



PEAL News

Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center Serving Western and Central Pennsylvania

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Mission Statement

The mission of the PEAL Center is to ensure that children, youth, and adults with disabilities lead rich, active lives and participate as full members of their schools and communities by providing training, information, and technical assistance based on best practices to individuals, families and all people who support them.



*"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity;
an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."
Winston Churchill*

Family Health Information Initiative

The PEAL Center is pleased to announce expanded services for families of children with special health care needs (CSHCN) and their families. PEAL has been awarded a three year federal Family to Family Health Information Center grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Joan Badger has joined the PEAL staff to coordinate this work. Joan is the parent of a 23 year old daughter, Josie, who has complex health care needs. Joan brings 36 years of classroom experience to the PEAL Center. She is a 4-H leader and adult ally for the PA Youth Leadership Network. She resides on a farm near Wampum with her husband and daughter.



The PEAL Center now provides individual information and technical assistance to families of children with special health care needs. By definition all children with disabilities are considered to have a special health care need. We will be offering workshops on health information, including transition to adult life, which will help parents find the resources that their children and families need. In addition, the PEAL Center is offering the Parent Leadership Institute to



Pennsylvania parent leaders to help increase their effectiveness on boards, committees and in the community. The Institute will address important issues affecting families of children with special health care needs and disabilities. To apply for the institute visit : www.pealcenter.org and click on the Parent Leadership Institute announcement. We are excited about this new initiative as we continue to offer assistance to individuals with disabilities and their families.

Joan Badger

Pennsylvania Health and Human Services Resource Guide—
www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/lib/health/governor/Resource_Guide_ENG_REV.pdf

Guía de Recursos de Salud y Servicios Humanos de Pennsylvania—
www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/lib/health/governor/Resource_Guide_ESP_REV.pdf

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PA Community Transition Forum 2007



So many people, so much information...This year's Transition Conference, held on July 18 - 20, 2007, at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College was another big success with around 800 people in attendance, only a small percentage were parents. The focus of the conference was summed up by Michael Stoehr of PaTTAN Pittsburgh, in the opening presentation on July 18:

"Collectively we are making a difference in the lives of youth and young adults, and families across the state." and

"The Shared Vision: All PA youth and young adults with disabilities will:

- ❖ Successfully transition to the role of productive and participating adult citizens
- ❖ Be empowered to recognize their talents, strengths and voice
- ❖ Have equal access to resources that will promote full participation in the communities of their choice."

It is again the youth and young adults who participated who continue to be our inspiration. Seeing and listening to these young people only reinforces why we all do what we do to support families and to help individuals with disabilities have a chance to prove who they are and what they can do.

Check out the PDE conference website for updated information: Sharednetwork.org

Transition Health Care Checklist

"The Pennsylvania Department of Health Southwest Regional staff and their community partners recognized a gap in health services for youth with special health care needs. When these youth leave school, they transition from having different or no insurance coverage, from seeing pediatric specialists to searching for adult medical specialists, and from good coverage for medications to having to understand new systems for obtaining medicines. Working with the State Transition Team, agencies, and families, the Transition Health Care Checklist was created to guide youth, families, and professionals during this time of change. This publication is only available on-line." Visit the Department of Health website:

www.health.state.pa.us/transitionchecklist

National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN):

"The National Voice for young leaders with disabilities"

The NYLN:

- Promotes leadership development, education, employment, independent living, and health and wellness among young leaders representing the diversity of race, ethnicity and disability in the United States.
- Fosters the inclusion of young leaders with disabilities into all aspects of society at national, state and local levels.
- Communicates about issues important to youth with disabilities and the policies and practices that affect their lives.

Visit : <http://nyln.org>

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is the State-wide advocate for individuals with disabilities who are seeking or receiving vocational rehabilitation services from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Blindness and Visual Services and federally funded programs of the Centers for Independent Living. CAP can help you understand what vocational rehabilitation services are available to you and can advise you of your rights and responsibilities as they relate to these services for employment. They help individuals be their own advocate. They also help clients pursue appeals within the VR system if a resolution to their concern cannot be agreed upon. For more information contact , visit www.equalemployment.org,

or call: Philadelphia CAP office — (215) 557-7112 Voice/TTY, (888) 745-2357 Voice/TTY
Harrisburg CAP office — (717) 364-1733 Voice/TTY, (888) 367-2954

Cover All Kids.— "On March 1, 2007, Pennsylvania expanded its CHIP program to make health insurance available to virtually all children who are citizens or in a qualified immigrant status. CHIP provides free or low-cost comprehensive health insurance through private insurance companies to children under age 19 whose families have low-income but do not qualify for Medical Assistance. The initiative is called Cover All Kids. " *PA Health Law Project.*

For more information and to complete application, call 1-800-986-KIDS or visit: www.chipcoverspakids.com.

The Pennsylvania Waiting List

As of August 1, 2007 there are 20,903 people waiting across Pennsylvania for MR waiver services.

Visit: www.pawaitinglistcampaign.org to learn more about the PA Waiting List.

MIDDLE SCHOOL INCLUSION SERIES ARCHIVED!

Middle School – the great abyss!! This time of life is traumatic for ANY student, but seems particularly challenging for our sons and daughters with disabilities. How does the added emphasis on curriculum impact our children's ability to be included with their peers? What happens with social groups and all the drama of friendships, extra curricular activities, and the beginnings of adolescence and the struggle for independence? These concerns face all families and we did not want anyone to feel alone or that they were the only ones facing these issues.

So the PEAL CENTER developed the "Middle School Inclusion: Making It Happen" audio conference series which ran from February 2007 through August 2007. Our seven speakers covered a variety of topics.

First, we examined the law and the legal framework for the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) with appropriate supports. Judy Gran, of the Public Interest Law Center in Philadelphia and chief litigator for the Gaskin Lawsuit, gave us a good historical perspective of special education and shared several cases where school districts tried to deny a student access to the general education curriculum and how this was overcome. Unfortunately, this session was not recorded. However, Judy's PowerPoint is on our website.

With the legal base, we moved on to some of the mechanics that can help make including a student with challenges successful. Dr. Lisa Dieker from the University of Central Florida gave us criteria to help analyze the school environment for its current strengths and weakness. Dr. Dieker examined several co-teaching models and offered many practical exercises on how to help the regular education teacher to imbed the IEP goals into the daily curriculum, including her "IEP Snapshots" and "General Education Curriculum Snapshots". Although the actual PEAL session was not recorded, a link to a recording of the same presentation by Dr. Dieker for the OSEP Community on LRE is posted on our website, along with her PowerPoint and handouts.

A most powerful presentation was given by Steven Hinkle, a college student with a disability. Steven shared his personal experiences through middle and high school, and how important it is to develop a social life that is connected with the schools and how the schools can, and need to, make it happen. His message about quality of life made a lasting impression on us all. How to support the regular education teachers as they teach our sons and daughters was the next topic presented by Rebecca Bond and Liz Castagnera, support teachers in two different high schools



in San Diego County. They shared a wealth of information about practical accommodations and modifications they have used for years with school staff to support students with more significant challenges. Their handouts are ready to use with anyone's school staff. Their discussion about their peer tutoring program gave another way to use more natural supports

A provocative viewpoint on support was offered by Michael Giangreco, Ph.D. from the University of Vermont Center on Disability & Community Inclusion. Often families see paraprofessionals as an absolute necessity in all environments. Dr. Giangreco gave an analysis of the special education infrastructure and where paraprofessionals can be beneficial and where and how they can be detrimental to our son's and daughter's academic and social growth. His PowerPoint and three articles that are posted on our website are powerful and helpful to teams to support students in independent ways.

Diana Autin, the Executive Director of the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network in New Jersey, was our sixth speaker who addressed "The Role of Families in Ensuring Access to Learning". Ms. Autin's view of the big picture gave families multiple ways to connect to their school community to help them be active members within the school and also on their son's or daughter's IEP team. The PowerPoint, three articles, and several handouts of correspondence with school districts are excellent additions to any family's training file.

Our final speaker was Jim DelBianco, a retired teacher from the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit, currently a presenter for Magee-Woman's Hospital and their series on sexuality and social lives. Mr. DelBianco gave a frank and necessary overview of how adolescence and puberty are just as much a part of our son's and daughter's lives as any other young person. He addressed families' fears about safety, good communication with our children, and age appropriate behavior.

Thank you to all who participated in our audio conference series. We received a lot of positive feedback and hope to offer other sessions. We invite you to contact the PEAL CENTER with suggestions for any topics or speakers we might offer to families and professionals in the future. To find the PowerPoints and audio recordings that are available please visit www.pealcenter.org and click on Middle School Series.

Deb Efkean