



*Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with
Disabilities (ABCD):
Accomplishments for 2006-07
(July 1, 2007-June 30, 2007)*

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 10,000 people with multiple physical and developmental disabilities and their families.

Current Focus:

- Support member agencies and enhance comprehensive policies for the developmental disability community in order to advance and promote individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.
- Continue efforts to advance ABCD policy priority areas and improve the quality of life for individuals with multiple physical and cognitive disabilities.
- Work on behalf of provider agencies to improve communication and information sharing with DHS/DDD.
- Active leadership with other stakeholders on advocacy efforts for an annualized cost of providing care funding increase for provider agencies.
- Provide continuous education for legislative officials and policy makers on the unique needs of people with multiple physical and developmental disabilities.
- Advocate for the reinvestment of federal funding into community services for people with developmental disabilities.

Organizational Accomplishments, 2006-07:

- Published more than six letters to the editors and an op-ed in newspapers ranging from the Star Ledger, New York Times, The Times of Trenton, Asbury Park Press, and Courier-News.
- Testified at more than a dozen hearings before the New Jersey Legislature, including an invitation-only hearing on Olmstead by the Assembly Human Services Committee, on issues related to health care, special education, early intervention, and community services.
- Met regularly with the Commissioner of Human Services, Medicaid Director, Assistant Commissioner for Developmental Disabilities, and Assistant Commissioner for Family Health Services.
- Expanded the membership of ABCD by nearly 30% in 2006-07.
- Successfully administered compensation and employment surveys for member agencies.
- Presented survey findings at Human Resources and Quality, Assurance, and Training Senior Staff Forums and reviewed data with member agency staff.
- Maintained resources for member agencies and community stakeholders with fully accessible website and bi-monthly newsletter publication.
- Provided forums for job postings and training opportunities for agencies' direct service staff on ABCD website.

Policy Areas:

I. Early Intervention:

Recognized by Early Intervention System's Lead Agency DOHHS and EI community as vital advocacy partner within EI advocacy, representing agencies that provide services for nearly 50% of all children and families in the EIS: for accomplishments with EI, see Appendix A.

II. Special Education:

Vigorously participated in discourse and advocacy around issues of special education and serving the needs of children with developmental disabilities in settings appropriate to their needs:

- Represented community-based agencies that serve children with special educational needs.
- Advanced efforts of ABCD's Special Education Committee.
- Helped to revitalize Special Education Funding Reform Coalition and contributed to advocacy efforts around funding reform issues, including recommendations on special education funding priorities.
- Participated in advocacy efforts on Burden of Proof litigation and legislation.

III. Housing and Olmstead Planning:

Actively participates in housing policy discussions at state and community level, and is recognized as critical voice in Olmstead Plan policy discussions:

- Active participant in the Policy Committee of Housing and Community Development Network of NJ.
- Consistent participant in the Commissioner of DCA's Task Force on Housing, member of the Special Needs Housing Subcommittee.

- Issued formal recommendations to DHS for the 2007 Olmstead Plan and served as stakeholder and advisor in the development and revision of the Plan.
- Continued to offer recommendations on the implementation of the Plan to the Department and community advocacy groups and stakeholders, including New Jersey Protection and Advocacy.
- Appointed to serve on the Olmstead Plan Advisory Committee, serve as Co-Chair Systems Redesign Work Group. ABCD's Board President also appointed to Committee and serve as Co-Chair of Service Delivery Work Group.

IV. Medical Day Care:

Serves as the single voice for agencies that provide medical day care for people with developmental disabilities.

- Convened a meeting between the Departments of Health and Senior Services and Human Services, along with researchers from the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy, to discuss the difference between medical day care for people with developmental disabilities and the general elderly population.
- Worked with the NJ Adult Day Health Association to prevent the inclusion of co-pays for Medical Day Care in the FY 2008 budget.

V. Cost of Providing Care Issues:

Provides leadership and advocacy around issues of cost of providing care in the community and at the state policy level:

- Highlighted the rising cost of care issues for provider agencies through strategic communications and advocacy campaigns, including serving on the Steering Committee for the Cost of Providing Care Coalition.
- Represented community-based agencies' concerns at the state policy level while advocating for a fair provider increase that is consistent with the Consumer Price Increase (CPI) for the Northeast Region of the U.S.
- Provided testimony at public hearings and meetings with legislative and executive branch officials on the need for an annualized cost of providing care increase.
- Continued advocacy resulted in a 3% cost of providing care increase, beginning in January of 2008.

VI. Direct Support Professional Development:

Acts as a leading voice in the development of comprehensive programs that will strengthen agency direct support staff and improve recruitment and retention for DSPs.

- Liaised with College of Direct Support on behalf of agencies to open discussions about participation in DSP development and continuing education programs, such as the DSP Career Path Ladder.
- Linked with the Elizabeth Boggs Center and other community based agencies and provider groups, as part of the NJ DSP Workforce Development Coalition, to apply for DD Council grant funding for agencies to participate in workforce development through the College of Direct Support.
- Member of the NJ Workforce Development Coalition Steering Committee and member of the Leadership Council.

VII. Children with Disabilities:

Continues to advocate for policies that protect and advance the health of children with special needs and developmental disabilities.

- Led discussion and advocacy around Medicaid Buy-In program for children with disabilities whose family income exceeds the Medicaid eligibility limit but who need access to Medicaid services.
- Participated in the development of an RFP with the Department of Children and Family's Division of Child Behavioral Health Services for community-based agencies that serve children with dual diagnoses of mental illness and developmental disability (MI/DD).

VIII. Poverty and Individuals with Low-Income:

Provides advocacy and a voice for agencies that serve individuals within the community who have disabilities and rely on fixed and/or low incomes.

- Active member of the Anti-Poverty Network (APN) of NJ.
- Served on the APN Steering and Conference Planning Committee in 2006; currently serving on the Steering Committee.
- Founding member of the Coalition for a Moral Budget and currently Chair. The Coalition is a diverse group of advocates, trade associations for pharmacies, and HMOs. The Coalition led efforts to prevent the State from implementing Medicaid co-pays for individuals who receive Medicaid benefits due to their low income and/or disability.

IX. Family Support:

Continues to advocate for increased funding and support services to families and agencies that serve them.

- Member of the Family Support Coalition, currently serving on the Executive Committee.
- Advocated for maximizing federal revenues through a Medicaid Waiver under Family Support rather than just State-only funding.

X. DDD and Community Services

Serves as the single voice for agencies that provide services to people with multiple physical and developmental disabilities.

- Served on Contracted Services Committee and Dialogue with the Division; also, member agency represents ABCD on the licensing Committee.
- Joined with other provider agencies to discuss with the Public Advocate concerns regarding implementation of Danielle's Law; resulting in the Public Advocate issuing recommendations on changes to Danielle's Law regulations.
- Led discussion and advocacy on expansion of Medicaid Waiver including ensuring that all federal funds are reinvested in DDD Community Services.
- Advocated for changes to reimbursement rates for Real Life Choices and other DDD community services based upon the acuity level needs of the individual.

Next Steps, 2007-08:

- Developing strategies with the Cost of Providing Care Coalition to advocate for an annualized Cost of Providing Care increase in the FY 2009 budget.
- Strategizing with the Coalition for a Moral Budget to ensure that Medicaid co-pays and other cuts to Medicaid are not included in the FY 2009 budget.
- Researching how other States have developed fee-for-service reimbursement for community services and different models of housing and service delivery for people with developmental disabilities.
- Planning and implementing competency-based training and career paths through the College of Direct Support with the NJ DSP Workforce Development Coalition using the grant provided by the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities.
- Convening a work group with the Departments of Health and Senior Services and Human Services to develop recommendations on reimbursement rates and licensing for medical day care providers that serve solely people with developmental disabilities.
- Working with trainers at the Boggs Center to develop an interagency staff training day for DSPs, special education teachers and school support staff through ABCD's Quality Assurance and Training Senior Staff Forum.