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 July 15.

IN THE NEWS

We’re blogging!

In June, CDS launched its Inclusion blog to engage the disability community, the public and policy makers in a provocative discussion of issues with the potential to bring about positive changes in the lives of people with disabilities. You can visit the blog at http://blog.cds.udel.edu. And please don’t just read what’s there, comment!

Our bloggers include advocates and experts, people with disabilities and people without disabilities, staff at CDS and writers outside CDS. The first wave of postings you’ll find at the Inclusion blog include entries from Brian Bard, a self-advocate and program specialist with The National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, who tackles persistent challenges faced by people in need of personal care assistants; Megan Pell, a coach for the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project at CDS, who addresses portrayals of disability and sexuality on film; and Cory Nourie, Patient Transition Social Work Coordinator at the Nemours Alfred I duPont Hospital for Children, who notes why acknowledging people with disabilities is a moral imperative.

Against the backdrop of the rule from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that will enable more people with disabilities to live and work in their communities, CDS director Beth Mineo probes the complexities of what actually constitutes community living. And
Victor Schaffner, CDS’s director of communications and advocacy, gives readers insights into what they can expect to find at the Inclusion blog, week in, week out.

We hope you’ll regularly visit the blog, and become part of the conversation.

This is major: Disabilities Studies minor still Number 1 at UD

According to enrollment numbers from the Office of the University of Delaware’s Registrar, Disabilities Studies has remained UD’s largest minor for the second year in a row. The minor increased its enrollment to 459 students, 20 students more than last year. School of Education Associate Professor Laura Eisenman, faculty coordinator of the minor, attributes the growth of the minor to an increasing interest in disability issues and recognition that the minor provides a strong foundation for disability-related graduate programs. Since 1997, 799 students have graduated with a Disabilities Studies minor from UD. One hundred twenty-two students graduated with the Disabilities Studies minor this year.

UDaily highlights Eisenman panel on ADA

CDS’s Laura Eisenman took part in a panel discussion on the Americans with Disabilities Act at the Morris Library on June 3. Eisenman presented an introduction to the world of disabilities, covering topics such as how the ADA defines disability, how to talk about disabilities and principals of Universal Design. Anne Jannarone, director of the Office of Disability Support Services, and Jonathan Jeffery, associate librarian, also discussed disabilities services available on campus at UD. View Eisenman’s PowerPoint and read the UDaily article here.

PROJECT UPDATES

Family SHADE expands networking breakfasts

Family SHADE, the CDS-administered alliance of organizations that serves children with special healthcare needs, is partnering with Autism Delaware to offer bi-monthly networking breakfasts in Kent and Sussex counties. These breakfasts will give more opportunities for member organizations and parents of children with special healthcare needs to share information about services and events. Family SHADE will continue to host networking breakfasts in New Castle County.
More schools enlist DE-PBS’s help

In June, CDS’s DE-PBS project held a workshop for schools interested in developing a School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) program. SWPBS is the first tier of Positive Behavior Supports, a three-tiered approach to develop positive learning environments and prevent problem behaviors. DE-PBS staff, including Debby Boyer, Megan Pell, Lindsey Mantz, Jessica Kradjel and Sarah Hearn, guided representatives from eight public schools and a 21st Century afterschool program through the initial steps of development, evaluation and implementation of a SWPBS program. Each team of school representatives will continue working with DE-PBS throughout the summer as they develop their SWPBS programs.

DECATD expands work in education, health sectors

The Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration (DECATD) at CDS began training Christiana Early Education Center teachers in May in best practices for using assistive technology in school settings. The best practices include considering AT for all students with disabilities regardless of the type or severity of the disability and assessing students’ AT needs.

DECATD also met with BAYADA clinicians to review their work together over the last 12 months. The clinicians’ responses were resoundingly positive with many reporting that they feel more knowledgeable about AT and how to use it with young children with disabilities.

NCI has record-setting year

Delaware’s National Core Indicators (NCI) project exceeded its goal of surveying 400 Delawareans with disabilities during the just completed fiscal year. The national assessment collects data concerning the performance of public disabilities services. NCI hopes the data will not only help improve these services but also add knowledge to the field and influence state and national policy. Delaware’s Division of Developmental Disability Services chose CDS to conduct the First State’s NCI assessments in 2013. Reaching the goal of 400 completed surveys enables Delaware’s data to be included in NCI’s national report. The report will come out in early 2016. Last year, CDS’s NCI project completed 175 surveys.
DATI expands inventory

The Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) has added hundreds of new items to its inventory over the past year. Among the new products are a variety of augmentative communication devices, switches and mounting systems, tools for students with print disabilities, toys and postural supports, and seating systems for young children. Delawareans can borrow virtually all of the items in DATI’s inventory at no cost. This recent expansion was made possible through the support of the Tobin Fund for Visual Assistive Technology at UD, the Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, the Delaware Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. To view DATI’s entire inventory, visit their website.

STAFF UPDATES

Grad student departures

After two years with the Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities (HDWD) project, Kara Magane is joining the University of Pennsylvania Health System as a clinical research coordinator. At CDS, Kara worked on a variety of HDWD projects including the Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities. She also managed the HDWD Health Promotion Workgroup and the project’s communications. Kara graduated in May with a M.S. in Health Promotion from the College of Health Sciences.

Matt Wattenmaker is joining the Laurel School District as a high school special education co-teacher after two years with CDS’s TEEM unit. At CDS, he worked with the Career and Life Studies Certificate Program, the National Core Indicators Project and Swank Employment Services. Matt graduated in May with a M.Ed. in Special Education with a focus on Autism and Severe Disabilities from the College of Education and Human Development.
**Rebecca Vitelli** is continuing her studies at UD’s College of Education and Human Development this summer after one semester with the Communications and Advocacy unit. Rebecca worked on several of the unit’s projects, such as the delAware and Project Bridge. She is pursuing a M.Ed. in Autism and Severe Disabilities.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**CDS on Facebook**

If you’re among the growing number of people who like [CDS on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), you saw highlights from the Special Olympic Delaware Summer Games; you read about the connection of people with disabilities to the leaderboard at the U.S. Open golf tournament; and you learned about the importance of inclusive physical education from a fitness guru in Newark.

If you haven’t yet liked [CDS on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), what’s keeping you? Connect with us now!

**CDS on Twitter**

In June, followers of CDS on Twitter learned about Robin Long, a Special Olympics World Games athlete from Delaware who got to train with Michael Phelps, history’s most decorated Olympian; read how Delaware music legend Dr. Harmonica’s unique playing style was influenced by a childhood disability; and found out how a UD adapted physical activity class taught a polio survivor how to swim.
Get social, and follow CDS on Twitter!

RESOURCES

Journey: A Positive Social Network

Former University of Nebraska Quarterback Taylor Martinez has created a social media app specifically for people with disabilities. The app, called Journey, encourages people with intellectual, physical and other disabilities to share their stories and to learn from and encourage others. The app is available to iOS users at no cost through iTunes.

Screen shot from the Journey app.

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.

Delaware’s ABLE Act

Gov. Jack Markell signed House Bill 60 in June, creating an Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Program in Delaware. The program allows eligible people with disabilities to establish accounts that can be used for education, housing and other expenses while protecting their eligibility for Medicaid and other federal benefits.

New law keeps parents in the loop on IEPs

Senate Bill 33 was signed into law in June, implementing recommendations provided by the state’s Individualized Education Program Improvement Task Force. Its provisions include requiring providers to solicit the input of parents and children regarding the IEP process before IEP meetings occur, and ensuring that teachers, staff, and contract employees are not subject to retaliation for offering their candid opinions during the IEP process.

Statewide debate over testing opt-out bill

The state House of Representatives and Senate passed House Bill 50, which would allow the parents or guardians of a child to opt the child out of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System (SBAS). SBAS is a yearly test used by Delaware public schools covering topics
included in Common Core State Standards. Advocates of the bill say that the Smarter Balanced test is of no use to them and that it will be administered to unfairly punish teachers and schools. Opponents of the bill say that Smarter Balanced test scores are important in making sure low-income and minority students aren’t left behind. Gov. Markell has voiced his opposition to the bill, but according to a June 17 News Journal article, he won’t make a decision until the bill reaches his desk.

**Ending prohibition for people with disabilities**

State legislators have approved House Bill 119, which would lift a legal prohibition on selling alcoholic beverages to a person with a mental condition or disability. The current law is a vestige of the 1935 Code, predating both the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Delaware Equal Accommodations Law.

**Autism Services Advancement Package update**

Senate Bills 92 and 93, which together make up the “Autism Services Advancement Package,” were unanimously voted out of the Senate Education Committee on June 3. However, they did not come to a vote on the Senate floor. The package is designed to establish the Interagency Committee for Autism, create the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism and enhance resources available to the Statewide Director of Autism Educational Services. There remains significant enthusiasm and support for introducing an autism services package again in the next legislative session.

**EVENTS**

**July 4**

*Inclusion Means Everyone 5K* – Registration for this run/walk will be at 8 a.m. The run/walk will start at 9 a.m. Everyone – no matter their level of ability – is encouraged to participate. All money raised will go towards teaching physical education teachers in Delaware schools how to work with students with special needs. For more information and to register, visit the event’s website.

**July 7**

*Nemours Summer Handwriting Camp* – Nemours Department of Therapeutic Services is offering a summer camp for children who are experiencing fine motor difficulties related to drawing, coloring, holding writing utensils, and writing. The program will focus on introducing the alphabet in a developmentally appropriate sequence, in order to help children improve legibility and gain self-confidence with writing. Classes for kindergarten and 1st grade will be held Tuesdays from July 7 through August 11, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Classes for 2nd and 3rd grade will be held Thursdays from July 9 through August 13, 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, view the camp’s flier.

**July 8**

*Standards Based IEPs* – The Parent Information Center of Delaware will present a free IEP workshop at the Appoquinimink Library in Middletown from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. The workshop will cover topics such as the characteristics of a quality IEP, how data are used in
creating an IEP and the importance of the Present Level of Performance. For more information and to register, visit the event’s website.

**July 18**

**Delaware to celebrate 25th anniversary of the ADA**

Delawareans will get the opportunity to celebrate the Americans with Disabilities Act’s 25th anniversary with a special event on July 18 in Dover from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event, co-sponsored by CDS, will feature advocates Daniese McMullen-Powell, John McNeal and Emmanuel Jenkins speaking about the past, present and future of the ADA. The event will also include a parade, giveaways, food and live entertainment at Legislative Mall and Loockerman Street. The US Business Leadership Network’s America’s Disability Rights Museum on Wheels will also be stopping in Dover as a part of its national tour. Volunteers are needed for the July 18 event. For more information on volunteering, contact Stefanie Lancaster. For more information on the event, see the event flier.

**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.

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