

Background:

- **Conference Attendees Reports:** Several Council and Staff members have recently attended state and national level conferences. Included are written reports of their experiences and reactions.

- **Remembrance of Rene Requenez:** Social time for Council members has been scheduled on Thursday evening and will include a tribute to Rene. A condolence letter to the Requenez family from Governor Rick Perry is included.

Committee of the Whole

Agenda Item III.

Expected Action:

No action required.

Conference Reports

National Association of Councils for Developmental Disabilities Fall Conference

October 27-29, 2009

Albuquerque, NM

Traveler: Amy Sharp, Council Member

Employment First: From Policy to Practice

- Check out Alliance for Full Participation, State Employee Leadership Network, National Core Indicators.
- Start Up – program in Alaska.
- Lisa Mills has some Best Practices on Employment (WI).
- Use policy changes to focus attention, align policy w/practices and money, make it a Priority.
- Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) AAIDD helps create individual budget allocations.
- CA's Employment 1st Bill passed and illustrated costs were neutral .
- Study on how adults spend their days.
- They have 200 pages of consumer friendly materials.

Advancing Strong Leadership in DD

- NC adapted the U of Delaware NCLDD week long program to develop leaders in DD.

From Me to We: Self Advocates Take the Lead Towards Systems Change and Sustainability

- Grass roots organizations need support.
- Self Advocates need choices.
- Partners w/ common goals.
- Work towards the goal.

AdvoGirl

- Self Advocate starts a cable program to interview various people.
- Questions and discusses disability issues with politicians, policy makers, community members, etc.

Wanted: Big Changes in State Systems

- Discussion about the Gap Reports in Tx, Fl and Il.
- Tx was shamed again for its over-reliance on using state operating institutions.
- Use State of State report to ID the time needed to make changes.
- QoL research shows that dispersed housing wins versus planned housing, etc. Based on international research.

Naturally Occurring Communities

- Interesting discussion on growing old for all and the issues involved.
- Again, research shows that people can stay at home while supported by their neighbors/communities.

Tomorrow is Halloween

- Boring discussion on challenges.

Take Home Ideas

- Good resources: Supports Intensity Scale, employment guides for consumers.
- Liked emphasis on supporting grass roots organizations.
- Liked emphasis on positive impact of Partners program. Idea to train each year in a region then move to another region; this facilitates networking that can self sustain.

Traveler: Kristen Cox, Council Member

- 1) The conference was outstanding. It was helpful to see what other Councils are doing, what works for them, and get creative ideas on programs we can have here.
- 2) The **self-advocate panel** discussion was by far my biggest “aha” moment. Seeing all of the various individuals with disabilities – some significant – so involved, active, positive, and charged up about their future and how they can impact it, gave me goose bumps. While Partners taught me that people with disabilities should advocate for themselves, I had not seen it in action at this level until NACDD. If we who don’t have visible disabilities were not here to advocate for those who do, I have full confidence they could do an admirable job on their own!
- 3) **Robotics Competition** - One idea that really struck home – partly because I am a technology person but more because of the documented outcome – was the project with the university giving away a monetary (nominal) prize for the student who could program a robot to help a person with a disability in a very specific scenario. Not only did the robots perform the intended tasks, but the college students who worked on the projects had to interact with people with disabilities in the course of their project, and virtually all of them said that they came away with a better understanding and appreciation for how people with disabilities live. When you consider that college students are just months away from entering the work force where they can have a huge influence on our world, that is a great time and way to capture their attention so they consider disability issues in whatever career path they choose.

Traveler: Mary Durham, Council Member

General Comments

- Having had the pleasure of attending several NACDD conferences in the past, I found this one to be one of their best to date. Whether due to the beautiful scenery or nippy temperatures (including watching the snow fall one afternoon), the passion and energy of the participants seemed to be at an all time high. Program planners definitely found programs worthy of presentation and consideration of replication. Highlighted a couple I found of most interest and benefit.
- **AdvoGirl** - Panel of self-advocates done in an interview format was both unique in format and extremely educational. For the new-comer or “old-timer”, the passion of the individuals and their determinations and successes demonstrated clearly demonstrates what is possible. One of the best self-advocate presentations in years and loved the cable format/interviews.
- **Project SEARCH High School Transition Project** - Finally a transition project that had meaningful outcomes with employment. This session to me was worth the whole conference. Texas DDC should pursue doing something like this. Project worked in conjunction with teaching hospitals, partnering with schools. Teaching hospitals are in unique situation in that they are by nature set up to do training already (internships). Priority given to students in their last year of High School eligibility who have already met their IEP credits. Move into the hospital program for training for one year and work in hospital environment all day, everyday – immersed into the system learning different jobs associated with hospital on a rotation basis – 3 different rotations lasting 12 weeks each. 14 year program with 141 sites in 32 different states. Funding from Hospital or business, community rehab providers, vocational rehab, school districts all working together within program. Most students participating in program have more significant disabilities and most end up with a full time job at competitive salaries and full health benefits. A definite project for us to research more and consider doing something in Texas.
- **Innovative Collaborations to Promote the Principles of Self Determination, Self Advocacy and Leadership** - New Mexico program started as a grant project and now a permanent part of the DDC

budget (with state funding). Collaboration model between self-advocates and higher education developing training modules with outcome of developing greater skills for the individual in self-determination and advocacy. New modules developed with each new group of self-advocates. Strong learning environment with each member of project responsible for research and contributing to the final presentation. Focus on learning to negotiate and compromise, team building. Have developed 44 modules to date with 6 more in the works including topics such as how to start your own business, sitting on boards, internet safety, etc.

- **Advancing Strong Leadership in Developmental Disabilities** - Did not take much from this but left wanting more specific information.
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Traveler: Melissa Loe, Communications Coordinator

Overall conference feedback

- Great way to network; invaluable to be able to put a face with a name, and to meet other DDC employees and learn more about what they are doing.
- Excellent immersion into topics and challenges I continue to learn about.
- Impressed with the variety of session topics

The biggest “take away” or aha moment

- I was surprised that the DD Council interest in social media was not necessarily indicative of their interest in creating a presence for their Council, but rather was related to getting more individuals with disabilities online. There is only one other DD Council using Twitter and Facebook (Wisconsin); most hadn't even considered social media as an additional communication method for sharing information and networking with others. TCDD is truly leading the way and has already been contacted by Michigan DDC for suggestions on launching a Facebook page.

Useful ideas and or other state example(s) TCDD may consider for discussion at a future time

- Outside of a conference session, Michigan DDC folks talked about the success of their YouTube page where they house Council and grantee products. This may be an option for TCDD to consider as we expand our online presence, and try to reach people through a number of different outlets.
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Got Determination? Self Determination Conference

Houston, Texas

Hosted by Imagine Enterprise

September 15 -17, 2009

Traveler: Joe Rivas, Council Member

Overall Conference Feedback

- I enjoyed it very much. It appeared to be very much enjoyed by others. I think everyone, including myself, enjoyed the personal stories about successful self-employment. I also enjoy the opportunity to network with other agencies and other persons.

Biggest “Take Away” or “Aha” Moment

- My biggest “aha” moment was when I understood how agencies such as (DARS) are now leaning towards “self-employment” with their consumers than competitive employment. Self-employment has fewer requirements on SSI/Medicaid and income tax reports than competitive employments. Plus, consumers

can access funds for job related equipment through state agencies and private contributors if they run or operate their own small business.

Useful ideas or notes about TCDD grantees that we should consider for discussion at a future time

- I would have liked to see and hear more success stories about persons with disabilities that have succeeded in the world of competitive employment. Was it more difficult for them to find jobs? Did they fear the loss of social benefits such as SSI/Medicaid? How did they handle the situation? And, would they encourage competitive employment over self employment to persons with severe disabilities?
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Traveler: Sonya Hosey, TCDD Grants Specialist

Comments

Approx 200+ participants from across the state, with National/state/self-advocate presenters. Most presentations were led by self-advocates. Some of the presenters spoke on the impact of SD principles, circle-of-support which led to better quality of life. I was particularly impressed with direct impact of SD, e.g., moving out of ICF-MR into homes, obtaining meaningful jobs and experiencing basic freedoms that we often take for granted. I was concerned that some state organization misrepresented SD. Imagine videotaped portion of the SD conference-“What Does SD Means to Me?” The project will submit with final report.

**Circle of Ten – Network for Collaboration Funders Forum
College Station
October 8-9**

Traveler: Sonya Hosey, TCDD Grants Specialist

Comments: Gathering of Texas A & M, Workforce, Councils of Government, & Faith organizations. National, State, Private funders explained how to get grants in rural communities. I would recommend TCDD participate to collaborate with underserved rural communities in future events.

**Arc of Texas Camp for All
And, Micro-Board Presentation
October 23- 25, 2009**

Traveler: Susan Vardell, Council Member

Overall conference feedback

- The conference was great. The format was to provide broad based information in small groups on a variety of topics. The first “round” you could pick 4 topic areas, the second round you could select 3 topic areas and in the final round you could select one of two topic areas. Although the sessions were short, there were lots of handouts and contact information for attendees to get more information at a later date. Attendees were exposed to A LOT of information in a short period of time. It really got you thinking!

The biggest “take away” or aha moment

- My biggest takeaway moment was the realization that my son will be 18 in 2.5 years and that all the rules change as he becomes an “adult”. I learned about the importance of good transition IEPs, the difference between guardianship and power of attorney, special/pooled trusts, employment, benefits

and more. I realized I needed to *immediately* add a new focus as I advocate for and plan with my son for his adult years.

I was further inspired and have contacted my local ISD to create a work placement at my organization for a student needing “field work” as a part of his/her IEP

- **Panel Presentation on Micro-Boards** - Micro-board presentation was great. It was meaningful to the participants to hear directly from those involved in micro-boards that the process was, in fact, “doable” and a real option for those who were interested. ARC staff was available to answer the tough questions.

Useful Ideas

- Splitting the kids from parents was a great idea. The kids had wonderful experiences while the parents got the knowledge, support and contacts they needed. It was VERY special when extra time was allotted for parents to join their kids to share the “kid experience”. The kids having “been there, done that!” were so proud to show their parents around and help them have some of those same experiences. As a parent, advocate and caregiver, so much time is spent in handling the day-to-day things. I REALLY enjoyed hanging out with my son and doing fun stuff....turns out I don’t just love him...I like him too!

National Association for Dual Diagnosis 26th Annual Conference

New Orleans

October 20-23, 2009

Traveler: Belinda Carlton, TCDD Public Policy Specialist

Overall Conference Feedback

- The National Association for Dual Diagnosis (NADD) conference was enlightening. The conference presenters were PhD’s, M.D.’s and clinicians who provided evidence-based research on co-occurring mental health and intellectual developmental disabilities (MH/IDD).

Biggest “Take Away” or “Aha” Moment

- Every session I attended had “aha” moments and all information provided was relevant. The overarching takeaway was that we are not recognizing nor addressing the needs of youth with MH/IDD. Schools ingrain problem behavior with seclusion and restraints and bring charges against students rather than addressing the mental health disability. Over 70% are arrested. Some states are extremely successful at rehabilitating offenders with MH/IDD. They have learned that these youth have not been taught how to behave and that when given positive behavior supports and taught social skills training they successfully earn their way back to the community at large.

Useful ideas or other state's examples that TCDD should consider for discussion at a future time

- Health development is one of the keys to prevent psychosocial and mental health problems. TCDD is currently funding two positive behavior supports projects in Education Service Centers and several peer to peer projects. TCDD may want to consider expanding projects that teach positive behavior supports, perhaps creating an RFP for Positive Behavior Support peer to peer project for educators.



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

RICK PERRY
GOVERNOR

December 11, 2009

Mr. and Mrs. Hermilo Requenez
1115 South 13th Avenue
Edinburg, Texas 78539-5615

Dear Requenez Family:

Please accept our condolences on the passing of your loved one, Rene Requenez. Rene lived life to the fullest and made a distinct difference.

His love for his family and friends will never be forgotten, and I am certain that he will be greatly missed.

Words are never enough at times like this, as we seek to comfort family and friends as they grieve for loved ones.

First Lady Anita Perry and I pray for God's blessings for you and your family today and in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

A large, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Perry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "R" at the beginning.

Rick Perry
Governor