celebration gave people with disabilities opportunities to participate in several accessible art projects. Students from the University of Delaware were also on hand to help participants tap their “inner artist.” The News Journal covered the event. You can view the newspaper article here. 6ABC filmed Artfest. And WDDE, Delaware’s NPR news station, published a web article in advance of the event. You can view the WDDE article here.

Artfest participant Haley Shiber with volunteers Natalie Pesetsky and Chip Keever.

CDS’s Brian Freedman, state officials tackle unemployment in News Journal

More leaders in our community need to make employing people with disabilities a priority if we are to appreciably increase their representation in the workforce. So said Brian Freedman, CDS’s director of transition, education and employment, along with Rita Landgraf, Delaware’s secretary of Health and Social Services, Mark Murphy, the state’s secretary of Education, and Andrea Guest, director of Delaware’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, in a letter to the editor. Only 30 percent of young adults with disabilities currently participate in the workforce. You can read the letter here.
RESOURCES

Family SHADE’s website makes navigating services a breeze

Family SHADE’s redesigned website includes a new “Roadmap to Services” that helps families navigate existing services and supports for children and youth with special healthcare needs. The roadmap features 12 “starting points,” or topic areas: diagnosis, legal services, library/resources, education, insurance, transition, healthcare, behavioral health, financial, family support, community life, and early childhood. The roadmap was developed by the Delaware chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Delaware Family Voices. CDS administers the Family SHADE website, and will manage the roadmap. See and sample the roadmap here!

PROJECT UPDATES

CDS helps Sesame Street chase the clouds away

Sesame Workshop, the organization behind Sesame Street, tapped CDS to coordinate a discussion group in Delaware focused on a new initiative to help reduce the stigma around children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). On Oct. 7 in Lewes, 11 family members of children with ASD were shown new content and characters created under the “See Amazing in All Children” initiative, which promotes inclusion of children with ASD. Sesame Workshop also displayed resources for families of children with ASD to help parents work through everyday situations, such as brushing teeth and visiting a doctor.

CDS project welcomes USF professor to lead training

DE-PBS hosted two days of training on the Prevent-Teach-Reinforce (PTR) model, led by Dr. Rose Iovannone from the University of South Florida. PTR is an approach to understanding a student’s challenging behavior and creating an individualized intervention plan to best support the student. This team-driven model differs from traditional approaches by including teacher coaching support and a daily progress monitoring tool that measures the impact of the intervention plan. More than 100 participants from 55 schools attended the first day of training. Five school psychologists attended the second day of training in order to become Master Facilitators who can train and coach others in the PTR model.
Helping Delaware schools reach students with disabilities

Members of the Systematic Processes for Enhancing and Assessing Communication Supports (SPEACS) initiative held training sessions on Oct. 1, 2 and 3 for 11 school teams from six districts across the state. The teams received two days of training focused on recognizing communicative competence and intent, interpreting communicative behaviors and developing strategies and action plans for communication for students with significant disabilities. Beyond the training, teams will receive coaching and support throughout the year to help them advance their students toward goals in their action plans. SPEACS collaborated with Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative to provide assistive technology resources and support to the school teams.

CDS hosts CERTs training

CDS’s Citizen Corps Council hosted a two-day Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training on Oct. 17 and Oct. 18. CERT is a national program that teaches members of the public how to protect themselves and their families before, during and after a major disaster. This month’s training offered information on disaster preparedness, medical operations, light search and rescue, utility safety, fire suppression, terrorism, animals in disasters, and more. Those who attended received a certificate of training, and a CERT kit with helmet, vest and emergency supplies. If you would like information on the next CERT training, contact Phyllis Guinivan.

CDS also hosted an evening event on emergency preparedness, Oct. 22, at the Delaware Biotechnology Institute in Newark. The event highlighted the new allreadyde.org website and the new delawaretips.org app.

STAFF UPDATES

A departure

Julie Bowers, ACCESS Project leader at CDS, left in October to assume a new position at the Nevada Department of Education. Julie worked at CDS since January 2012, helping to promote access to the general education curriculum for students with significant disabilities. Under Julie’s guidance, the ACCESS project expanded to include several new initiatives, including Writing Rigorous IEPs to Teach Educational Standards (WRITES), Systematic Processes for Enhancing and Assessing Communication Supports (SPEACS), and the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM).

Suzanne Milbourne publishes article on a mixed approach to education

Suzanne Milbourne, project director for the Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration, co-authored an article in the latest issue of Young Exceptional Children Monograph 16: Blending Practices for All Children. The article, “Together is Better: Environmental Teaching Practices to Support All Children’s Learning,” suggests it is
beneficial to combine lessons on a particular skill with environmental practices that encourage participation in daily activities. While this approach may seem like non-instruction, systematic reviews about the use of adaptations and assistive technology demonstrate a strong evidence base supporting use of environmental practices to promote participation and learning. The article also expands our understanding of environmental practices by providing examples of real-life stories.

Jamie Wolfe presents on living independently

Disabilities specialist Jamie Wolfe presented at the second annual Delaware Self Advocacy Conference in Smyrna on Oct. 18. Jamie spoke about what it is like to live in the community as an individual with a disability and as a self-advocate. She stressed that individuals with disabilities have the right to live wherever they choose. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, states must provide proper supports and services as defined by individuals and their medical professionals. State agencies that provide long-term services and supports cannot deny this right by citing cost, so long as the person’s support professionals endorse community living as a viable option. Jamie also examined the risks people with disabilities take when living alone, such as the possibility of not having immediate assistance in a time of need.

Brian Freedman offers education options for students with ASD

Brian Freedman presented at the Kennedy Krieger Institute’s 14th Annual Autism Conference on supporting students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in college. Brian discussed challenges they can face, such as a high expectation of independence, learning to use proactive communication when they need assistance, and new rules for social interaction with professors and peers. He recommended individual coaching for these students to help them become more organized and stronger advocates. Brian also discussed how parents can help, including facilitating their child’s independence throughout high school and encouraging self-advocacy.

Suzanne Milbourne shows the way to assistive technology

Suzanne Milbourne was a presenter at three different sessions during the Division for Early Childhood’s Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and their Families. Suzanne was a panelist for two sessions covering what assistive technology is, what is available and how to apply it to one’s life. She also presented on how to use CARA’s Kit to promote a child’s successful participation within everyday routines and activities. Suzanne is a co-author of CARA’s kit, which is a six-step process to building a bridge between the skills that a child can currently perform and the requirements or expectations of an activity/routine.
SOCIAL MEDIA

If you’re among the growing numbers of people who like CDS on Facebook, you saw WNBA star and UD alum Elena Delle Donne’s account of how her sister inspired her to create a more inclusive world; you read about CDS director Beth Mineo’s online chat in the ASHA Leader, where she answered questions from clinicians about how to get augmentative and alternative technology they need for their clients; you caught President Obama’s proclamation of October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month; and you got continuing updates on Artfest, Disability Mentoring Day, our emergency preparedness workshop and the upcoming Lunchtime learning session.

If you haven’t yet liked CDS on Facebook, what’s keeping you? Connect with us now!

CDS on Twitter

In October, followers of CDS on Twitter learned about Gov. Markell’s Small Business Focus Program that gives businesses owned by people with disabilities a chance to compete for government contracts; they were informed about the challenges faced by people with disabilities entering the work force; and they found events specifically for people with disabilities all around the state.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

EVENTS

October 31

2014 Delaware Community of Practice Transition and Self Determination Conference
The Delaware Community of Practice will hold their annual Transition and Self Determination Conference on Oct. 31 at the Dover Downs Conference Center in Dover. This conference is designed for youth ages 14-21 receiving special education services, their families and the educators and professionals who serve them.

November 3

Lunchtime Learning: Disabilities Studies Minor – CDS will devote its latest installment of Lunchtime Learning to Disabilities Studies, UD’s most popular minor. Laura Eisenman, associate professor in UD’s School of Education and the faculty coordinator of the Disabilities Studies minor, will demonstrate with other presenters how students who study the minor can better support, appreciate and work and live alongside the 1 billion people worldwide who experience disability. Click here for more information.

November 9-12

its 67 member organizations workshops to better engage the public in disability issues, along with sessions on education, employment and community living for people with disabilities. More information on this conference can be found on the AUCD website.

**November 11**

**CLSC Open House** – From 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at CDS, located at 461 Wyoming Rd. in Newark, join Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program students as they present a typical day in their lives at UD. They will share personal experiences, moments of success and the challenges they face. The event is an exploratory opportunity for students and families to consider if this postsecondary option is a good fit for them. RSVP to clsc-info@udel.edu.

Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.

**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.

**Disability Mentoring Day**

CDS’s Transition, Education and Employment Model unit hosted the sixth annual Disability Mentoring Day on Oct. 15, where more than 25 young adults with disabilities got to shadow and network with managers and employers in the Newark area. Participants were able to see a diverse set of jobs first hand, including food service, technology support, communications and mechanical work. The day ended with a special ceremony where Gov. Jack Markell congratulated each of the participants. The governor also said that when more people in society believe in students with disabilities, those students will “believe in themselves.”

**Nominations for Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee**

The federal Department of Health and Human Services is taking nominations for members of the national Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee who are not employed by the federal government, as required by the Autism CARES Act of 2014. The Act, signed on Aug. 8, mandates that the committee will include individuals on the spectrum for autism, family members, and representatives from research, service, and advocacy organizations nationwide. There are currently 29 members on the committee which, according to the Act, can accommodate more members. If individuals from Delaware are appointed to the committee, the state should have a stronger opportunity to receive federal grant funds for programs that provide supports and services for individuals with ASD and their families. Nominations are due by Friday, Nov. 14, and may be sent via e-mail
Managed care group dropping from Medicaid

On Jan. 1, 2015, Delaware Physicians Care Inc. (DPCI) will be withdrawing from Medicaid as a managed care organization. As a result, 137,200 clients who utilize DPCI through Medicaid for their medical and long-term care services will need to switch coverage to either United Healthcare or Highmark. Approximately 2,800 people in this group rely on the Medicaid-funded MCO to stay in their homes with supports and services. The process of choosing a new managed care organization will begin Nov. 15 and end Jan. 1, 2015. If a plan is not selected, those using DPCI will be automatically enrolled in Highmark. Clients will begin receiving open enrollment packages in the mail containing information about United Health Care or Highmark by Oct. 31. Clients can also contact their health benefits managers with questions or concerns. Many within the disability community fear that there will be a lapse or reduction in daily medical and social services they rely on to stay healthy and maintain a good quality of life. If clients do not receive information in a timely manner or have questions about the Medicaid Managed Care process, they can contact their health benefits manager or the Medicaid plan manager, Kathleen Dougherty, at (302) 453-4124 or Kathleen.dougherty@state.de.us.

Give your “two-cents” on the state budget

Throughout November, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will be holding public hearings in order to develop the fiscal year 2016 state budget. Cabinet secretaries will have the opportunity to discuss major accomplishments from FY 2015 and challenges they foresee in the upcoming fiscal year. The public is invited to provide comment. The dates for hearings of particular interest to the disability community are as follows:

- Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families, Senate chamber, Nov. 14, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Delaware Department of Transportation, Senate chamber, Nov. 18, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Senate chamber, Nov. 20, 1 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.
- Delaware State Housing Authority, Senate chamber, Nov. 21, 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

If you are interested in testifying or have general questions, please contact Valorie Luke at (302)672-5125.

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. You’ll also find CDS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/UDelCDS.
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