

APSE ECHO

Employment Choice Hope Opportunity



Summer 2006

NJ Department of Human Services Has a New Acting Commissioner



Clarke Bruno, an attorney who has spent most of his career working in social services, was nominated to be Commissioner of the Department of Human Services by Governor Jon S. Corzine in July of 2006.

As Commissioner, Bruno leads a Department with 16,000 employees and an annual budget of more than \$9 billion that serves almost one million New Jersey residents annually. The Department administers New Jersey's Medicaid and TANF programs and operates the state's five psychiatric hospitals and seven residential centers for people with developmental disabilities. DHS also provides many other services in the community for people with a range of social service needs through contracts with non-profit agencies and organizations.

Before coming to the Department of Human Services, Bruno was General Counsel at the New York City Department of Homeless Services. There, he directed the legal affairs and spearheaded new policies that addressed the needs of homeless men, women and children throughout the state. He was a key member of the management team that transformed the historically troubled agency into one of the highest performing agencies in city government.

Become a *Real Life Choices* Qualified Provider

By Terre Lewis

In September 2003, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) implemented a systems change that favorably impacts individuals with developmental disabilities accessing community services and supports. This systems change is called *Real Life Choices*.

Real Life Choices is a community based self-direction option that empowers individuals to make real life choices about where they want to go and how to best utilize the supports and services necessary to get them there. With their own budgets, individuals are now able to purchase supported employment services as well as generic services such as gym memberships, dance lessons, and even pay for a course at a local college. The agencies and businesses providing the services must be pre-approved by DDD since the individual budgets are funded by federal funds. Most recently, *Real Life Choices* participants have been able to purchase services from a Housing Specialist and Employment Specialist. Becoming a DDD qualified provider affords you the opportunity to expand your existing services and supports. .

Once pre-approved, general information about your business/organization is included in DDD's database of statewide resources. This information is posted on the Family Support Center of New Jersey web site at www.fscnj.org for others to access and indicates that your business/organization is a DDD qualified provider. The web site is a great opportunity to advertise the services and supports you offer.

There are currently 2 different rates for supported employment services that are based upon the qualifications of the person providing the service as well as the service that is provided. The \$45/hour rate is for follow-along services only, while the \$50/hour rate is for services provided to someone who is not eligible for DVRS services and would like to purchase any of the services typically available through the supported employment process from job development through fading out.

If your organization is interested in participating in this unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our *Real Life Choices* participants while positively impacting your community or has questions regarding the funding of supported employment services, please contact Terre Lewis, Coordinator of Agency Qualifications at the Division of Developmental Disabilities, at (609) 987-2044.

Inside this issue:

From the President	2
Changes for NJWINS	2
New DVRS Chief	3
Mentoring Day	3
Mentoring Day	4

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From the NJ APSE President

By Jennifer Joyce

The NJ APSE Board has been very busy over the past few months.

Our continued advocacy efforts around the issue of Long Term Follow-Along (LTFA) funding for DVRS were rewarded in this year's budget. As a result, DVRS has been able to raise the LTFA hourly rate to match the rate provided for Pre-Placement and Intensive hours to \$51. I must acknowledge the great work the NJ APSE Governmental Affairs Division and Nils Richardson, President/CEO of ACCSES NJ, have done, and will continue to do, on this issue. And, to all of you who responded to the Action Alerts, testified at the Budget Hearings, and continued to discuss this issue with your legislators, I thank you for your efforts and hope you will continue to advocate for funding, legislation, and services that will increase the number of individuals with disabilities who are competitively employed in integrated settings.

I met with the Commissioner at the Department of the Public Advocate, Ron Chen, a few months ago to provide him with a better understanding of the supported employment process in New Jersey. The Commissioner and his staff are very interested in supporting people with disabilities in employment and have been making every effort to hire people with disabilities as they fill positions at this new office.

We are also in the process of arranging meetings with the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, Clarke Bruno, and the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, David Socolow, to further emphasize the importance of supported employment.

As we approach the end of the year, the NJ APSE Board will be setting our goals for 2007 and defining the direction NJ APSE will be going. Part of this process will include gathering feedback and ideas from our membership so we can rejuvenate the field of Supported Employment in an effort to reverse an unsettling trend. In the past few years, the numbers of individuals with disabilities who are receiving supported employment services have been declining.

Employment must be the **first option** available to **every** person with a disability! This basic need is not a choice. It is a responsibility! Too many students with disabilities are exiting the school system without any knowledge of supported employment. Too many people are being prevented from receiving supported employment services because someone has made the determination that he or she has a disability that precludes him/her from working, needs too many supports to work, has too many limitations or behavioral issues to work, or is just "not ready to work". How can these decisions be made without attempting employment first? With the right job match and supports, **all persons with disabilities can and have the responsibility to work**. Unless we raise our expectations and set the standard to its highest level, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities will remain dismal and the numbers of individuals receiving supported employment services will continue to decrease. We need to make every effort to ensure that employment is the first option!

A Few Changes for NJWINS

By Jennifer Joyce

NJWINS, a program funded by the Social Security Administration and designed to provide accurate and current information on how work affects Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Benefits, has experienced some changes effective October 1, 2006.

In addition to The Epilepsy Foundation of NJ and Cerebral Palsy of NJ, Team Management 2000 will be providing NJWINS services. The Epilepsy Foundation will work with Morris, Hunterdon, Somerset, Union, Monmouth, Ocean, Burlington, and Camden Counties while Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey will work with Sussex, Warren, Mercer, Middlesex, Gloucester, Atlantic, Salem, Cumberland, and Cape May Counties. Team Management 2000 will work with Bergen, Passaic (formerly covered by Cerebral Palsy of NJ), and Essex (formerly covered by The Epilepsy Foundation) Counties.

NJWINS still serves SSI and SSDI cash beneficiaries who are ages 14 to 64 and considering a change in their work situation or the possibility of working. Services still include information and referral, problem solving, work incentives analysis and advisement, work incentives planning, and on-call Community Work Incentives Coordinators to adjust the original plan when needed.

For additional information regarding NJWINS call 1-866-WINS4NJ (946-7465) or visit www.njwins.org on the web.

APSE ECHO is produced by the Communication/
Outreach Division of NJ APSE.

Communication/Outreach Division:

Jennifer Joyce-Editor
Glori Bine-Callagy-Co-Chair
Frank Adu
Jared Deppeler
Wendy Manganaro
John Rose
Rebecca Shulman

*Please submit articles to
Jennifer Joyce at jjoyce@arcnj.org*

Mark McDevitt Named Chief, Community Rehabilitation Programs Unit at DVRS

Mark has been in the field of rehabilitation for over 30 years, having gained valuable experience in a wide range of both private non-profit and government rehabilitation programs. He has experience in inpatient psychiatric and substance abuse treatment, as well as, veterans and community rehabilitation programs. A graduate of The University of Tennessee, Mark studied Philosophy and Rehabilitation Counseling.

Between 1974 and 1980, Mark was employed at a number of inpatient treatment facilities including the Lakeshore Mental Health Institute in Knoxville, TN., the Mountain Home VA Medical Center, and the Carrier Foundation in Belle Mead. In 1980, Mark began working as the Rehabilitation Coordinator for The Arc/Mercer, Inc. OTC.

Joining NJDVRS in 1985, Mark worked as a Rehabilitation Counselor in the Trenton Office for fourteen years, prior to his appointment as Supervising Counselor and then Manager of the Camden Office. In 2004, he became the Chief of the Administrative Services Unit in the Central Office of NJDVRS and was the Project Manager of the Division's new web-based case management system.

Mark recently moved to his present position, overseeing NJDVRS' relationship with more than 100 Community Rehabilitation Programs, including rehabilitation workshops, job coaching and supported employment programs, rehabilitation hospitals and mental health centers.

Mark is committed to improving services to people with disabilities, and developing efficient, effective working relationships between the Division and Community Rehabilitation Programs.

The mission of the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services is to enable individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, abilities and capabilities. NJDVRS is a Division of the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, in partnership with the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration. NJDVRS has 18 field offices located throughout the state, and this past FFY (ending 9/30/06), enabled 4,288 citizens of New Jersey with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes, and over 6,000 individuals to maintain their supported job placements.

National Disability Mentoring Day

By Kelly Jiras

Each year during the month of October the American Association of Persons with Disabilities, AAPD, hosts National Disability Mentoring Day. The event takes place in all 50 states and has expanded internationally to include 20 other countries such as India, China, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. After learning more about this exciting and motivating event, Allies, Inc. decided to join this year's effort in New Jersey in order to bring it to as many students and job seekers in as many communities as possible.

National Disability Mentoring Day has gone from the participation of less than three dozen local students at the White House in 1999 to include thousands of participants. Mentoring Day is a one-day program which provides job shadowing and career exploration to students and job seekers in their home communities. It is absolutely free to everyone involved and strives to boost awareness in the community as well as education and confidence in students and job seekers.

This year's planning in NJ began with spreading the word to fellow support organizations in New Jersey, school districts, and companies and forming a steering committee that included Lauren Agoratus of SPAN, Scott Elliott and Rene Pfaff of the Progressive Centers for Independent Living, Donna Brown of DVRS, Myra Madnick of the National Down Syndrome Society, Dr. Dan Baker of the Elizabeth M. Boggs Center UMDNJ, Monique Wilson of the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities Sue Pniewski of the Alliance for Disabled in Action, and Krystal Odell, Elise Gambino, Kelly Jiras, Alyse Betso, Cheryl Blake, and Kevin Gilmore of Allies, Inc.

The steering committee connected with companies and organizations who would consider opening their doors on October 18, 2006 to act as a Mentor Site and offered students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in this free event. Approximately 200 mentees experienced tours and



Nick greets an employee at Music for a Song in the Jackson Outlets

career education, which included interacting with employees, taking part in activities, learning about the companies, and discussing jobs and internships, from the mentor companies. These companies included Johnson & Johnson, Olive Garden, Red Lobster, The Superior Court of Monmouth County, the Mayor's Office and Municipal Building of Bridgewater, Sovereign Bank Arena, City

(Continued on page 4)

THE NEWSLETTER OF NEW JERSEY APSE: THE NETWORK ON EMPLOYMENT

NJ APSE
219 Black Horse Lane
Suite I
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

Phone: 732-831-1114
Email: info@njapse.org
Website: <http://www.njapse.org>



Submit articles to jjoyce@arcnj.org

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(Continued from page 3)

Hall of Newark, Shop-rite, Best Buy, Staples, Music for a Song, the New Jersey Department of Personnel and many more! At Sovereign Bank Arena, our largest Mentor Site accommodating 20 students, Brian Fitzgibbons, Assistant Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation was on hand to greet students and kick off the event.

The goal of National Disability Mentoring Day is to empower and motivate job seekers with disabilities through community based career exploration. The challenge of bringing this exciting event to communities throughout the state of New Jersey was unbelievably rewarding. We thank all who contributed to this events' success by opening their doors and minds. It is our hope that many more students, job seekers, and employers will join us next October.

Did You Know?

The Marriott Hotels' program that trains and hires people with disabilities found that participants had just a 6% turnover rate vs. 52% for their other employees!

Include Your Stories in Upcoming Newsletters.

Are you an employment specialist who really loves your job and wants to share information about what has led to your success? Contact Dan Baker at (732) 235-9325 or dan.baker@umdnj.edu to share your "Happy Job Coach" story.

Do you know an individual with a disability who has experienced employment success? Contact Jennifer Joyce at (732) 246-2525 ext. 32 or jjoyce@arcnj.org to share your "Employment Success" story.