

## Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities Annual Program Performance Report Summary 2014

The Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities works to promote the independence, integration, and productivity of people with developmental disabilities. The Council identifies and addresses pressing needs, including inequities in employment, education, housing, transportation, health care, and community inclusion. In 2014, the Nebraska Planning Council received \$452,431 in federal funding authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Act to support its work. Its 23 members are appointed by the Governor with 60% of these members being individuals with developmental disabilities or family members. In 2014, the Council supported a number of activities including, the following:

- Six voluntary regional councils comprised of individuals with disabilities, family members, agency representatives, service providers, and advocates conducted local activities across the state in advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change based on the Council's State Plan priorities. As a funding source to help implement the state plan through public education and awareness efforts, Regional Council funds supported 426 individuals across the state to attend conferences, workshops, and training in leadership, self-advocacy, and self-determination.
- Council funds supported a fall and spring event hosted by Centennial Public Schools in Utica, Nebraska for high school students ages 14-21 with developmental disabilities. Social activities and opportunities for this population are often limited, and these events brought students from the surrounding schools together to receive self-advocacy training while enjoying social interactions with peers and adults outside of their usual school routines.
- The successful joint project between The Arc of Buffalo County and the University of Nebraska-Kearney (UNK) College of Education developed a statewide model for improving healthy living for individuals with developmental disabilities through inclusive measures. The Kearney Inclusive Wellness Initiative (KIWI) project model included exercise, healthy living tips, healthy cooking classes, and weight management. KIWI collaborated with special education instructors from the College of Education, Kearney Family YMCA, Parks and Recreation, the local Take off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) organization, First Presbyterian Church, and UNK service learning and social work volunteers. Thirty-three participants have made and continue to make significant lifestyle changes to improve their overall health while role modeling full inclusion into community resources such as TOPS and the local YMCA, through participation in inclusive volleyball and kickball teams, and attendance at healthy cooking classes sponsored by their local Hy-Vee grocery store.
- Fritz & O'Hare Associates was funded to develop a series of e-learning modules for self-advocates, children and adults with developmental disabilities, and their families to increase meaningful participation in the Individual Education Planning (IEP) or Individual Supports Planning (ISP). The training modules are currently available at no cost as an E-learning course on the Southeast Community College website. Training guidebooks and DVDs for participants and facilitators were also developed and distributed. Fritz & O'Hare Associates plans to collaborate with lead agencies across the state to develop local consortiums to assist in dissemination of the modules in 2015.

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- The Council funded a project for the Nebraska Direct Support Professional Network (NDSPN) to work in collaboration with the Association of Community Professionals (ACP). This funding provided training titled "The Cornerstones of Direct Support: Competencies and Ethics" at the ACP fall conference. There were over 150 attendees from the Nebraska developmental disability provider community, self-advocates, and educational and behavioral professionals.
- The Council supports self-advocacy as a valuable resource to bring system improvements and awareness across the state. Council funds support People First of Nebraska, a state-wide nonprofit advocacy organization led by people with disabilities in Nebraska. People First of Nebraska continued to work on strengthening their organization in 2014 by offering development training to board members on various topics to cultivate greater ownership. People First of Nebraska continues to recruit and establish new chapters across the state. Their annual conference provides training to over 200 self-advocates.
- The Council funded a study on the level of family support and areas needing improvement for Nebraska families who have children with disabilities. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the 451 responses: challenges for families; service responsiveness; systems barriers; and unmet family needs. Families shared that their primary concern was the lack of available information about programs and services that could assist them. Recommendations were made to the Council which will require continued advocacy to bring about improvements.

In addition to funding these and other projects, Council staff take an active role in bringing advocacy and awareness in the following ways:

- Council staff advocate, collaborate, and increase awareness for individuals with developmental disabilities by serving on numerous advisory councils and committees: Nebraska Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership Advisory Council, Brain Injury Advisory Council, Nebraska Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (NCCD), Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP), and the Coordinated Funding Committee. The Designated State Agency for the Council is the Division of Public Health. Council staff serve on various work groups focused on the Division of Public Health's strategic plan, which provides a roadmap to continue to help Nebraskans live healthier lives now and into the future. This collaboration addresses health disparities for persons with disabilities and develops strategies to lay the foundation for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in generic public health programs.
- The Council annually publishes *Newsline* during the legislative session to keep citizens informed regarding proposed legislation related to disabilities and providing status updates on legislative bills the Council has selected to follow.