

sowing seeds of closer communication among
Nebraskans working to ensure dignity,
choice and quality of life for persons with
developmental disabilities

From the Directors Desk. . .

March was a hectic month as the DD leadership team travelled all over the state visiting with service coordination staff, providers, parents, guardians, self-advocates, advocacy groups and other stakeholders as we move towards preparing our three year State Plan for developmental disability services. Thanks to all who have taken the time to attend the stakeholder meetings and share their concerns and recommendations for DD services!

March was also a very chilly month, which made the Polar Plunge event sponsored by Special Olympics of Nebraska even more challenging. The costumed participants were hilarious, and the event was very well attended. I commend the participants for their dedication to this great event.

March also offered opportunities for communicating with our legislators about issues im-

portant to people with developmental disabilities. Many people came to the Capitol on March 10th to celebrate the Governor's proclamation recognizing people with developmental disabilities and their contributions to our communities. It was wonderful to see such a large turnout!

Our first DD Summit was held March 25-27. Thank you to everyone that participated in making this event a success. I would like to give a special thanks to Kathie Lueke, Deputy Administrator for Quality Improvement for coordinating.

Thank you for taking the time to read about what's going on with

DD in Nebraska. It is your continued support and involvement that makes these opportunities for individuals possible.

Enjoy Spring!

- Jodi M. Fenner



Above Photo Provided by Kerry F. Zingg: Lincoln Shooting Stars visiting the capital on Legislative Day.



Left Photo Provided by: Kerry F. Zingg Dressed up and ready to go! Individuals getting ready to make the polar plunge.

What's a "Waiver program?"

By Pam Hovis, Waiver Manager

DHHS—Division of Developmental Disabilities

There is a lot of talk about 'waivers' when you speak to someone who works for Community Based Services within the Division of Developmental Disabilities. Often we see glazed over expressions and we wanted to give some background as to what exactly we mean when we talk about a 'waiver program'.

Under section 1915 (c) of the Social Security Act (the Act), States may request waivers of certain Federal requirements in order to develop Medicaid-financed community-based service alternatives.

Medicaid home and community-based service (HCBS) waivers afford States the flexibility to develop and implement creative alternatives to placing individuals who are Medicaid-eligible in hospitals, nursing facilities or intermediate care facilities for persons with intellectual disabilities (institutions). The HCBS waiver program recognizes that many individuals at risk of being placed in these facilities can receive habilitation services and supports in their homes and communities directed toward the acquisition, retention, and improvement of self-help, vocational, socialization, and adaptive skills for the individual's maximum possible independence.

Within the parameters of broad Federal guidelines, States have the flexibility to develop HCBS

waiver programs designed to meet the specific needs of targeted populations. Federal requirements for states choosing to implement an HCBS waiver program include:

- Demonstrating that providing waiver services to a target population is no more costly than the cost of services these individuals would receive in an institution.
- Ensuring that measures will be taken to protect the health and welfare of consumers.
- Providing adequate and reasonable provider standards to meet the needs of the target population.

Ensuring that services are provided in accordance with a service plan, known as an Individual Program Plan in Nebraska.

The State Medicaid agency, which is the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), must submit to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for review and approval, an application for an HCBS waiver, and the state has the ultimate responsibility for administration of an HCBS waiver program. Initial HCBS waivers are approved for a three-year period, and waivers are renewed for five-year intervals. When a state desires to make changes in a HCBS waiver program in between renewal periods, an amendment request is submitted to CMS.

In its oversight role, CMS focuses on each state's quality man-

agement system to assure and improve quality. CMS's approach is to use information provided by the states, derived from the State's internal self-monitoring activities, as a primary source of information. This approach provides a more efficient and effective assessment of waiver programs by CMS. Prior to a renewal of an HCBS waiver, CMS requests that the state provide information and evidence of the state's design and implementation of their quality management system. CMS reviews the evidence to determine the effectiveness of the state's quality management system and makes recommendations for improvements and incorporation into the waiver application for renewal.

Forty-eight States and the District of Columbia offer services through HCBS waivers, and Arizona operates a similar program as a research and demonstration program. There is no federal requirement limiting the number of HCBS waiver programs a state may operate at any given time, and currently there are approximately 287 active HCBS waiver programs in operation throughout the country.

The HCBS waiver program is the single most important source of financing for home and community-based services today, serving well over one million citizens with disabilities or who are elderly.

What's Happening in Nebraska?

By Pam Hovis, Waiver Manager

DHHS—Division of Developmental Disabilities

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) within the DHHS administers five HCBS waivers for adults and children with developmental disabilities (DD).

The comprehensive services waiver for adults consists of residential and day habilitation, respite services, and team behavioral consultation services.

The residential waiver for adults consists of residential habilitation, respite services, and team behavioral consultation services.

The day services waiver for adults consists of day habilitation, respite services, and team behavioral consultation services.

Habilitation, team behavioral consultation, and respite services under the above waivers are *specialized services* and are delivered by certified DD provider agencies with whom DDD contracts.

The community supports waiver for adults consists of community living and day supports, respite services, personal emergency response system, assistive technology and supports, home modifications, and vehicle modifications. Community supports services are *non-specialized* and are delivered by independent contractors with whom DHHS contracts.

The waiver for children with DD and their families consists of residential habilitation, respite

services, team behavioral consultation, habilitative child care, homemaker services, and home modifications. Specialized, certified DD providers and non-specialized independent providers deliver services to individuals on this waiver.

DDD has made changes in the current adult day and adult comprehensive services waivers and is planning significant changes in the waivers to offer more flexibility, choices, and employment focus for those individuals who are looking for more opportunities to self direct their services.

Amendments to the adult day and adult comprehensive services waiver were submitted to revise current day habilitation services to offer adults, including young adults graduating from special education services, alternatives to sheltered workshops. The revised Vocational Planning services and Integrated Community Employment services will focus on job searching and job training that will lead to sustained paid employment along side the general workforce in their community.

Upcoming changes in the waivers will focus on offering a larger menu of service options and more flexibility in funding to move the system towards more self-directed and person-centered decision-making.

The four adult waivers will be combined into two waivers by adding current services and new services to the adult day services

and adult comprehensive services waiver. The Community Supports waiver will be added to the above waivers and terminated. Individuals participating in the community supports waiver will seamlessly transition to the day or comprehensive services waiver and this will allow all individuals on those waivers access to both specialized and non-specialized supports. Because of the low number of participants on the residential services waiver, this waiver will be terminated and the current participants will seamlessly transition to the comprehensive services waiver.

Additional specialized services will be added to the menus under the adult day services waiver and adult comprehensive services waiver including retirement services for older individuals, medical risk services for individuals with complex medical needs that require ongoing evaluation and treatment and behavioral risk services to address behaviors that are challenging and put the person or others at risk of harm and/or frequent contact with law enforcement.

To give individuals more flexibility, the current monthly day and residential service allocated amounts will be converted to an annualized individual budget amount. Individuals, with support from their individual team will be able to purchase from a menu of services and supports to meet their needs and preferences.

DD Summit “Raps” Up

By Kathie Lueke, Deputy of Quality Assurance
DHHS—Developmental Disabilities

The Nebraska Developmental Disabilities Summit was held March 25 -27, 2010, in Lincoln and Kearney, Nebraska. The initial vision for the Summit was planned with input from provider/service organizations, advocates, the DD Council, and the DHHS DD Division. Through the input received, ideas for topics, national experts in the DD field, and format, helped shape the 2010 DD Summit which featured four conference “tracks” including – Management, Direct Support, Family/Guardian, and Medical. All presentations at the DD Summit were well received and overwhelmingly ranked as excellent and meeting the needs by those who attended. Comments captured

on evaluations recognized the quality of speakers presentation style and content, as well as specifics on what was most helpful for the session participants. Many wanted to hear more from the session presenters.

Featured national presenter on Positive Behavior Supports, Michael “Mike” Mayer, Senior Partner at community Resource Alliance, Mebane, NC, brought practical wisdom and humor to participants for positively guiding behavior through integrated services and community supports. Calvin and Tricia Luker, RespectABILITY Law Center, Royal Oak, Michigan, shared their personal insights as advocates and practical tools/guidance for person-centered and self-determination opportunities. Both of these sessions were offered in



Above Picture: Led by Tricia Mason, The DHHS team shares their rapping ability.

both Lincoln and Kearney, Nebraska.

On March 25th in Lincoln, participants were also able to participate in the Summit Opening by State Senator Colby Coash. A presentation on “DD History and Trends” by Sahana Sanyal, of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services set the stage nicely for the luncheon presentation on the “The Vision for DD in Nebraska” by DD Director Jodi Fenner, BSDC CEO Dan Howell and DD Community Based Services Administrator, Tricia Mason. Everyone in attendance was “rap”tured by the robust future plans for Nebraska in serving individuals with intellectual/ developmental



Pictured above: “Mike” Mayer Senior Partner at community Resource Alliance, Mebane, NC,

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DD Summit “Raps” Up

disabilities. Two national presenters, Angela Amado, Ph.D., University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration; and Geery Howe, M.A., Morning Star Associates; further emphasized the important role of leadership in shaping DD’s future through their presentations. An evening presentation (in Lincoln only) by John W. Herdzina and Thomas J. Malicki, of Abraham Kaslow and Cassman, LLP, Omaha, Nebraska, spent time with guardians, family, and DD Division staff related to Special Needs Trusts and Advanced Directives.

Two additional presentations for the Management track were held the morning of March 26th in Lincoln, Nebraska. Patti Scott, Co-Founder and CEO of Neighbors, Inc., Highland Park, New Jersey, demonstrated throughout her presentation how to support people towards citizenship and full lives in the community. Participants appreciated the real life stories that Patti shared on how individuals can be supported in unique ways that greatly affect their lives. Dr. Todd Stull, M.D., Assistant Professor, UNMC Department of Psychiatry, shared practical informa-

tion on common mental health diagnoses in the DD population, medication, and related information. His manner of presentation, interaction, and easily understood information was appreciated by participants.

The Medical track on Friday, March 26th, targeted physicians and nurses across the state of Nebraska where individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities may seek their services. Featured topics & speakers included: “Palliative Care”, Carl Greiner, M.D., Professor, Asst. Dean for Clinical Affairs, Vice Chair for Education, UNMC Department of Psychology; “Pandemic Preparedness in the DD Population”, Joann Schaefer, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Director of the DHHS Public Health Division; and “Epileptic Disorders”, Sanjay Singh, M.D., Director, The Nebraska Epilepsy Center and Neurology Residency Program,



Above Picture : Sahana Sanyal, of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

UNMC Department of Neurological Services.

Other featured sessions were presented by medical staff at BSDC on: Wellness and Illness Prevention; Dentistry and Developmental Disability; Behavioral Manifestations of Developmental Disability, Mental Illness, Respiratory Illnesses, Medical Errors, and Nutrition Management.

On Saturday, March 27th, the “Alternative to Guardianship” presentation by Calvin and Tricia Luker was repeated for those who were not able to attend the sessions on Thursday or Friday.

Planning for the 2011 DD Summit is underway! If you would like to suggest a topic or presenter, please send a note to: DHHS.DevelopmentalDisabilities@nebraska.gov.

Abraham Lincoln High School Student, Brandon Stokes, Succeeds Through SEAC Program

By Pam Monsky, Community Relations Director
Vocational Development Center, Inc. (VODEC)

Tim Andersen, the General Manager of Buffalo Wild Wings in Council Bluffs, couldn't be more pleased with his new employee, Brandon Stokes. "He's been a success, he's climbed the ladder," said Andersen. "You tell him something once and it's done. He has a great work ethic and he's reliable. Most young kids don't have his work ethic."

Brandon has been working as a host and greeter for more than three months and says, "I love the atmosphere at Buffalo Wild Wings. It's fast-paced and I love to keep moving."

Brandon got his job through the SEAC Program, a collaborative effort between VODEC and Council Bluffs Community Schools. Michele Stephens, Supported Employment Specialist for VODEC, works with the students at Abraham Lincoln High School and contacted Andersen and Larry Cushing, Assistant General

Manager to participate in a Mentoring Day last fall for special education students. Cushing sat with Brandon during the lunch and said he was impressed with him from the very start. "Brandon has great eye contact and shook hands right away. He asked to sit by me and said he wanted to work at Buffalo Wild Wings. He was very persistent!" said Cushing.

Brandon credits the SEAC Program and Michele for helping him achieve his goals. "The teachers help us get to interviews during school," he explained. "It's not just to get a job, it's also for a grade. But my motivation comes from Michele. She helped me to trust in myself and to make my own decisions."

Since getting his job, Brandon is working on getting his driver's li-

cense.

Cushing whole-heartedly endorses the SEAC Program. "After going through the Mentoring Day, I knew the kids were being taught through the program what employers want in an employee," he said. Brandon agreed, adding, "Pay attention in the SEAC Program. Show what you can do and look and act like you want the job."



Assistant General Manager Larry Cushing (left), Brandon Stokes (center) and General Manager Tim Andersen at Buffalo Wild Wings in Council Bluffs

A Long Time Overdue

Ellen Moeller,
Services Coordination Supervisor
DHHS - Developmental Disabilities

Carrie O'Brien not only talks the talk; she walks the walk.

Carrie lives in Lincoln, Nebraska. She has a long history of self-advocacy, and is the current president of the Nebraska chapter of People First, a nationwide organization of people with developmental disabilities empowering other people with developmental disabilities to learn more about

their rights and responsibilities, to represent their own views and concerns, to solve problems and make decisions, and to become more active participants in their communities. In addition, she has travelled extensively speaking to community groups about self-advocacy.

Carrie had a court-appointed legal guardian for many years. Her guardian recognized Carrie's strengths, and respected Carrie's decisions. When Carrie expressed an interest in having the

guardianship legally dissolved, her guardian did not object.

With the assistance of Carrie's team from ServiceLinc, her DHHS Service Coordinator, and Lincoln attorney Steffanie Garner Kotik of Kotik and McClure Law office, Carrie achieved her goal. On 3/9/2010 in Lancaster County Court, Judge Gerald Rouse found Carrie to be legally competent and terminated guardianship.

Carrie has this to say, "This was long time overdue."

Witnessing Results

By: Bill Barnett, DSN

Ron Hamouz has been a Residential Manager at Developmental Services of Nebraska for the past three and one half years. He works with a number of people supported by a successful new program in Nebraska.

Ron sees a direct correlation between the program and the quality of life for the individuals it serves. He said, “They become more a part of the community and actually see themselves involved in the community. They are empowered to do more.”

“I have not seen a single person who is served by this program fall back and fail. They may fall back momentarily, but they always move forward. When they see that they are moving ahead it is very exciting and life changing for them. I have individuals in the program who, after only a month or two, begin looking ahead to where they want to live in the community. It really allows them to be free thinkers and not so institutional in their thinking.”

How it Began

Over eight years ago, the Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities piloted a program to meet the needs of people with both developmental disabilities and psychiatric diagnoses who were inappropriately placed at the State’s Regional Centers. These were people who needed the services of both the mental health and developmental disabilities systems, but there were no service providers in either system with the comprehensive expertise required to meet their needs. Developmental Services of Nebraska stepped forward, partnering with the State in piloting a program that would offer both developmental disabilities and mental health services.

Today, Developmental Services of Nebraska (DSN) continues its work in partnership with the State and Pediatric Psychology Associates, an agency with specialized clinical expertise for persons

with complex emotional, developmental and behavioral needs. DSN is one of just two Nebraska community-based service providers delivering what the State now refers to as “Risk Reduction” services.

Measuring success

DSN currently supports 18 people funded under the Risk Reduction service model. Each person, along with their Individual Program Planning Team, has a unique set of benchmarks the person must meet to move toward being funded under the traditional developmental disabilities service model.

Since its inception, four people have transitioned out of the program. Two people are expected to complete their transition very soon, while six others are in various stages of transition and two are under consideration to begin transition out of the program. Only three people have required placement in a developmental disabilities institutional setting when the close monitoring provided by the program identified a need for greater support than could be provided safely in the community.

will help the person gain the skills they need to be successful.

Communities benefit because the people served under the program become contributing members, and Nebraska taxpayers benefit because the people are not reliant on high cost institutional and psychiatric hospital care.

The experience of the program has also resulted in the development of relationships between the developmental disabilities and behavioral health systems that are more far-reaching than this program, alone. Today, the expertise of both systems is brought together to benefit people with dual diagnoses, and additional projects are underway to offer services to others with a history of long term or recidivistic institutional placement.

Why DSN took on this challenge

Initially, DSN saw an unmet need and a way to meet it by partnering with the State. The work of supporting people eligible for risk reduction services is challenging. It includes considerable staff training and oversight—far more than that required under traditional de-

“I have not seen a single person served in this program fall back and fail. They may fall back momentarily, but they always move forward.”

Ron Hamouz, Developmental Services of Nebraska

Who Really Benefits

Those benefiting most from the risk reduction program are the people who once lived in regional centers and other institutions without the appropriate supports needed to help them move forward in life. As a result of this program, people are often now diverted from institutional placement, entirely—even short term placement at a regional center or BSDC has not been necessary in many cases.

The families of persons served benefit greatly by knowing their relative is getting high quality, intensive services that

velopmental disabilities services.

Tiffany Schnittker, Area Director of DSN’s Lincoln program, said, “We see it as an opportunity to think outside the box—to find solutions to challenges that don’t always fit nicely in a box. I believe we have grown tremendously, both as a Human Services agency and as professionals, in our ability to serve the needs of individuals in Nebraska.”

Look for follow up articles about the Risk Reduction program, including actual stories from individuals served and family members who share their unique perspectives.

Mr. Christian Goes to Washington

By: Joyce Werner, Community Liaison
Division of Developmental Disabilities

On January 26, 27, & 28th Christian Beard, accompanied by Special Olympics Nebraska staff members Chuck Cooper, Sarah Leeth, Carolyn Chamberlin, and Kerry Zing visited Washington D.C. Christian is a Special Olympics Nebraska athlete and will be competing in the 2010 National Games. Christian is also a graduate of the Athlete Leadership Program and is a Global Messenger. He traveled to DC to talk about the 2010 National Games to be held in Lincoln, Nebraska and to invite everyone to visit his home state of Nebraska July 17-24 to witness a world class athletic competition.

While he was in DC, he made a formal presentation honoring Eunice Kennedy Shriver and was able to visit with Tim and Anthony Shriver regarding his presentation. They congratulated him on his ability and thanked him for honoring their mother. According to Christian, this was the



Above Picture: Christian Beard speaking in honor of Advocate and Special Olympics Founder, Eunice Kennedy Shriver
Photo by Kerry Zing.



Above Picture: Christian Beard on the streets of DC. Photo by Kerry Zing



Left Picture: Christian Beard, Jeff Fortenberry, and Chuck Hagel. Photo by Kerry Zing

high light of his trip! In addition to the Shriver's, Christian met with the Senators and the Representative from Nebraska.

Christian was able to do some sight seeing while in DC and spent one afternoon at the Holocaust Museum. He also was able to meet with family members who live close by in Virginia. All in all, it was a wonderful trip for Christian and he said how **blessed** he has been to be part of Special Olympics Nebraska and to be selected as their representative for the Washington DC trip.

Stay in the Loop!

If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter, please let us know!

To help us keep costs down, if you are willing to receive the *Sower* electronically, please send an email to DHHS.DevelopmentalDisabilities@nebraska.gov or you can subscribe online at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/newsletters/sower/> by clicking on the "subscribe to this newsletter" link.

ACP SPRING CONFERENCE

ACP is holding their annual spring conference featuring Kathie Snow, the author and driving force behind *Disability is Natural* on May 6, 2010 in Lincoln at St. Mark's 84th & Pioneer Blvd. and May 7, 2010 in North Platte at the Holiday Inn Express. For additional details please visit the ACP website, acpnebraska.org.



Above Picture: 2009 Milford Volleyball Team showing their support to end the word! Photo by Shanna Meyer

Showing Support

March 3, 2010 marked the annual day of awareness for the Special Olympics “Spread the Word to End the Word” campaign. This campaign aims to change the perception that the R-word is, harmless and acceptable. The stereotypes conveyed by R-word impedes any further progress for individuals with developmental disabilities.

For more information, or to pledge not to say the R-word please visit

www.r-word.org.

Supported Employment Service Works for Allison

By Pam Monsky, Community Relations Director
Vocational Development Center, Inc. (VODEC)

Just a few months ago, Allison Ainge was working with her mother at their in-home day care business. But after her mother passed away and the business closed, Allison realized she needed a little help. VODEC’s Supported Employment Services provided exactly what Allison was looking for.

Within 30 days of being in VODEC services, Allison got a job at Skate Daze in Omaha. Allison lives in her own home and has a car. She did a lot of job searching on her own, but was able to expand her options after working with VODEC’s Supported Employment Specialist Anne Reimer. “At first, Allison was only looking at daycare jobs,” said Reimer. “We worked together to look at other opportunities. Allison’s very dedicated to her work and her job search.

She’s willing to learn anything and has a positive attitude, which helps in any employment situation.”

Allison said, “I’m very pleased with the services I’ve received through VODEC.” Allison also noted that her favorite parts of her job are working in the kitchen, dishwashing and cleaning. She’s working towards being a birthday party host in the future.

Lynn Burns, the event coordinator at Skate Daze is Allison’s supervisor. “I think everything is great. It’s a real benefit having Anne Reimer from VODEC here. We’re very fast paced and Allison is doing a great job keeping up. She’s conscientious, smart and loyal, everything you want in an employee.” said Burns.

According to Reimer, “Supported Employment is necessary to teach clients how to be as independent as possible. I think

Allison learned enough from this process that she could find her next job on her own, and that’s our goal. For people to be independent and successful in the community.”



Allison Ainge at Skate Daze in Omaha



Division of Developmental Disabilities

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Calendar of Events!

MAY

- 6 ACP Spring Conference (Lincoln)
- 7 ACP Spring Conference (North Platte, Holiday Inn)
- 15 Family and Friends Meeting(BSDC)
- 21 DD Town hall Meeting (NSOB 1Z)

JUNE

- 1-3 NAS Social Role Valorization Workshop (NE Wesleyen Univ.)
- 5 Region V Picnic and Advisory Committee Meeting (Pioneer’s Park, Lincoln)
- 25 DD Town Hall Meeting (NSOB 1Y)

JULY

- 17 Family and Friends Meeting (BSDC)
- 18-23 National Special Olympics
- 29 DD Town Hall Meeting (NSOB LLD)

- 30-31 NAS and Nebraska Wesleyan Summer Institute

AUGUST

- 13 DD Provider Meeting (Golds, Lincoln)
- 20 DD Townhall Meeting (NSOB 1Z)

SEPTEMBER

- 24 DD Townhall Meeting (NSOB 1Z)

OCTOBER

- 2 Region V Dinner Dance (Pershing, Lincoln)
- 29 DD Townhall Meeting (NSOB 1Z)

NOVEMBER

- 5 DD Provider Meeting (Gold’s, Lincoln)
- 19 DD Townhall Meeting (NSOB LLD)

Sower is published monthly by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), part of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), for benefit of families, guardians, service providers, advocates and other interested individuals.

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