

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT

EVERETT TOWN HALL MEETING AND LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST September 22 & 23, 2011

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

The Community Outreach Subcommittee of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) met in Everett on September 22 and 23, 2011. The meeting was held at the Snohomish County Administration Building - East, (Robert J. Drewel Building).

The local planning team included support from the ARC of Snohomish County, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Snohomish County Developmental Disabilities and Work Opportunities. Special notes of thanks need to be given to Shayne Nagel, Director of the ARC of Snohomish County, Phil McConnell, Director of Work Opportunities, and Stewart Torgerson and Tamra Bradford, with the Snohomish County Developmental Disabilities and their staff for providing on-site support during the local events.

We were warmly welcomed by nearly 100 meeting participants which included people with disabilities, family members, service providers, and elected officials. We appreciate the valuable input and candor of everyone present.

The following report represents a summary of the issues discussed. Suggested actions, both legislative and local are presented. We look forward to further communications on these issues. Also included are the results of the evaluation forms that were received. Your feedback will be used to improve our outreach planning process and future meeting structure.

COMMUNITY ACCESS

Participant Comments and Recommendations

Eagle Wings disAbility Ministries is a church sponsored program geared towards individuals with Developmental Disabilities. They provide transportation and social activities. They serve approximately 2,200 individuals in Snohomish County. They have been working with the entertainment industries and art venues to offer lower cost admissions when their customers present the Eagle ID Card. Eagle Wings disAbility Ministries is located at 1624 Grove Street, Suite C, Marysville WA. Their mailing address is PO Box 1122, Marysville WA 98270. Their phone number is (360) 658-6093 and their email address is kinder.eaglewings@frontier.com.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Participant Comments and Recommendations

Numerous adults with developmental disabilities are not actively engaged in employment opportunities or participate in adult day programs. Many of these individuals are on a waitlist

Developmental Disabilities services. Volunteer opportunities should be promoted for these individuals. Eric Price with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) developed a paid internship opportunity with one of his customers who provided job coaching services to a worker with a developmental disability. This is an example of a win - win situation for the employer, the worker with disabilities and the DVR customer! More opportunities like this need to be created,

A parent expressed her frustration with the bureaucratic responsibilities related to reporting wages to the Social Security Administration every time her son gets a job. He will work awhile and then his benefits are reduced because he is earning money. He stops working because he needs his benefits. He wants to be active and working but cannot afford to lose his medical benefits or see a reduction in his monthly checks.

Other individuals may have similar concerns about benefits and the impact of earnings. Plan to Work is a program funded by the Social Security Administration which offers free benefit planning services to those who receive benefits based on disability. Plan to Work serves all of Washington State except for two counties, King and Kitsap. If you live in King and Kitsap counties Positive Solutions is the contact. If you receive services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities and live in Snohomish County you can contact Melinda Bocci for more information on benefit planning services.

Contact information for the agencies listed above is:

Plan to Work – Technical Assistance Line

25 West Main Avenue, Suite 310
Spokane, WA 99201
Direct Phone: (509) 209-2608
Toll Free: 1-866-497-9443
Fax: (509) 444-3077
staciec@community-minded.org
www.plantowork.org

Positive Solutions

114 Alaskan Way S
Suite 103
Seattle, WA 98104
Direct Phone: (206) 322-8181
Fax: 206 624-2595
www.psbrc.org

Snohomish County Developmental Disabilities

Melinda Bocci, *Human Services Specialist II*
Social Security Benefits Assistance, Jobs by 21
3000 Rockefeller Avenue, M/S 305
Everett, WA 98201
425-388-7259
melinda.bocci@snoco.org

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS/EMERGENCY SERVICES

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

Randy Fay with the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management explained that their mission is to develop disaster-resistant communities within Snohomish County. Emergency Preparedness includes activities that encourage a state of readiness in governments, public organizations, business, families and individuals that enhance the capability to survive a disaster and to ensure the continuity of government. City and county governments are responsible for developing a comprehensive disaster plan. We are increasing our efforts to include people with

disabilities in all parts of the plan. Currently they are working with SnoTrac (Snohomish County Transportation Coalition) and encouraging other organizations to get involved. More needs to be done to get a greater representation of the disability community in the overall planning process. One of our major efforts is to make sure that emergency information is available to the deaf community. Strategies to provide quick and effective communication are being developed. “My State USA”, provides text messages about what is going on. Information will be posted on our emergency management website and we are working with the Red Cross as well.

A suggestion was made to create opportunities for persons with disabilities to actively participate in all mock emergency preparedness training exercises. There is nothing better than working in an environment that closely resembles the challenges first responders may experience.

More information needs to be available on the “Map Your Neighborhood” (MYN) program. MYN is designed to help neighborhoods prepare for disasters. It provides information on identifying what needs to happen immediately following a disaster. The MYN program assists with identifying: the skills and equipment each neighbor has; the locations of natural gas and propane tanks; and provides instruction on how to develop a contact list identifying where people with vulnerabilities are located and their likely needs.

Randy offered to provide information on the MYN program and is willing to meet with local neighborhoods who are interested in participating in this program. Randy can be reached at 425.388.5063 or at Randall.fay@snoco.org.

EMPLOYMENT

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

Everett WorkSource has a staff person who teaches job interviewing skills and assists persons with disabilities in their job search. The “Straight Talk Workshop Series” (STS) is open to everyone and will rotate through a variety of job search related topics, such as: Essential Job Search Tools, Interviewing, Networking, The Impact of Attitude and much more. These workshops are free and if you are interested in knowing more about the Everett WorkSource you can find them on line at Go2worksource.com. The office is located at 3201 Smith Ave, Suite 413, Everett, WA 98301. Their phone number is 425.258.6300.

Barry Long, the facilitator described a recent employment fair held at Shoreline Community College entitled “Overcoming Barriers to Employment”. This event was funded through a stimulus money grant. To find out more about the planning and funding process you can contact Judy Parson with the North Shore Community Services, her number is 206.393.4418. Angela Hughes with the Office of Special Service for Shoreline Community College also assisted with the program; she can be reached at ahughes@shoreline.edu. Shayne Nagel with the ARC of Snohomish County and Sally Malan expressed an interest in bringing the program to Everett Community College.

A local Albertson’s store was acknowledged for its efforts to use natural supports for job coaching services. This successful job placement was made by a school to work transition program which recently had its funding reduced. These skill building opportunities need to be fully funded.

Toby Olson, the Executive Secretary of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment reported on a recent survey conducted by the business community. The issue for businesses is not related their willingness to hire persons with disabilities but finding applicants with disabilities who meet their employment needs. Businesses that have a reputation for hiring persons with disabilities think that there needs to be better coordination between job developers. Job developers need to reach out to new employers for hiring opportunities and expand their employer networks.

Forecasted budget reductions for the Division of Developmental Disabilities will decrease funds used for supportive employment services and redirect them for adult day program services. This change represents a major step backwards. Not only will these individuals need to reduce their work efforts and self sufficiency, it also creates pressure on residential programs and families. Jim Morris, Chair of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment recommended that individuals who are interested in this issue should be talking with Representative Mary Lou Dickerson who chairs the Human Services Committee. Mike Hatch, a GCDE member and the former director of Work Opportunities is serving on a taskforce looking into these proposed cuts. You may want to talk with him and share your concerns.

Persons with disabilities are often hired in part-time positions with no benefits and very limited opportunities for advancement. This is a nation-wide problem causing high underemployment and unemployment.

Toby Olson, GCDE commented that some large employers have programs to facilitate persons with disabilities in the workplace, Walgreen's and Wal-Mart are a couple of examples. GCDE has received a grant to work with the Association of Washington Business to address increasing full-time employment opportunities with benefits for person with disabilities.

HEALTHCARE

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

Aditya Ganapathiraju, a GCDE Member shared that early notification suggests that further cuts are going to be made by the health care authority. Programs spared previously may not be spared this time, specifically the basic health plan and Disability Life Line.

Medical insurance companies in general do not provide adequate coverage for children with Autism. How can we mandate the insurance industry to provide parity? Toby Olson, GCDE explained that a recent lawsuit ruled insurance companies should be mandated to provide parity for autism. The ruling is currently being appealed but if the decision in lower court prevails, medical services should be covered.

HOUSING

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

There are multiple organizations with multiple programs in Snohomish County all competing for the same dollar resources and all marketing their own programs. We could save a lot of money and offer a more comprehensive programs if we would all work together

A modest 1 bedroom apartment rents for 136% of the standard Supplemental Security Income. Section 8 vouchers are closed and the waiting list for subsidized housing is 6 years.

The ARC of Snohomish County offers information on housing on their website, arcsno.org, or you can call Sally Grube at 425.258.2459 X109 or email her at Sally@arcsno.org.

“A Home of Your Own” program was great and lots of people purchased their own homes. Locally we experienced problems with no funding for home maintenance and neighborhood transitions where the neighborhood no longer was as attractive as it was at purchase.

Melinda Johnson, GCDE mentioned the success the ARC of Spokane was having with their Home Ownership program. Since 2004 the ARC of Spokane helped over 70 people and families buy homes in Spokane. They also offer programs on financial management and home maintenance. If you want to know more about their program you can contact Kathy Griffith at 509.328.6326. Kathy was a former member of GCDE and served as co-chair of the Community Outreach Subcommittee.

Carolyn Weikel, the County Auditor has a contact name of an architect for accessible housing she can be reached at 425.388.3693.

MENTAL HEALTH

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

In our community parents call the police on their kids to get them into jail in order to get services and treatment taking them to the local emergency rooms does not work.

The Snohomish County voters approved a 0.01% tax increase for mental health services for older adults.

The Snohomish County Involuntary Treatment program serves individuals who are mentally ill and may be dangerous to themselves, others, or to property, or who are so disabled that they require evaluation for involuntary psychiatric commitment. A County Designated Mental Health Professional can be reached 24 hours, 7 days a week at: (425) 388-7215.

SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

School to Work Transition services vary by school district. If you live in the Edmonds your services will differ from those available in Marysville. As a state, transition services should be the same in every school district. Student services should not depend on tax revenue but should be developed and administered uniformly across the state. Resources should be administered at the state level to ensure equal opportunity and services across the state.

Currently we have pockets of super services and pockets of need. Standardization of services needs to be developed and an oversight committee established to provide quality services in every district. Parents struggle for services and school districts have established silos of responsibility without standards of care.

A teacher in the Everett School District expressed concerns regarding limited options for students with disabilities for supported employment. Funding is being cut and services are being reduced or eliminated.

School districts prioritize their specific needs within their own district; the Educational Service Districts do not influence this process. A representative with the Everett School district explained that they are seeing a dwindling population of deaf students and they are partnering with the Edmond School district to utilize an itinerant deaf and Hard of Hearing teacher.

The Snohomish County Transition Council may be a good group to contact to talk about the quality of transition services across school districts. It is a network of schools, providers and professionals invested in the transition process for students age 18 – 21. Meetings are on the 1st Wednesday of the month from 7:00 am to 8:30 am through the school year. For more information call Melinda Bocci at 425.388.7259.

ARC has started a transition club to pull students together from various school districts contact Kelly Church at 425.258.2459 for more information.

Hot off the Press!! - On March 27, 2012 the *15th Annual Snohomish County Transition Resource Fair* will be held from 4:00 to 8:30 p.m. It will be at the Cascade High School, 801 East Casino Road, Everett, WA 98203. This event is sponsored by the Snohomish County Transition Council. If you want more information contact Tamra Bradford, 425.388.7320.

Families often experience a “Catch 22” situation. Students are not eligible for services from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation when in school. These individuals want to work but get placed in a complex system with limited funding for supported employment and life skills training. A representative from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation stated that DVR counselors do work with students in school to provide transition services.

TRANSPORTATION

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

One participant takes 3 buses and travels 2 .5 hours to get to work and then walks 1.5 miles on each end of the bus route. This is very difficult. She uses multiple transit systems and has lots of waiting time for the buses. It is just a 10 mile trip overall. A suggestion was made to check with other large employers nearby to see if there are carpools that could assist with meeting your transportation needs. Those in disability community often get stuck in the disability mindset for services and forget to look outside of the usual disability options. Community Transit offers a vanpool program for more information call (425) 353RIDE (7433).

Snohomish County Paratransit is making severe service cutbacks. A suggestion was made to develop legislation requiring transit operators to factor in routes where riders with disabilities have higher route usage and not just the overall route usage.

Ryan Warner, ADA Coordinator for Statewide Transportation explained that transit providers are making hard decisions across the state, cutting services based on ridership or using cross the board cuts. Eliminating Sunday service is another cost saving measure being implemented

throughout the state. Ryan suggests that when there is a vote on transit the disability community needs to organize and advocate for their concerns.

Local transit is proposing an additional 20 percent cut next year. We need to develop an initiative like they did in King County to add a \$20.00 tax on the license tab renewal. This added cost would be earmarked for transit services. Adding this type of tax requires legislative approval.

A comment was made that this initiative most likely would not get voter approval but most of the people in this room would support it.

Dialysis patient used to be transported by DART, which is no longer available to him. What are other resources?

Toby Olson responded that Medicaid is currently funding transport for medical services. Trips should be arranged through Medicaid brokerage.

The rural areas of Snohomish County are underserved by transit providers. We have over 600 square miles with no service and it is going to get worse with the projected budget shortfalls.

Who is responsible for ensuring the path of travel to the Park n ride in Marysville is safe? I have to cross unmarked railroad tracks and feel it is very risky.

Ryan Warner responded that it really depends on who owns it; Community Transit, Sound Transit, Metro, Burlington Northern any of these are a possible suspects. Safety issues have to be addressed to the entity who owns it. Washington State Department of Transportation would be interested in learning more about this particular park n ride and Ryan shared his contact information with the individual.

Transportation Assistance Program (TAP) provides a special needs transportation safety net for older adults and people with disabilities outside the DART service area. TAP connects people to services, health care, senior centers, shopping, recreation and more. For more information about the TAP program you can call 425.423.8517.

Sunday Pay Your Pal is a program sponsored through Community Transit and through a Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant. It operates county wide and anyone who is DART eligible can participate. The rider recruits their own driver and the driver is reimbursed for their mileage. Call Sandy Scheurman at SnoTrac 425.265.2227 or 1.800.223.8145. This service is also available on holidays. There is currently a waiting list and it may end in December based on available funding.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is installing a visual paging system on their ferries. They hired a new ADA Coordinator, Susan Moriarty to focus on access issues. A comment that the traffic patterns and directions for loading seem random and they were unsure if riders with disabilities were being accommodated. Barry Long, the meeting facilitator uses the ferries frequently and as a chair user finds them very accommodating. Ryan added that you can call ahead for a reservation to guarantee boarding. Also two new wheelchairs are going to be available on all ferries to address the long and tiring access for walk on traffic via the ramps. Barry commented the emergency plan for wheelchair evacuation has never been articulated to him and he is unaware of the process.

VOTING ACCESS

Participant Comments and Recommendations:

A participant commented that deaf and deaf/blind don't have an accessible voting option, large screen or Braille is not available.

Karen Weickel, the Snohomish County Auditor reported that since 2006 Snohomish County has been an all mail ballot county. They partner with libraries as accessible voting and drop off locations. A number of these locations were eliminated because they were not being used. People seemed to have worked out a way to vote at home. Accessible voting machines are available in her office 18 days prior to Election Day and in certain libraries the day before Election Day. Their availability is advertised in the mailed ballots and in the local voter's pamphlet. Karen stated that the interest in accessible voting machines has declined. In regards to party caucus meetings, she is unaware of any requirement that party caucus meetings need to be accessible and hope local planners are looking for accessible locations but she cannot make them do so.

SUMMARY OF MEETING EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback. It is extremely useful and we take it seriously. Evaluation forms were distributed to all meeting participants for both the Town Hall and Leadership Meetings. A total of 37 people returned the surveys. Overall 90% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the meeting facility was accessible, registration process was timely, and the outreach helped them identify community issues that need to be addressed. Several helpful suggestions were made to assist with the planning of future events:

- ⇒ Limit topic discussion allowing additional time to address more concerns.
- ⇒ Don't waste so much time with introductions of meeting participants
- ⇒ People first language should be used by facilitators

Respectfully submitted by:

Subcommittee Chair -
GCDE Staff -

Cathy Warms
Melinda Johnson,

REPORT DISTRIBUTION:

All meeting participants who signed in and provided a mailing address will receive a meeting summary. The city, county, and state elected officials and the members of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment receive a copy of the meeting summary.