



Spring/Summer

District of Columbia Developmental Disabilities Council

Herald

Self Determination "Nothing About Us – Without Us"

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL (DDC)

Welcome to the spring/summer edition of The Herald Newsletter. This summer season represented two significant anniversaries for the disability community: 15th Anniversary of Olmstead and 24th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The 15th Anniversary of the Olmstead decision took place in June. In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court held that Georgia's Department of Human Resources violated the ADA by keeping two women with mental health conditions in a state psychiatric hospital long after their treatment professionals recommended their transfer to community-based care. The Court provided that states could meet their obligations under the ADA's "integration mandate" by developing a comprehensive, effectively working plan for placing individuals with disabilities in less restrictive settings. The importance of the Olmstead decision was previously well stated by President Barack Obama:

The Olmstead ruling was a critical step forward for our nation, articulating one of the most fundamental rights of Americans with disabilities: Having the choice to live independently. (June 22, 2009)

On July 26, 2014, our advocates with disabilities and their families were brought together again across the nation in recognition of the 24th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA is the most comprehensive federal law that protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination and requires that they be given equal access and opportunity. As a person that belongs to the *ADA Generation*, I take great pride in our civil rights law and the Olmstead decision that promote equality, accessibility, and community integration for all people with disabilities in the District of Columbia and across the United States.

Furthermore, I extend my greatest appreciation to all of DDC's governmental and community-based partners dedicated to ensuring that our District residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are given the appropriate supports and services in order for them to serve as contributing members and leaders in our communities. Yet, we cannot rest on our laurels until all people with I/DD are given the opportunity to reach their fullest potential as individuals.

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Case in point, the National Disability Institute's (NDI) report, *Financial Capability of Adults with Disabilities – Findings from the FINRA Investor Education Foundation 2012 National Financial Capability Study*, revealed that 78% of people with disabilities found it difficult to make ends meet, as compared with 56% of people without disabilities. Though the ADA guarantees all individuals with disabilities the opportunity to achieve “economic self-sufficiency”, this report shows that our community members are on the losing end of obtaining, controlling, and using their own money and other financial resources wisely. Not because they are incapable of doing so, but because our community members with disabilities are generally not taught the financial literacy involved with practicing good management skills in the areas of budgeting, spending and saving money.

Recognizing the opportunity to improve upon the financial capability of District residents with disabilities, the DDC partnered with NDI in the past year to develop and implement the Building Economic Strength Together (B.E.S.T.) Project. Furthermore, a web-based education curriculum on financial literacy will be available to students with disabilities, families, teachers, and other stakeholders through the DDC website in the upcoming months. The DDC is very excited to be offering this innovative curriculum, and we will certainly send out an announcement once the financial literacy tool is available online.

In closing, I am honored and thankful that the members of the DC Developmental Disabilities Council and our partners are absolutely committed to improving and enhancing the quality of life for all of our District residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their professional and personal lives. Lead on with integrity and pride. Happy Anniversaries to you!

With the utmost respect and sincerity, Mat

UPCOMING DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL MEETING

The next Developmental Disabilities Council Meeting will be held August 14, 2014 from 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm at the Citywide Conference Center, 441 4th Street, NW, Room 1107.

To learn more about the DD Council or to request reasonable accommodations to participate in the meetings, contact Mat McCollough on (202) 727-6744 or mathew.mccollough@dc.gov.

RICARDO THORNTON APPOINTED AS MEMBER OF PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

President Barack Obama appointed Ricardo Thornton, Developmental Disabilities Council Member, along with other individuals, to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities. President Obama said, “I am confident that these outstanding men and women will serve the American people well in their new roles and I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come.” Congratulations to Ricardo!!!

TRIBUTE TO NELSON MANDELA 1918 – 2013

President Nelson Mandela was someone I greatly admired. He was my hero. He went to prison for 27 years and was freed in 1990. He became President of South Africa in 1994. I went to South Africa in 2001 with a delegation from Special Olympics.

President Mandela took a stand for what he believed even when it meant he would be jailed. He was a strong man with strong beliefs. I admire him because of his willingness to not give up and to open doors so others could be acknowledged. He believed in inclusion of all people, including those of us with special needs.



Pictured front row from left to right, Ricardo Thornton and President Nelson Mandela.

I am proud to stand with my friend, President Mandela, in this picture at Robben Island where he was in prison. We are holding the torch of HOPE (Health Opportunities for People Everywhere). HOPE is a global partnership that empowers communities to enable every citizen to become healthy, responsible and contributing members of society.

While at Robben Island, I went to visit his cell; and it brought back memories of my life at Forest Haven. I am glad to see we are now all free.

By: Ricardo Thornton

DENNIS O'CONNOR SUCCESS STORY: EMPLOYMENT WITH TD BANK



Dennis O'Connor

Since getting my Master's Degree and my Juris Doctorate, I have attended many career fairs aimed at diversity. When I participated in the Disability Mentoring Day in October 2013 as a mentee for TD Bank, I thought I had a good idea of what to expect. However, what I found instead blew me away. Rather than a quick lunch and brief interview, I was presented with a detailed agenda listing a series of meetings with 11 TD Bank employees. Throughout the day, I was introduced to more and more people – so many that it took me months to write all of my “Thank You Letters.” I expressed that I was looking for employment and was interviewed with employers who had tangible positions available.

Since beginning my role at TD Bank, I have repeatedly heard from our leadership that diversity is not only the right thing to do, but it IS critical to achieving business success. At TD Bank, we sell products to people whom we have a relationship with and our customers can see themselves reflected in our employees. For example, TD Bank recognizes that 40 – 60 percent of U.S. citizens without a checking account are people with disabilities, according to the National Institute on Disability, and is reaching out to the community to help. TD is not only committed to just people with disabilities. The bank's diversity efforts extend into the LGBT community, all ethnicities and races, gender, and more.

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I have repeatedly heard Brian Monday, TD Bank Regional Market President in Washington, DC, close his presentations and speeches urging employees to “Take care of each other; take care of your customers; and grow the brand.” That truly sums up what it means to work for TD Bank. It has been an amazing experience and gets better every day!

By: Dennis O’Connor

SUPREME COURT REJECTS BRIGHT-LINE TEST FOR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

WASHINGTON — A closely divided Supreme Court on Tuesday struck down Florida’s strict IQ cutoff for determining inmate eligibility for the death penalty. In a 5-4 ruling, the court concluded that the state’s rigid IQ cutoff of 70 “disregards established medical practice” and creates the “unacceptable risk” that an inmate with intellectual disability might be executed in violation of the Constitution.

“Our society does not consider this strict cutoff as proper or humane,” Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote. Instead, Kennedy **and the court’s four liberal justices concluded, Florida must** take into account other factors as well as the IQ testing’s standard error of measurement in evaluating intellectual disability. This is already the practice in many other states. “By failing to take into account the (standard error of measurement) and setting a strict cutoff at 70, Florida goes against the unanimous professional consensus,” Kennedy wrote, adding that “the flaws in Florida’s law are the result of the inherent error in IQ tests themselves. An IQ score is an approximation, not a final and infallible assessment of intellectual functioning.”

THE DC DDC APPLAUDS THE MINIMUM WAGE EXECUTIVE ORDER AND ITS INCLUSION OF WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES!!!

The DC DDC is happy to see that President Obama and his Administration are working for the good of **all** citizens and that he heard the outcry. Signing the Minimum Wage Executive Order and making it inclusive of workers with disabilities demonstrate that he values the work that we do. This executive order requires new federal contractors to pay a minimum wage of \$10.10 per hour to **all** of its workers instead of the current minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. That was a happy, happy day for us as it covers workers under service or concession contracts with the federal government. This is a step in the right direction. Advocacy is important and it does make a difference!

SENATORS TAKE AIM AT SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME ASSET LIMITS

Under a new bill proposed in the U.S. Senate, the amount of money that Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients could save without losing access to their benefits would rise for the first time in over two decades. Currently, individuals who receive SSI can have no more than \$2,000 in cash or liquid assets at any given time without forfeiting their eligibility for benefits.

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The legislation calls for that asset limit to increase to \$10,000. The bill would also eliminate restrictions that currently disallow friends and family from providing financial, food and housing support to those receiving SSI and the measure would boost the amount of income beneficiaries could earn without losing out on benefits.

More than 8 million Americans — including many with disabilities — draw on SSI. Currently, the maximum federal benefit for an individual receiving SSI is \$721 per month. The last time the asset cap for SSI recipients was increased was in 1989.

For additional information, go to <http://www.disabilitycoop.com/2014/03/11/senators-ssi-asset-limits/19180/>.

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT ON REAUTHORIZATION OF WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT AND REHABILITATION ACT

On Wednesday May 21, 2014, agreement on a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (which includes the Rehabilitation Act) was announced by a key group of Democrats and Republican legislators in the Senate and House, led by Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa). This bill, renamed the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*, will now go before both houses of Congress for approval, and the understanding at APSE is that the bill is likely to pass both the House and Senate in essentially its current form.

While APSE is opposed to the inclusion of Section 511, Limitations on Use of Subminimum Wages, we are pleased to see there are many provisions within this bill that strengthen the with disabilities to become successfully employed, working side-by side with their fellow citizens, and advancing economically. A few of the specifics of Rehabilitation Act of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* include:

- Stresses competitive integrated employment as the first and best choice for people with disabilities and directs 15 percent of VR funds to assist with transitioning young people with disabilities to the workforce.
- Increases pre-employment transition services to include experience in competitive integrated settings through internships, part-time jobs and summer jobs, and requires state VR agencies to presume all individuals with disabilities who want to work can do so with the appropriate supports and services.
- Aligns disability programs in order to ensure that individuals receive the services, technology, and support they need in order to live inclusive, successful lives.
- Provides for the provision of technical assistance to promote high quality employment outcomes.
- Maintains the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) within the Department of Education, rather than moving it to the Department of Labor as was proposed.

For additional information, go to http://www.help.senate.gov/newsroom/press/index.cfm?PageNum_rs=2.

ESPN TO BROADCAST SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES



Special Olympics Chairman Tim Shriver announces that Los Angeles will host the organization's 2015 World Games. ESPN has agreed to broadcast the games on its networks and online. (Special Olympics)

Special Olympics Chairman Tim Shriver announces that Los Angeles will host the organization's 2015 World Games. ESPN has agreed to broadcast the (Special Olympics) games on its networks and online. Some of the world's most talented athletes with intellectual disabilities will be center stage on national television under a deal with ESPN.

Organizers of the 2015 Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles said the sports network will broadcast next year's summer games. ESPN will produce live coverage of the opening ceremony as well as a nightly highlights program, the organizing committee said. Though specific details are not yet available, ESPN is expected to air the event on its television networks and online.

The World Games are held every two years and alternate between summer and winter. The Los Angeles games, which will kick off July 25, 2015, are expected to draw some 7,000 athletes and 500,000 spectators from around the globe.

ESPN [previously](#) streamed coverage of the 2011 World Games in Athens, Greece on ESPN3.com.

*By: Shaun Heasley
May 6, 2014*

NEW RULES FOR DISABILITY CAREGIVERS PROMPT CHANGES

A new rule from the Obama administration designed to provide better pay and working conditions to 2 million home care workers is forcing many states to rethink how they look at Medicaid payments and may result in higher Medicaid costs. Starting January 1, 2015, home care workers in 29 states will, for the first time, be eligible for the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour and overtime pay, under a new regulation from the U.S. Department of Labor. These workers go to homes of the elderly and people with disabilities to help with cooking, bathing and other daily tasks, and are paid by the clients or through Medicaid. Fifteen states already had applied state minimum wage and overtime protections to home care workers, also called "direct care" workers, while six others and the District of Columbia offer just state minimum wages.

Many states have never considered Medicaid payments to be wages, said Sarah Leberstein, a staff attorney with the National Employment Law Project, which advocates for higher pay for the poor. "It's a new mindset. The states will have to shift their thinking and take another look at their reimbursement practices and guidelines with the new wage rules in mind." The U.S. Department of Labor estimates the rule will cost \$6.8 million a year over a 10-year period, with private businesses and state Medicaid programs picking up the tab. But critics contend that number is too low. Supporters say the rule will reduce turnover and improve quality of care while opponents contend that the new rule will force employers to cut home care workers' hours.

For additional information, go to www.disabilityscoop.com/2014/04/28/new-rules-caregivers-changes/19313.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL**Council Chairperson**

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) of the District of Columbia seeks to strengthen the voice of people with developmental disabilities and their families in DC in support of greater independence, inclusion, empowerment and the pursuit of life as they choose. We strive to create change that eliminates discrimination and removes barriers to full inclusion through our advocacy.