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 updates from the past few months and a look forward to upcoming events.

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

YEAR IN REVIEW

Digital annual report with expanded content now available

For the first time, CDS’s digital annual report features content beyond what the Center’s calendar version of the report traditionally has offered CDS followers. This accessible and often interactive content features links to videos, slideshows, newspaper stories, a radio broadcast, research studies and PowerPoint presentations, alongside stories detailing what the Center and its staff did in the past fiscal year. You’ll also find links connecting you to CDS staff members mentioned in the report. Click here to view our 2013-2014 digital annual report.
IN THE NEWS

CDS talks emergency preparedness with WDEL 1150AM

On Jan. 14, WDEL's Allan Loudell and CDS's Phyllis Guinivan discussed how people with disabilities can better anticipate and handle emergencies. Guinivan, director of the Center's Emergency Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities Project, pointed out resources CDS recently developed to help people prepare for emergencies. They include: CDS’s emergency preparedness helpline, 855-READY-DE (855-732-3933); the interactive allreadyde.org website, which shows people how to develop personal readiness plans; and the delawaretips.org web app, which can improve how first responders and caregivers assist people with disabilities. You can listen to the full interview, read a transcript of the interview, and check out an article about the interview on WDEL’s website.

PROJECT UPDATES

CDS looks to engage young adults with new app

On Jan. 13, CDS’s Health and Wellness unit launched Healthy Transitions, a new mobile app designed to help young adults with special health care needs build skills needed to become more independent and manage their own health care. The app, funded by the Delaware Division of Public Health through a grant from the federal Health Resource and Service Administration, features videos and an interactive game that explain how to handle real life scenarios in four categories: healthcare, insurance, healthy lifestyles and relationships. The app’s content was adapted from a collaboration with Healthy Transitions New York, Parent Information Center of Delaware, Delaware Family Voices and Dietary Directions, Inc. The app can be downloaded for free through iTunes and Google Play. For more information, contact Annalisa Ekbladh at annalisa@udel.edu or 302-831-0626.
**CLSC students take center stage at Lunchtime Learning**

CDS’s Jan. 29 Lunchtime Learning session drew a full house of educators, students and community members to a discussion of UD’s Career and Life Studies Certificate (CLSC), a two-year program that offers young adults with intellectual disabilities access to a college education. CLSC program director Brian Freedman and five current CLSC students addressed everything from first-day-of-class jitters and excitement to how the students learn new skills to reach their career goals. Some of the students also described how the program is helping them to both maintain jobs while taking classes and make the choice to live independently for the first time. [Get more information about CLSC here.](#)

**A new insight into Delaware Medicaid data**

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities has awarded funding to CDS to support its examination of Delaware Medicaid data to learn more about the leading health issues among Delaware Medicaid enrollees with intellectual and developmental disabilities. CDS’s Beth Mineo and Jae Chul Lee will lead a team of researchers who will also look at health care utilization and cost. The team will also explore non-traumatic dental condition-related emergency department visits, the frequency of those visits, and their associated costs for enrollees. Lee says examining this data can guide the creation of programs and policies that will better address the complex health needs of people with disabilities. The research team also includes Mary Joan McDuffie from UD’s Center for Community Research and Services and Mia Papas from UD’s Behavioral Health and Nutrition Department in the College of Health Sciences.
New associate director at CDS

Brian Freedman was named associate director of CDS in January. In his newly expanded role, Freedman will provide oversight for the center’s daily operations, handle administration related to federal and state budget offices and manage the data collection processes and reporting for the Center’s core federal funding. He will also work with CDS Director Beth Mineo on strategic initiatives and contribute to the development and implementation of the Center’s strategic agenda. Freedman will continue to lead the Transition, Education & Employment Model (TEEM) Unit and its associated programs.

CDS staff present at 2015 LIFE Conference

Members of CDS’s staff and Community Advisory Council (CAC) led sessions on assistive technology (AT), public policy and accessibility in the community at the 2015 LIFE Conference on Jan. 15 in Dover.

Suzanne Milbourne of CDS’s Assistive Technology Unit discussed how public policy can make it easier for people with disabilities to get and use AT. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), she said, requires that AT be considered for every child who is eligible for early intervention services. Milbourne said the ideal relationship between AT providers and consumers is one in which they both understand that AT consists of a wide range of items that can make things easier for people with disabilities.

Eileen Sparling of CDS’s Health and Wellness Unit and CAC member Linda Heller examined accessibility barriers present in community settings in a presentation moderated by Sonja Rathel of CDS’s Assistive Technology Unit. Heller discussed barriers in faith-based communities, such as inaccessible worship facilities and community exclusion. Sparling addressed barriers that exist in medical offices, such as inaccessible medical equipment and communication issues. Each encouraged attendees to speak up when they notice an accessibility barrier in their community. The presentation also featured Kathryn Cieniewicz from Pivot Physical Therapy in Lewes, who discussed accessibility in residential settings.
**STUDENT UPDATES**

**Former CDS intern lands job with Johns Hopkins**

Former Career & Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program undergraduate intern Micah Bernard was recently hired at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center as a rehabilitation therapist in the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program. She will be working directly with clients with psychiatric disorders and assisting in the development of new curriculums for their wellness programs. In addition to her internship with the CLSC program, Micah graduated from UD with a minor in Disabilities Studies and worked as an interviewer for the National Core Indicators project. CDS congratulates Micah and wishes her continuing success.

![Micah Bernard](image)

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**CDS on Facebook**

If you’re among the growing numbers of people who like CDS on Facebook, you heard about UD professor and CDS advisor Karl Booksh’s initiative to prepare students with disabilities for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); you saw a video of UD’s College of Health Science raising money to buy adaptive bicycles for children with disabilities; you learned how disproportionately high numbers of people with disabilities who suffer hypertension can lower their blood pressure; and you encountered a horse therapy group in southern Delaware that found a place to call home … after 15 years.

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

**CDS on Twitter**

In December, followers of CDS on Twitter saw a retrospective on the previous year’s milestones for people with disabilities; heard about CDS’s open house featuring kid-friendly assistive technology; and learned about a local teen getting an award for sharing his passion for soccer with people with disabilities.

Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!
**RESOURCES**

**Award-winning website makes Twitter more accessible**

Recipient of the 2014 FCC Chairman's Award for Advancement in Accessibility, Easy Chirp is a Web-based Twitter interface that makes the social media service easier to use for people with disabilities. Easy Chirp recreates a user's Twitter feed in a way that is screen reader friendly and features an adjustable, high-contrast display. It’s available in English, Spanish, French, Dutch and Arabic languages. Visit the Easy Chirp website for more information.

**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.

**New home care rule from U.S. Department of Labor takes effect**

Beginning in January 2015, DOL is requiring that in-home workers who provide significant numbers of services other than companionship, and who are employed or jointly employed by someone other than the care recipient or the recipient's family, be compensated for overtime hours worked and for travel between work sites. As the National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities reports, this includes most care workers funded through Medicaid. Some advocates fear that if states don’t adequately adapt to the new rule, it could compromise the support people with disabilities need to live and work in the community.

**Advocates unveil 2014-2015 legislative agenda**

At the Jan. 15 LIFE Conference in Dover, Brian Hartman, project director of the Delaware Disabilities Law Program and a member of CDS’s Community Advisory Council, presented a legislative agenda for Delaware compiled by several leading disabilities-focused organizations. The agenda includes: development of a family support services home and community based waiver; tougher accessible parking laws; increased funding for the state’s Personal Attendant Services Program; replacing subminimum wages with competitive wages; reducing solitary confinement in correctional facilities; convening a legislative task force to consider alternatives to the state’s reform of Delaware’s paratransit service; convening a legislative task force to examine barriers that cause patients to be denied treatment needed for their mental health and for substance use; creating a task force to address the needs of people who are homeless in Delaware; and extending dental care coverage to adult Medicaid beneficiaries. Hartman also discussed benefits of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2014, which would direct funding to states and municipalities that adopt certain proven methodologies to fight addiction. Read more about the legislative agenda here.
EVENTS

February 13

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) winter demonstrations - DATI staff will demonstrate their selection of kid-friendly assistive technology devices, which DATI loans to families at no charge, at the Center for Disabilities Studies, 461 Wyoming Rd. in Newark, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. You can also see assistive technology in action between 9 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. at the Lab Preschool next door to CDS. Parking passes are not required. For more information, view the event flier or contact Joann McCafferty by email or by phone (302-831-0354).

February 19

Autism Delaware Speaker Series “Transition” – Vincent Varrassi of Varrassi Educational Associates will talk with families about important considerations for students with autism spectrum disorder who are advancing to secondary education. Visit the event’s website for more information.

February 27

Creating AT Solutions in Minutes – The Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration will present a hands-on workshop on how to create AT solutions in minutes. Dr. Therese Willkomm, known as “The MacGyver of Assistive Technology”, will be the featured presenter. Attendees will also get a preview of a new initiative being launched by the Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration called “fabricATe”. The event will run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Lunch will not be provided. To register, click here and use the password “AT solutions!” or call 302-831-0354.

March 9

2015 Inclusion Conference – Delaware’s 21st annual Inclusion Conference will be held at the Dover Downs Conference Center in Dover and will provide attendees with inclusive education best practices. Workshops will include teaching strategies, positive behavior supports, assistive technology, access to the general education curriculum, English language learners and early childhood. To register, click here.

Visit the CDS calendar for more upcoming events.

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.

Notice of Non-discrimination, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

The University of Delaware is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. For the University’s complete non-discrimination statement, visit the UD Legal Notices website page at http://www.udel.edu/aboutus/legalnotices.html.

Core funding for the Center for Disabilities Studies originates from Grant # 90DD0688-03-00 from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD). AIDD is part of the Administration for Community Living, a branch within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.