



GAPSE Newsletter

Georgia Chapter of APSE: The Network on Employment

August 2008

Special points of interest:

- 2008 Conference
- GAPSE Employment Grant
- Legislative Issues



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Highlights from the GAPSE President

As I enter my final 4 months as GAPSE president, I look ahead in great anticipation of welcoming you on October 22nd to one of the finest annual conferences ever offered. We also expect to begin a public policy initiative that will give GAPSE significance while being extremely meaningful to Georgians with disabilities. It is an exciting time to be a GAPSE member!

On behalf of the GAPSE Conference Planning Task Group I am very pleased to announce that the program for the 15th annual conference is no longer tentative. We are honored to have **Gwen Skinner**, director of the Georgia Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, & Addictive Diseases, open our conference by sharing her thoughts regarding the importance of our conference theme, **JOBS!**, for Georgians with disabilities.

What better way to emphasize GAPSE's commitment to integrated employment and **JOBS for ALL** than to have **Deb Russell**, Walgreens' Outreach & Employment Services Manager, as our opening key-note. Deb will share **Walgreens' Quest for Inclusion** and discuss how conferees can become involved in employment opportunities with Walgreens new bulk distribution center in Pendergrass as well as local stores throughout Georgia. GAPSE is partnering with Walgreens in their quest for inclusion and together we expect to interest other businesses in replicating Walgreens' model.

Denise Bissonnette wakes us up in style Thursday morning with **Beyond Barriers to Passion and Possibility**. Denise's extraordinary success as a job developer has resulted in her being one of North America's most sought-after trainers. Denise frames her work with respect for the human spirit. She unabashedly asserts the worth of each human being and the right that each of us has to a livelihood that draws on our best qualities, stirs our truest passions, and brings us joy. Her book, **Beyond Traditional Job Development** stands as the definitive text for job development professionals throughout the continent. Please don't want to miss this training event.

By very popular demand, **Mindy Oppenheim** will return to our conference to provide great (and fun) training. With many years of experience in supported employment, Mindy has trained thousands of job coaches and employment specialists around the country. Mindy is known for her pragmatic, down-to-earth approach. Her presentations combine humor and practical strategies to inspire, instruct, and impel job coaches and employment specialists to unprecedented levels of creativity, productivity, and effectiveness. Mindy will facilitate two workshops during the concurrent sessions on Thursday and she closes our conference on Friday with **Are We There Yet?**

We have outstanding presenters who will be speaking on topics of interest during the concurrent sessions Thursday afternoon. Please look at the "Schedule at a Glance" for session topics and presenters. More detail regarding the concurrent sessions will be provided through the GAPSE Alert listserv. This is a **must attend** conference. Register early.

In another area within this newsletter, I have the opportunity to discuss GAPSE's role in public policy. The most important part of this discussion is GAPSE's exploration of ways to make employment the first option and the preferred outcome of all Georgia youth and working age adults with disabilities. Please review my thoughts and provide input to me. Thanks and I look forward to seeing you at the beach.

Phil Chase
GAPSE President



SE: Building bridges to a better tomorrow

News from the Office of DD

The Office of Developmental Disabilities is rolling out two new Medicaid Waivers this fall and is excited about the innovative ways these waivers will support people with Developmental Disabilities in getting the individualized supports they need to find and create the jobs and lives in the community they want. Self-direction and creative use of service categories will offer tremendous opportunity to wrap services around people's person-centered goals for employment and community life. The options to self-direct services and to use waiver dollars to pay co-employed providers-of-one will mean increased choice for Georgia citizens with developmental disabilities and improved quality in Georgia's community-based services.

The New Options Waiver (NOW) Program represents Georgia's commitment to continual improvement of home and community-based services for persons with mental retardation/ developmental disabilities (MR/DD). Individuals eligible for NOW services live with family members or in their own home. NOW provides services for individuals with less intense and urgent needs than out-of-home residential treatment or extensive waiver supports to live safely in the community. The NOW Program includes safeguards for participants whose intensity of needs change post-entrance to the waiver. Individuals to be served in the NOW Program include current participants and additional participants receiving services due to recent funding increases by the Georgia General Assembly. The NOW Program uses a participant-centered assessment process to determine the support needs of participants and as the foundation for the development of the Individual Service Plan and the individual budget. The individual budget process is designed to increase flexibility in service delivery to meet exact individual need, enhance the predictability and consistent utilization management of the waiver funds, and support participant direction. Supports for community connection building and participant direction are essential components of the NOW Program. NOW includes services that provide these key supports to participants and their families.

Purpose. The purpose of NOW is to offer services and supports that enable individuals to remain living in their own or family home and participate in community life. To this end, NOW implements individualized budgeting, enhanced flexibility in service delivery, and increased opportunities for participant direction and community connection building.

Goals. NOW Program goals are to: (1) avoid the need for more intensive services; (2) increase independence and quality of life of individuals with MR/DD; (3) increase the flexibility of service planning and delivery to meet exact individual need; (4) provide the opportunity for all participants to elect to direct their services to the extent that they choose; and (5) ensure the health, safety and welfare of NOW participants.

Objectives. NOW Program objectives are to: (1) transition 100 percent of NOW participants to an individual budget by the end of the first year; (2) offer the opportunity for participant direction to 100 percent of NOW participants by the end of the first year; (3) afford NOW participants increased opportunities for community membership and supported employment at community work sites where persons without disabilities are employed; and, (4) increase access of NOW participants to community connections during evenings and weekends.

Organizational Structure. The Department of Community Health (DCH), Medicaid, delegates the day today operation of the NOW Program to the Department of Human Resources, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (DHR, MHDDAD). DCH maintains administration over the NOW Program and oversees DHR's performance of operational functions. The DHR, MHDDAD Central Office performs statewide waiver operational and daily administrative functions. The five DHR, MHDDAD regional offices perform NOW functions at the regional level, including intake and evaluation, preauthorization of NOW services, utilization management, crisis resolution, and quality management. Individuals access the NOW Program through the DHR, MHDDAD regional offices.

Service Delivery Methods. NOW provides individuals with MR/DD and their families the opportunity for enhanced freedom, choice, control, and responsibility over services received through the statewide availability of participant-directed service delivery. NOW participants may also opt for traditional service delivery.

The Georgia Comprehensive (COMP) Supports Waiver Program makes community living and participation a reality for individuals with mental retardation/developmental disabilities (MR/DD) who require comprehensive and intensive services. Individuals eligible for the COMP Program need out-of-home residential support and supervision or intensive levels of in home services to remain in the community. Individuals to be served in the COMP Program include current participants and additional participants receiving services due to recent funding increases by the Georgia General Assembly. The COMP Program uses a participant-centered process to determine the support needs of participants and as the foundation for the development of the Individual Service Plan and the individual budget. The individual budget process includes design features to enhance the predictability and consistent utilization management of the waiver funds as well as to support Georgia's movement towards participant direction.

Purpose. The purpose of the COMP Program is to offer comprehensive and extensive waiver services to enable individuals with urgent and intense needs to avoid institutional placement. The COMP Program provides the level of services needed by individuals transitioning from institutions to community living.

Goals. The COMP Program goals are to: (1) avoid the need for institutional placement; (2) increase independence and quality of life of individuals with MR/DD, who have intensive or comprehensive support needs; (3) facilitate the transition of institutionalized individuals to community living; (4) begin to offer opportunities statewide for participant direction by waiver participants who have intense or comprehensive support needs; and (5) ensure the health, safety and welfare of COMP Program participants.

Objectives. The COMP Program objectives are to: (1) transition 100 percent of COMP Program participants to an individual budget by the end of the first year; (2) offer the opportunity for participant direction to 100 percent of COMP Program participants receiving selected services by the end of the first year; (3) transition at least 100 institutionalized individuals to community living each year of the waiver period; (4) afford COMP participants increased opportunity for community participation in generic environments.

Organizational Structure. The Department of Community Health (DCH), Medicaid, delegates the day-to-day operation of the COMP Program to the Department of Human Resources, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (DHR, MHDDAD). DCH maintains administration over the COMP Program and oversees DHR's performance of operational functions. The DHR, MHDDAD Central Office performs statewide waiver operational and daily administrative functions. The five DHR, MHDDAD regional offices perform COMP waiver functions at the regional level, including intake and evaluation, preauthorization of COMP waiver services, utilization management, crisis resolution, and quality management. Individuals access the COMP Program through the DHR, MHDDAD regional offices.

Service Delivery Methods. Georgia offers statewide availability of participant-directed service delivery. All COMP Program participants have the opportunity to elect to direct some of their waiver services. Participants may also opt for traditional service delivery of all of their waiver services.

Availability of Current Waiver Services

All services provided under the current Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Services Waivers will be available through the New Options Waiver (NOW) Program or the Comprehensive (COMP) Supports Waiver Program. Current MR/DD waiver participants will transfer and receive services in one of these waivers, either the NOW or COMP. Further, no waiver participant will lose services due to this transition.

For more information about funding employment services with the new DD Waivers contact: Kate D. Brady, *Employment Policy & Programming Director*, DHR-Division of MHDDAD Office of Developmental Disabilities, 2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite: 22-417, Atlanta, GA 30303-3171, office: 404/657-6427, fax: 404/657-2310, kbrady@dhr.ga.gov

GAPSE: The Georgia Network on Employment is a member organization formed to improve and expand integrated employment opportunities, services and outcomes for persons experiencing disabilities. If you are not a member of this very important movement we invite you to join our group. Visit the GAPSE website at www.gapsenetwork.com

GAPSE

850 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30602

Phone: 706-542-1360

E-mail: pchase@uga.edu

GAPSE Offers Grant to Person or Persons to Obtain Employment

The GAPSE board will offer up to \$5000 this year to help one or more people with significant disabilities obtain employment. The applicant (job coach or employment specialist, person with a disability, or other advocate for the individual) must be a member of GAPSE. There must be a good plan for how the money will be spent and enhance or result in employment. Please go to the GAPSE website (www.gapsenetwork.com) to find the application (click on "Grant Application") or call or e-mail Adele Patrick or any other board member. Information about all of us can be found on the GAPSE website.

Public Policy Update:

GAPSE is in the process of finding its' role and determining what kind of players we will be in the public policy arena. We know that we must stop reacting to change and begin influencing change. Easier said than done! Hopefully, we all joined GAPSE because of a common interest consistent with the mission of APSE/GAPSE: **To improve and expand integrated employment opportunities, services, and outcomes for persons with disabilities.** Staying consistent with our mission, GAPSE leadership must first determine the interests of our members and set priorities. The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, led by Eric Jacobson, gives us an excellent model to follow. Look at the Council's 2008 Legislative Agenda at www.qcdd.org and I think you will agree that these folks know their priorities. Go to GA NAMI and Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network's websites and you will immediately see their priorities. Once our priorities are identified, we must give our members good information on those issues. Then we must provide members the mechanism to influence public policy relating to the issue of interest. Hang on; we are going to get there!

GAPSE is committed to supporting APSE's public policy agenda. Our members receive "Action Alerts" and typically we follow-up with additional local information. An example of recent partnering is the effort to ensure passage of the **Americans Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008**. APSE leaders began their work by participating in a work group which proposed the Amendments. We were then asked to encourage Georgians in the House of Representatives to pass this legislation. Fortunately, the ADAA passed the House overwhelmingly with little help from Georgia as 6 of our 13 House members did not vote in favor. Our effort now is to secure passage on the Senate side with more help from Georgia. APSE's initial Alert reflected that Senator Saxby Chambliss was a co-sponsor of the bill; therefore, it became important that we get Senator Johnny Isakson's support of this bill. I am very pleased to report that Senator Isakson has joined 63 of his colleagues as a co-sponsor of ADAA. Thanks to all of you who contacted Senator Isakson and/or his staff.

Last February when President Bush asked Congress to eliminate funding for the Supported Employment State Grant program we asked our members and friends to contact Georgia legislators and convince them to oppose the President's request. We also attempt to be responsive to the public policy agendas of our friends such as the Governor's Council on Development Disabilities, NAMI, and the Mental Health Consumer Network.

At this time, GAPSE is exploring ways to make employment the first option and the preferred outcome of all Georgia youth and working age adults with disabilities. Although still in the planning stage, we need to bring together key constituents throughout Georgia who believe strongly in the idea that integrated employment in the workplace at competitive wages should be the expected and first choice of Georgians with significant disabilities. Together, it is essential that we develop a blueprint to change our state's culture and make employment as the first choice a reality. This is not a new concept as APSE chapters in Minnesota, Colorado, and Indiana have experience in a similar initiative. Chapter leaders in these states have agreed to assist us.

If you are interested in working with GAPSE's public policy task group, let any board member know. We need your help!

Phil

Note from the Editor: GAPSE strives to stay in the know and advocate for individuals that receive SE services. If you have articles or success stories that you would like to submit please contact Sabrina Tuten at (912) 449-7236 or e-mail at stuten@satilla.csb.state.ga.us