

A Brief Report on the Disabilities Issue Agenda

Prepared for the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities

Martin School of Public Policy and Administration
University of Kentucky
Developmental Disabilities Team

Edward T. Jennings, Jr., Director

Kristen Hoffman
Perry Papka
Jeremy Hall

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SUMMARY

Issues affecting people with disabilities are widespread across the nation and are being addressed in many different ways. The lists below show issues currently being discussed in Kentucky, at a national level and within other states. This listing was compiled in September. It was compiled by surveying a variety of sources. The search strategy is described in Appendix A.

Kentucky Issues

- Waiting Lists: Long waiting lists for community based services have sparked action in Kentucky. Arc of the Bluegrass currently has a waiting list campaign. Also, the Kentucky “waiting list” case is set to begin in January of 2005.
- First Steps Program: How will proposed cuts by Governor Fletcher affect the program? Is the program currently running efficiently?
- Special Education: Appropriate funding? How is special education affected by No Child Left Behind? Arc of the Bluegrass has a Coalition for Reform in Special Education (C.R.I.S.E.S) program.
- Ticket to Work: Looking into reasons for low response rates.
- Medicaid Reform: How to improve medical coverage to people with disabilities.
- Housing: Kentucky ranks low in treating people with disabilities in a community setting.
- Aging: Public hearing to discuss state plan to assist the aging.

National Issues

- IDEA Reauthorization: House and Senate bills are in conference. The Arc feels both bills are in need of adjustments.
- Federal Jobs Legislation: Legislation is to be introduced that will protect the federal jobs of people with disabilities from private outsourcing.
- Transportation Reauthorization Bill: Currently in conference. There are large differences in funding levels between the bills.
- Criminal Justice: The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, if passed, will strengthen the Federal hate crime statute to include people with disabilities. Also, there is a national push to implement training and best practices among local law enforcements.
- Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Bill: If passed in the House, this bill will assure no employment or health insurance discrimination based on genetic information.
- Genetic Testing: Discussion about ethics of using genetic testing to determine disability.
- Direct Support Professionals: Difficulty in recruiting and retaining these professionals has led to discussion about increasing wages and benefits.
- Special Education: Discussions to improve special education student testing and tracking.
- Autism: New study potentially linking autism with a mercury-based preservative in childhood vaccines.
- Ticket to Work: Reviewing this program.
- Voting Accessibility: Discussed by many national organizations.

Issues across State Councils for Developmental Disabilities

- Direct Support Professionals: Difficulty in recruiting and retaining these professionals has led to discussions about increasing wages and benefits.
- Self Determination: Projects to change waivers so people can hire, fire and direct their own support.
- Waiting Lists: Most states have initiatives to improve the problem with waiting lists.
- Transitional Services: Many programs are in place to improve the transition from school to work.
- Inclusion Education: Variety of incentive programs are in place to promote inclusion in schools.
- Dental Care: Focus to provide improved dental care to people with disabilities is a widespread focus.
- Housing: Initiatives to increase the number of affordable and accessible housing options. Many states have programs to encourage home purchasing.
- Respite Care: Protection and improvement of respite care facilities.

- Inclusive Recreation: Increasing the supply and awareness of recreation activities, including interfaith worship initiatives.
- Transportation: Many states are conducting transportation studies, some with voucher programs.
- Inclusive child care: Programs that provide funding and training are attempting to fill this need in states.

Appendix A

Search Strategies to Identify Issues

The goal of the research was to scan local and national resources to gain perspective on issues dealing with disabilities as well as to understand what kinds of things organizations are doing in the disability arena. The research plan was as follows:

Local Media Search

- Looked up web pages for the Lexington *Herald Leader* and the Louisville's *Courier-Journal*. Searched for recent articles that included the term "disabilities".
- From the University of Kentucky electronic resources, searched *Access World News*, a search engine that includes 500 U.S. newspapers and 250 international titles, for all local Kentucky newspapers. Used search terms "disabilities" and "issue" to generate most of the articles.
- Looked over pertinent articles and divided them into general areas of interest.

Local Disability Organizations Search

- Went to www.disabilityresources.org and looked at various disability web pages.
- Decided to focus on Arc of the Bluegrass, Arc of Kentucky, Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute and the Protection and Advocacy agency.
- Searched each of these websites for programs and topics of interest.

National Media Search

- From the University of Kentucky electronic resources, searched *Access World News*, a search engine that includes 500 U.S. newspapers and 250 international titles, for the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune and the New York Times. Used search terms "disabilities" and "issue" to generate most of the articles.
- Wrote a brief summary for all articles disability related articles discussing issues or interesting practices.
- Looked up *National Journal* on the search engine *Academic Search Premier*. Searched for any articles discussing disabilities.
- Wrote a brief summary of the *National Journal* articles.

National Disability Organizations Search

- Looked at www.thearc.org for current issues and legislation concerning people with disabilities.
- Looked at The Arc's links for national organizations and skimmed many of the pages.
- Decided to write up the following organizations: *American Association of People with Disabilities*, *National Organization on Disability*, *National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems and Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities*.
- For each of these organizations, summarized the topics they are interested in, the actions they are taking and other interesting facts found relating to disabilities.

State Developmental Disabilities Council Web Pages Search

- Went to the webpage for the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities and found their listing of state councils.
- Viewed state websites and summarized the topics they are interested in, the programs they are pursuing.

Write-ups of Local News and Organizations, National News and Organizations and State Councils

- Created areas of interest I had found overlapping all of my searches: Advocacy, Criminal Justice, Direct Support Professionals, Early Intervention, Education, Employment, Health Care, Housing, Community Life, Transportation and Misc.
- For each of the areas, I listed common issues I had found being discussed as well as new or original programs that surfaced through the research.