

Highlights

1999



The
Maryland
Developmental Disabilities Council



Marylanders Moving To The Community

In the case of *Olmstead v. L.C. and E. W.*, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of community settings over institutions for people with disabilities. The Court found that the unjustified isolation of institutionalized people with disabilities is discrimination under current law.

The State of Maryland initially joined twenty-two states in requesting that the Supreme Court hear the *Olmstead* case and requesting limitations on the rights of people with disabilities to live in the community. After strong advocacy led by the Maryland Council and its fourteen cross-disability collaborators, the State of Maryland changed its position in this matter. The Maryland Attorney General notified the lead counsel for the states that Maryland would not be joining the states' brief or continuing to argue for limited rights for people with disabilities. Over half of the original states subsequently followed Maryland's lead, and refused to support the argument that community options should be limited.

Additionally, in order to demonstrate his support for people with disabilities living in communities, Governor Parris Glendening agreed to convene workgroups to develop and issue recommendations that will assist people with disabilities, currently institutionalized in a variety of settings, to move in a timely way to homes in our communities, with appropriate and quality supports. The Council actively participates in the workgroups. Recommendations will be forwarded to the Governor in the fall, 1999.

Health Care

Without adequate health care, full participation in community life is impossible for most people with developmental disabilities. The Council has therefore played a vital role in advocating for protections for children and adults with disabilities as the state implemented its managed care system for virtually all individuals who receive Medicaid. Now that many of the protections are incorporated into law, the Council continues its vigilance in advocating for enforcement of these provisions and monitoring their implementation. The Council continues to educate the disability community about health care rights and options, as well as provide information and training to the medical community about issues of importance to people with developmental disabilities.

Over the past year, the Council has played a strong role in developing recommendations regarding continuity of care for specialty services for children, ensuring appropriate services when changes occur in provider networks or plans, coordination of health care services for children with disabilities, and measuring health care outcomes for children with special health care needs. The results of successful coalition advocacy are seen with the new option that will allow all children to access appropriate physical and occupational therapies and speech and audiology services outside of their HealthChoice managed care plans. The Council continues to be involved with the implementation and likely expansion of the Maryland Children's Health Program, currently providing health care for approximately 55,000 of Maryland's children.

Self Advocacy in Action

The Council and the Developmental Disabilities Administration collaboratively sponsored the **Ask Me! Project** - a pilot consumer satisfaction survey developed by People on the Go, a statewide self-advocacy group, and The Arc of Maryland. This project has continued and expanded its work as a quality assurance tool measuring life satisfaction for people with developmental disabilities. As a part of this project, people with disabilities have been trained to interview their peers with disabilities about the services and supports they receive. The Developmental Disabilities Administration is using this information as it evaluates services for people with developmental disabilities.

Partners in Policymaking (a joint project of the Council, The Arc of Maryland, and the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program/Family Support Network) provides leadership training for parents of young children with significant disabilities and people with developmental disabilities so that they become skilled systems change advocates. Partners in Policymaking provides an unique opportunity for parents with children with disabilities and adults with disabilities network and learn how to advocate for common goals. The program has traveled around the state, and meets this year in Princess Anne on the Eastern Shore.

Employment, Health Care and Benefits

Often the fear of losing Social Security/SSI benefits and health insurance that is a part of the benefits package prevents people with developmental disabilities from seeking employment. Independence Now, Inc.'s project **Benefits INfo Source**, funded by the Council, addresses this barrier to employment. Professionals who understand how employment affects Social Security/SSI benefits and who understand other public benefits including Medicaid, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Medicare provide advice and help through a toll free hotline. Additionally, free training sessions on Social Security/SSI work incentives are periodically offered throughout the state to people with developmental disabilities, their families, and service providers. The Benefits INfo Source telephone number is 1-888-704-7113.

Home of Your Own

The Maryland Home of Your Own (HOYO) Coalition is a statewide, cross-disability alliance committed to increasing homeownership opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities. Cofounded and cochaired by the Council, the Coalition is a unique collaboration of disability and housing advocates, professionals, and people with disabilities. The HOYO Coalition works to identify public and private resources, improve public policy, and develop new programs. Coalition highlights include:

- ◆ Development of a statewide, affordable, flexible mortgage product specifically targeting people with disabilities.
- ◆ Commitment by the state, several counties and Baltimore City to offer down payment and closing cost assistance to buyers with disabilities.
- ◆ Training of housing counselors, lenders and other housing professionals to more effectively work with people with disabilities.
- ◆ In FY1999, 50 people with disabilities were able to purchase their own homes.

Maryland Council Projects

Community Education

The **AHAVA Project** (Jewish Family Services and AHAVA) is helping the Orthodox Jewish community in Baltimore to develop and implement a shared vision of an inclusive community for people with developmental disabilities, provide education regarding services and financial planning, and create individualized support plans for at least 17 people who are at the greatest risk.

The **Support and Outreach Project for Families of Children with Developmental Disabilities** (Families Involved Together in collaboration with the Maryland Center for Independent Living and The Arc of Maryland) matches students enrolled in Community Service Learning hours with families of children with disabilities to provide support to families living in Baltimore. The project is also designed to foster community awareness about people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Family Partnership Project (The Arc of Frederick County's Service Coordination Division) has formed partnerships with families in which aging parents provide care for adult children with developmental disabilities and aging services professionals to develop comprehensive plans to meet the support needs of 22 families in Western Maryland.

Education

The **Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education** supports parents in Maryland who seek inclusive educational opportunities for their children in neighborhood schools. MCIE provides supports to parent groups advocating for inclusive education in local school systems, individual advocacy for students seeking less restrictive educational settings, information dissemination about inclusive services and best and promising practices, and legal advocacy to increase inclusive education practices at the local, state, and federal level.

Connections: Fostering Inclusion in General Education Classrooms and Extracurricular Activities (The Allegany County Public Schools) is expanding and refining a co-teaching model for including students with developmental disabilities in general education classrooms by adapting curriculum and extracurricular activities using assistive technology.

Employment

The **PDQ Project** (The Arc of the Northern Chesapeake Region) closed NMARC Industries, a sheltered workshop, and provided supported employment and integrative community opportunities to individuals who were previously served in the workshop. This project targets developing supports for individuals with the most intensive and extensive support needs.

Evaluating Maryland's RWJ Self-Determination Initiative

In 1998, Maryland received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to promote the practice of self-determination in the delivery of services for people with developmental disabilities. The Human Services Research Institute and the Ask Me! Project are conducting an evaluation of the outcomes and lessons learned through the Self-Determination Initiative.

Maryland Council Projects

Community Living

Expanding Homeownership Opportunities for People with Disabilities (The Maryland Center for Community Development) is designed to expand homeownership opportunities for people with disabilities through education of housing professionals, outreach and education to people with disabilities, research of best practices, identification of barriers to home ownership, and development of public policy recommendations and solutions. This is a collaborative project between the Council, Mental Hygiene Administration, and Developmental Disabilities Administration.

In collaboration with the HOYO Coalition, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) committed over \$800,000 in mortgage money to low income people with disabilities in 1998. Based on the success of the program, DHCD committed an additional \$2 million in funding for 1999.

Self Advocacy

Leadership Now! (People on the Go/The Arc of Maryland) strengthens the self-advocacy movement by supporting activities of state and local self-advocacy groups including a legislative reception and state wide self-advocacy conference.

Family Support Services

Family Support Conference

Building on its study of Family Support Services in Maryland, the Council sponsored *Creating Effective Partnerships for Families*, a statewide conference that brought together over 200 families, service providers, and advocates. The Conference featured an inspirational address by Administration on Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Sue Swenson. Participants acquired knowledge and agreed to share this new information with other families who have children with developmental disabilities.

Availability of Family Supports Increased

Through advocacy of the Council, families with children with developmental disabilities, and disability advocates, the second year of the Governor's Waiting List Initiative provides for a substantial increase in family support services. In fiscal year 2000, Governor Glendening's budget allocates \$600,000 to offer family support services to an additional 300 families who have children with developmental disabilities. This funding will assist families who have children with significant disabilities to have services that will allow them to enjoy everyday family life. The Council enthusiastically applauds the new availability of supports for families throughout Maryland.

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Council Mission

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council advocates for public policy and supportive practices and opportunities which promote the full inclusion of all people with developmental disabilities in community life.