PROJECT BRIDGE

AUGUST 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 July and August.

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

CDS IN THE NEWS

iCanConnect promoted in newspapers and in UDaily

As administrator of the exceptional federal program that provides free communications technology to eligible people with combined hearing and vision loss, CDS produced and has been running promotions about iCanConnect in newspapers and on the newspaper’s websites statewide. UDaily also featured the program in August. To learn about eligibility, visit this iCanConnect website.

A July Reuters Health article highlighted a study co-authored by Jae Chul Lee, CDS’s health and wellness unit director, that explores health disparities among people with disabilities based on where they live. The study, originally published in Disability and Health Journal, found that people with disabilities who live in rural areas are less likely to get screened for colon and rectal cancers than those who live in urban areas, regardless of socioeconomic status or access to health care. The findings suggest that rural residents with disabilities may be at higher risk of getting diagnosed with late-stage cancer than urban residents with disabilities. Currently, colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S. The article is available on the Reuters website.
If you’re among the growing numbers of people who like CDS on Facebook, you learned this month how texting 911 in an emergency soon should become a commonplace alternative for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities, thanks to a new ruling from the Federal Communication Commission; you got word that UD Assistant Professor Stephanie Kerschbaum will conduct research on how faculty members with disabilities disclose those disabilities within the academic workplace; you heard that Congress may be on the verge of passing the Achieving a Better Life Experience, or ABLE Act, which would create a new, tax-free savings account for people with disabilities; and you read about a Pennsylvania barista’s wonderfully successful efforts to cultivate a special relationship with a young man with autism.

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

**CDS on Twitter**

In August, followers of CDS on Twitter learned about setbacks suffered by students with disabilities when their teachers take other jobs; they saw Pennsylvania follow Delaware by enacting a Down syndrome education act; and they heard about activities for people with disabilities in Newport, Hockessin and Lewes.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

**PROJECT UPDATES**

**Beth Mineo presents to American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**

CDS Director Beth Mineo contributed a pre-recorded presentation to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s e-conference regarding the value of interprofessional collaboration in serving individuals with significant disabilities. The presentation was available to more than 260 registrants from June 11-23 and included a live chat feature, enabling registrants to explore areas of interest in more depth. ASHA’s magazine, *The ASHA Leader*, will publish in October a section of Beth’s live chat that focused on practical tips for interprofessional collaboration as well as strategies promoting reimbursement for AAC devices and services. The full transcript of the live chat will be published on *The ASHA Leader*’s website.
Workshop for employers hiring people with disabilities

Max Kursh and Wendy Claiser from CDS’s TEEM unit led the first Employer Training Project Workshop on August 5 at CDS. Two hiring managers from New Castle County learned about strategies to hire and retain individuals with intellectual disabilities. The session focused on overcoming some of the challenges encountered by job seekers with disabilities, from applications to assessments. An individual with a disability also attended to add a personal perspective to the session. To get more information about the workshop or to sign up for a future session, contact Wendy Claiser.

Twenty years of assistive technology at Partners in Policymaking

Beth Mineo and Karen Latimer, assistive technology specialist at CDS, continued the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative’s 20-year tradition of presenting information about assistive technology (AT) for Partners in Policymaking™ trainees on Friday, July 25. Karen provided an AT overview while Beth explored policy and funding challenges and solutions. Sponsored by the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council, Partners in Policymaking is an innovative leadership training program designed for parents raising young or school-aged children with a developmental disability or young adults with developmental disabilities.

STAFF UPDATES

With the start of the new school year, CDS sends a fond farewell to our 2013-2014 graduate assistants and welcomes the incoming class of 2014-2015.

Departures

Katie Hoffman spent the last two years in the Communications and Advocacy unit. During her time at CDS, Katie spearheaded Artfest 2013 and worked on publications such as the annual report, delAware and Project Bridge. This fall, she will begin a full-time internship with the Appoquinimink School District, a final requirement to earn her Education Specialist degree in school psychology from UD. She looks forward to working with students, teachers and families in a way that acknowledges and emphasizes individual abilities.

Ben Wallace is a Disaster Science and Management M.S. student who started at CDS in 2013 after finishing an internship at the Council of State Governments in Manhattan. He worked as project coordinator on the National Core Indicators (NCI) survey in a partnership with the Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities Services. The project conducted almost 200 in-person surveys of individuals with developmental disabilities throughout Delaware. After Ben finishes his thesis, he intends to use his experience at CDS to support the inclusion of vulnerable populations in disaster management.

Lindsey Mantz served as a graduate assistant for the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project for three years. In that time, she supported the Project by analyzing Delaware School Climate Survey results, evaluating Delaware schools’ Positive Behavior Support programs and assisting and presenting at professional development workshops for educators. As a doctoral student specializing in School Psychology, Lindsey will teach a master’s level course in the fall
focusing on educational achievement testing. She says she intends to apply what she learned at CDS in her future school psychology career.

Samantha Gralla was a graduate assistant with the ACCESS Project and left CDS to begin a full-time school psychology internship with the Freehold Regional High School District and the Marlboro School District in Monmouth County, N.J. Samantha is excited to begin the final phase of earning her Education Specialist degree in school psychology and looks forward to returning home and supporting the academic and social-emotional needs of students in her community.

Arrivals

Ariel Perez is a UD graduate with a B.S. in Early Childhood Education. She is continuing her studies at UD as a graduate student in the Exceptional Children and Youth Program with a concentration in Autism and Severe Disabilities. Ariel is looking forward to joining the CDS team and working with ACCESS to provide support for children and teachers.

Carly Nigro will be working with the Positive Behavior Support Project at CDS. Carly graduated from UD with majors in Psychology and Spanish and minors in Biology and Disabilities Studies. She is currently pursuing an Education Specialist degree in School Psychology.

Carly Herring is joining the TEEM unit. A recent graduate of Clemson University with a B.A. in Psychology and minor in Education, Carly will be pursuing her Masters and Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology and is excited to embark on her CDS adventure.

Margo Price graduated from UD in 2009 with a B.A. in English and a minor in History. This fall, she will begin pursuing a Master’s degree in Human Development and Family Studies and is thrilled to be joining the CLSC team. Previously, Margo served as an AmeriCorps VISTA member and Creative Mentoring Coordinator, worked with youth at the Fraim Boys and Girls Club of Wilmington and most recently was the Director of Religious Education at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County in Maryland.

Audrey Rossi recently joined the Communications and Advocacy unit at CDS, and will be helping facilitate projects such as Lunchtime Learning, Project Bridge and Artfest. Audrey is a UD graduate with a B.S. in Human Services, minor in Disabilities Studies, and is currently working toward a Master’s in Leadership in Human Development and Family Studies.

PROJECT UPDATES

Jae Chul Lee to explore Medicaid use in Delaware

Jae Chul Lee recently received funding from the College of Education and Human Development that supports his examination of Medicaid claims data. These data reflect the actual utilization of healthcare services in Delaware, which Jae Chul plans to use to inform ongoing research on health disparities.
George Bear and Megan Pell co-author new article

In an article published in Learning Environments Research (LER), CDS’s George Bear and Megan Pell, along with UD doctoral candidate Chunyan Yang and UD Alumni Dr. Claire Gaskin, confirmed that the teacher version of the Delaware School Climate Survey (DSCS) is a valid and reliable tool to collect information on school climate. The study also found that supportive school climate correlated with lower suspension and expulsion rates and higher academic achievement. The information was collected from the DSCS scores of 5,781 staff members in 132 Delaware Schools. The DSCS for teachers is now one of the few teacher climate surveys in the nation to have such evidence for its validity and reliability.

Annalisa Ekbladh appointed to autism task force

Annalisa Ekbladh, a program coordinator with the Health and Wellness unit, has been appointed to represent CDS on Delaware’s Autism Educational Task Force (Senate Continuing Resolution 65). The task force, which was created in July, will study the Blueprint for Collective Action, the state’s strategic plan to improve services and supports for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Then, the task force will make recommendations regarding the initiative and suggest possible funding sources for a statewide Autism Resource Center and Educational and Technical Assistance Teams. The goal is that seamless services are provided across the state. The task force will provide its recommendation to the governor on March 31, 2015.

EVENTS

September 9

Medicaid Mental/Behavioral/Emotional Health Care Call – 11 a.m to 1 p.m. Families and representatives from the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services, the Disabilities Law Program, Medicaid, Delaware Physicians Care Inc., United Healthcare and other agencies will participate in a call to answer questions about mental, behavioral, and emotional health. For more information, visit the Family Voices website.

September 12

Speech & Feeding Seminar – Easter Seals of New Castle, DE, 61 Corporate Circle, New Castle. Down Syndrome Association of Delaware will host a special one-day seminar focused on the development of oral-motor and feeding skills among those with Down syndrome from birth to adulthood. For more information, visit The DSA’s website.
September 13

**Sensory Friendly Movie** - 1365 N. Dupont Highway, Dover. Autism Delaware will be hosting a sensory friendly showing of “Dolphin Tales 2” at the Carmike Cinemas at the Dover Mall. For more information, visit [the event website](#).

September 14

**Delaware School for the Deaf Zumbathon** - 630 E. Chestnut Hill Road, Newark. DSD will host a Zumba dance event to raise money for the 2014 Family Learning Weekend. For more information, visit [the event website](#).

September 26

**Teen / Tween Asperger’s Game Night** - Autism Delaware Lewes Office, 17517 Nassau Commons Blvd., Unit 1, Lewes. Autism Delaware will be hosting a game night for those age 10 through 15. For more information, visit [the event’s website](#).

**Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.**

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**RESOURCES**

**Delaware creates website to help young people transition to adulthood**

The state recently launched DelAWARE DisABILITY HUB, a website that helps young people with disabilities and their families make the transition to adulthood. The site provides interactive tools, resources and personal stories about education, employment, health, housing, transportation, among other topics. More information can be found on [the DelAWARE DisABILITY HUB website](#).

**Assistive Technology On-Demand Webinar**

CDS’s Karen Latimer and the Parent Information Center of Delaware recorded a webinar about the basics of assistive technology and how you can help children use it more successfully. [Check out the webinar here](#).

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**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.

**Autism CARES Act becomes law**

President Obama signed the Autism CARES Act of 2014, sponsored by Reps. Chris Smith (R – N.J.) and Mike Doyle (D – Pa.) on August 8. The Act authorizes $1.3 billion over the next five years to assess the needs of the autism community, to determine effective data collection methods, to facilitate meaningful employment pathways for children with autism who are approaching adulthood, and to update the numbers on the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Funds also will be allocated for education, early detection and intervention efforts.
The Act directs the Interagency Autism Coordinating Council to include individuals with autism, family members and representatives from research, service and advocacy organizations.

**DHSS pursues grant to improve health care system**

The Delaware Health Care Commission is seeking $40 million from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services that would help develop plans to transform the quality and cost of health care in the state. The funding is part of a $700 million grant available all states. States that have applied will receive notice of grant awards this fall. For Delaware, the grant has 3 goals: reducing health related costs, improving the quality of the overall state system, and promoting better health for all Delawareans.

**CONTACT US**

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