

ABCD NEWS

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ABCD Joins Cost of Providing Care Coalition in Holiday Reminder To NJ State Officials

*Happy New Year
from ABCD!*

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The Cost of Providing Care Coalition stepped up its advocacy efforts during the Holidays by sending thousands of letters and Holiday Cards to Governor Corzine and key cabinet officials. The Holiday Cards reminded officials of the current crisis among agencies that provide services to those most in need and advocated for an annualized cost of providing care increase for agency staff.

As a founding member of the Coalition and a member of the Steering Committee, ABCD continues to focus its efforts on this important area. Letters to the editor from ABCD were published in the *Times of Trenton*, the *Asbury*

Park Press, and the *Courier News*. We are also waiting for letters to be published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Bergen Record*. The Coalition continues to meet with members of the Administration, including the Treasurer's Office, and is meeting with Assemblyman Cryan who is the prime sponsor of A1996; legislation to mandate the annualized cost of providing care increase.

New Jersey depends on community-based organizations and their dedicated and compassionate employees, who serve as the safety net for so many in the state. Nevertheless, these organizations are now on the brink themselves as the safety net is significantly weakening. Agencies are struggling to meet the rent, pay the heating bills, find affordable health insurance and offer decent wages to employees. In recent years, they have faced increasing demand and spiraling costs, particularly in insurance, energy bills, and gasoline. They have faced increased competition for their employees, who can earn substantially more money and receive better benefits working for state government, the educational system or in private industry.

In recent years, the resources these organizations have received from the State of New Jersey have fallen far short of the rate of inflation. During some years, there have been no increases in the state contracts that help to support a multitude of community-based programs: in most other years, the increase has been only 1 or 2 percent. While these organizations seek out financial assistance from donors and foundations to stay afloat, they struggle to provide adequate salaries and raises to hire and retain compassionate and dedicated employees.

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ABCD is a statewide organization that provides policy analysis and education related to people with developmental disabilities. ABCD represents member agencies that provide an array of community-based services to more than 9,000 people with multiple physical and developmental disabilities and their families.

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Hundreds of organizations that provide social services for vulnerable individuals have joined together as the Cost of Providing Care Coalition to call on the State of New Jersey to provide sufficient resources to enable them to do the important work of assisting vulnerable citizens. We are asking the state to provide a 4.1 percent contract increase, which would just cover inflation, but would still fall far short of compensating them for years of under-funding. We are also asking the State to automatically include inflationary increases pursuant to the Consumer Price Index for Northeast Urban Wage-earners in contracts each year, so that we can spend our time serving individuals and families rather than pleading for funding. The automatic annualized increase is mandated in a bill proposed by Assemblyman Cryan, A1996.

ABCD will continue to work with the Cost of Providing Care Coalition during this budget season to ensure adequate funding for agencies that serve the most vulnerable citizens in New Jersey.

ABCD Introduces the EI Coalition

In 2006, ABCD formed the Early Intervention (EI) Coalition in order for New Jersey providers of Early Intervention services to have a uniform voice at the policy table. The EI Coalition is comprised of agencies, represented by ABCD, that provide quality EI services throughout the state of New Jersey. The member agencies of the EI Coalition currently serve approximately 50% of children and their families in the Early Intervention System.

In order to maximize ABCD's leadership on behalf of the Coalition on EI issues, one of the organization's priority policy areas, ABCD currently serves on the State of New Jersey's EI Steering Committee and a statewide EI Working Group of advocates. ABCD's current efforts in EI advocacy include support for legislation recently introduced in the State Senate that would require private health insurance companies to cover the cost of EI services (S2303).

Membership in the EI Coalition is open to all providers (both for and non-profits) who provide Early Intervention Services. For a full list of EI Coalition member agencies, please visit our Member Agencies page at <http://www.abcdnj.org/members.html>. For more information on the EI Coalition, please contact Emily Kronenberger at (609) 581-8375 or at Emily@abcdnj.org.

Update on Department of Community Affairs and Housing Issues

In December, ABCD submitted comments to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) concerning the proposed new rules for the State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP). ABCD expressed its gratitude to DCA for making significant changes to the SRAP rules that will greatly benefit individuals with disabilities. DCA is altering the program to set aside 10 percent of the tenant-based vouchers for disabled head of households or their spouses. Previously, individuals with disabilities did not have a guaranteed set aside, as did other special needs groups. DCA will now allow individuals with disabilities to use their SRAP voucher as long as they qualify for the program or until they receive a Federal Section 8 voucher. Also in the previous rule, individuals with disabilities, like all non-senior recipients of the program, could only receive a voucher for a five year period. Altering the SRAP to ensure that 10 percent of the tenant-based vouchers are set-aside for individuals with disabilities and that these vouchers have an unlimited timeframe are important steps in addressing the need for affordable housing in the disability community. If you would like to read all of ABCD's comments, please visit the publications page of our website at www.abcdnj.org/pubs.html. (Continued on page 3)

Joint Legislative Committee Announces Final Recommendations on Public School Funding Reform

On November 15, 2006, the Special Session Joint Legislative Committee released its Report on Public School Funding Reform as a component of the State Legislature's property tax relief initiative. The Report, which was later revised and finalized on December 1, contained over twenty recommendations on public school education funding reform; six of which applied directly to special education funding issues. Within the discussion section, the Committee cited a lack of federal funding for special education programming, the rising costs of special education, and the historically high level of special education identification and out-of-district placements among New Jersey students as premises for reform.

Recommendations issued in the Report to meet the growing need for and cost of special education services included proposals: 18) increased pre-identification services to prevent inappropriate classification among students; 19) Promotion of inclusion for all students in local school districts; 20) Greater coordination of in-district special education services at the County level; 21) Establishment of a consistent tuition structure for out-of-district placements; 22) Reduction of Due Process hearings by way of increased conflict resolution and medication services; and 23) Continuation of funding for extraordinary special education aid.

Currently, ABCD supports all of the recommendations given by the Joint Committee and is a member of the Coalition on Special Education Funding Reform. For the full Report on Public School Funding Reform, visit http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/PropertyTaxSession/JCSF_final_report.pdf

(Update on Department of Community Affairs and Housing Issues Continued)

In other Affordable and Accessible Housing News, DCA has made its recommendations to the Governor Corzine and should release the State of New Jersey Housing Plan early this year. This plan was developed with input from the New Jersey Housing Taskforce and will serve as a blueprint to meet Governor Corzine's goal of producing, preserving, financing 100,000 units of affordable housing over the next ten years. ABCD staff member Jonathan Campbell is a member of the Special Needs Subcommittee of the New Jersey Housing Taskforce. Although DCA's recommendations have not been publicly released, rough drafts were reviewed by the subcommittees. One promising recommendation included a plan to develop a Supports Service Trust Fund to be linked with the Special Needs Housing Trust Fund. The Support Service Trust Fund would be used to ensure that proposed housing projects have the operational funds needed to function. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jonathan at 609-581-8375.

Stay Tuned for ABCD's New and Improved Website Updates!

In the New Year, ABCD will be introducing some exciting new features to its website. New items include our Resource Guide available on the Links page with information for agencies, practitioners, and families on a number of diverse issues within the developmental disabilities community. Check back soon for our updates to the Resources/Links page!

Recent Publications

- "Community Providers Need More," Arye, L. *Trenton Times*, December 15, 2006
<http://www.nj.com/search/index.ssf?/base/news-1/1166159291105580.xml?times?let&coll=5>
- "Providers Need a Boost", Arye, L., *Asbury Park Press*, December 15, 2006,
- Community Providers need annual hikes too, Arye, L. *Home News Tribune*, December 18, 2006
- "Help Disabled Children", Arye, L., *The Star Ledger*, December 15, 2006
- In case you missed it, the November/December 2006 issue of *ABCD News* is for download available online!*
- January/February 2007, *ABCD News**

Important Dates

January:

9-18: Public Hearings on Individuals Transitioning from Developmental Centers, for more information visit http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/DHS%20Publications/PubNot1_07plnInstit2Comm.pdf

11: Anti-Poverty Network (APN) Steering Committee Meeting on Universal Healthcare

17: APN General Meeting

25: NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities Public Meeting, for more information visit njddc@njddc.org

26: State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) Meeting

February:

7: APN Steering Committee Meeting

27: Governor Corzine Delivers Budget Message

28: APN General Meeting

*Ongoing trainings for supported employment, direct support, essential life style planning, individual habilitation plans, and positive behavioral supports are available through the **Elizabeth Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities** from January through March of 2007. For more information, go to <http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/>

Spotlight on an ABCD Member Agency: Eden Family Services, Inc.

Founded in 1975, Eden Family Services is a non-profit organization that provides services to people with autism in New Jersey. For over thirty years, Eden has worked to maintain its unique mission of providing comprehensive support services for individuals and their families over the entire lifespan. Eden fulfills this goal by creating a continuum of care from Early Intervention and Special Education services, to Employment Training, to programming for older adults with autism. Located in Princeton, New Jersey, Eden strives to provide quality and community-based programming for over 2,400 people living with autism and their families each year.

We are proud to announce the official November 2006 induction of Eden Family Services as a full member of ABCD. For more information on Eden's innovative programs and services, visit them on the web at <http://www.edenservices.org> or for direct contact information, go to ABCD's Member Agencies page at <http://www.abcdnj.org/members.html>.

ABCD NEWS is published periodically and provides an update on the activities of ABCD and on major issues facing people with multiple and physical developmental disabilities in New Jersey. For an electronic subscription, send your e-mail address to emily@abcdnj.org.