

CAP UPDATE

Volume 2, Issue 3

June 2005

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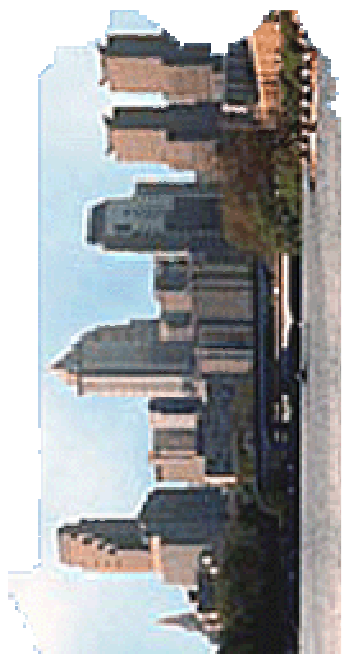
"Anne Contacts CAP"

By: Cindy Crissman and Margaret Passio McKenna

Anne is very excited about her choice of vocational goal. She hopes her waiver gets approved! She is not going to be able to afford living on campus with just her social security check. Anne is starting to get anxious and decided to call her counselor to see if she heard anything from her supervisor.

Tuesday morning, Anne called her counselor. She was very disappointed she did not reach her. It had been over two weeks since they met, and she was anxious to hear about her waiver. All she was able to do was leave a message. In the meantime, Anne went over, again, all the information from the school, including financial aid for her particular program. She can not wait to pursue her career goal, but at the same time is starting to feel a little uneasy about OVR's assistance. As she was going through her papers, it hit Anne how much it will cost for her to attend this school. Anne's nervous energy also caused her to look through her packet of paperwork she received from OVR when she initially applied. In this packet she happened to find a pink bookmark about CAP. She read the bookmark and decided to call CAP to see if they could provide some information .

She contacted CAP and spoke with an advocate who listened to her situation and asked a few questions. Anne went on as to how she is very much looking forward to going to this particular college and explained her reasoning in detail, a few times, to the advocate. The advocate asked her about her goal and why this college was "the one." Anne responded as best as she could to these questions. Anne asked how much OVR pays for college. The CAP advocate stated that OVR's college policy, for a client on Social Security, pays a maximum contribution per academic year equal to the average allowable costs for a student attending a state school. There are two exceptions to this but they are determined on an individual case by case basis. The advocate suggested Anne do some more research and find out the cost of a local state school. It also might be helpful if Anne found another school that offers similar programs and disability services. She needs to have a second choice to compare cost. At this point, the CAP advocate asked if there was anything else she could help Anne with. Anne then told the advocate she was in the middle of requesting a waiver and is starting to feel very discouraged as to if it will be approved. The CAP advocate took some further information from Anne and told her she would open a CAP case for her to try and assist her with the waiver request. She will send Anne a CAP release/survey and encouraged Anne to do some of the research they discussed. The advocate stated if Anne's situation fits within OVR's exceptions for funding, perhaps a wavier will not be needed. A waiver she told Anne is based on "financial hardship."



Anne thanked the Advocate for her help and will send back the release. Anne got off the phone and realized it has been over a week and her counselor has not returned her call. Anne is getting upset that she is not going to be able to pursue her dream.

She is going to take a break from worrying about this and call her counselor again later this week. She does feel good that she contacted CAP. Hopefully, they will be able to help Anne.

Will the dark cloud that Anne sees up above her head soon give away to sunny skies?

Individuals With Disabilities Have Their Voices Heard

By Jamie C. Ray

On May 26, 2005, it is estimated that 1,000 individuals with disabilities converged on the plaza in front of the United States Department of Education in Washington, DC. I was one of those people. Why? For me, it was a matter of pride, a matter of respect, and a matter of needing the world to hear not only my voice, but the voice of other individuals with disabilities as well, and perhaps the voices of those who could not bring themselves to Washington.

For 31 years, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 has been the Bill of Rights for individuals with disabilities. Thirty-one years is as long as I have been alive. The Rehabilitation Act is now being re-authorized. This is a common practice for laws. However, this re-authorization period has been uncommon to say the least. So far, individuals with disabilities have successfully fought off an amendment to this law called "WIA Plus". WIA Plus is essentially a block-granting program that would take money that has been traditionally earmarked to serve people with disabilities and dump it into a common pot with at least eight other programs. If this were to happen, vocational rehabilitation as we know it would cease to exist. We cannot, and should not allow this to happen. So why did we converge on Washington? We converged because we were fighting for our rights. We converged because we had to. We converged because people with disabilities do have one voice.

CAP Managing Attorney Participates in Institute on Rehabilitation Issues

By Jamie C. Ray

May 1 - 3, 2005, I participated in a unique conference in Crystal City, Virginia. This conference was the 31st Annual Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, sponsored by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The Institute on Rehabilitation Issues is an opportunity to study a topic of importance to rehabilitation. This year, those topics were leading and managing change in public vocational rehabilitation and effective use of consumer organizations in vocational rehabilitation. I participated in the work group which studied leading and managing change. The process involved two meetings with vocational rehabilitation colleagues from across the United States. Participants ranged from state vocational rehabilitation directors, to trainers, to past CSAVR presidents. I, of course, represented both the Client Assistance Program and the voice of the VR consumer as part of the IRI study group. IRI provided an opportunity to share ideas with others in the field. The IRI publications will be available in approximately one year. If you are interested in looking at other IRIs on vocational rehabilitation topics, you can go to www.rcep6.org or www.gwu.edu/rrcep.

Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Full Council Meeting

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

by Cindy Crissman

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) met for a Full Council Meeting, Wednesday, April 13, 2005, at the Penn State Conference Center, in beautiful State College. 15 Council members were present, along with staff from the Office of Vocational

Rehabilitation (OVR); Project staff, and guests. The meeting began at 9:45 am and adjourned at 12:00 pm. The Council meeting was followed by a Public Forum.

Mr. Thomas Walsh, Council Chairperson, called the meeting to order, and read the Council's mission statement. All members introduced themselves, giving a brief description of their background and relationship to the Council. Guests, as well, introduced themselves. Committee briefings were given, as follows: Customer Satisfaction Committee by Ms Jamie Ray; Disability Agenda Committee, by Ms. Linda Rusinko; State Plan Committee, by staff for Mr. Donald Zeigler; Legislative Committee by Mr. Darryl Herman for Mr. Mark Senk. The Executive Committee financial report was given by Ms. Bette Peoples.

Ms. Linda Williams read the list of names approved by the Executive Committee for appointment and reappointment to the Full Council. Appointments and categories to be filled were Ms. Lisa Case (business/industry/labor); Ms. Alaine Chang (cognitive disability); Ms. Leslie Kelly (second business/industry/labor); Ms. Jean Searle (mental retardation); and Mr. Robin Stemple (former customer).. Members for reappointment for a second term were Ms. Lucinda Crissman. Ms. Passle Helminski, and Ms. Sandi Weber. A motion was made and seconded to approve everyone on the list to become Members of the Council.

Ms. Katherine Seelman spoke about the Allegheny County Task Force in Pittsburgh, its Chairperson, and first meeting in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. William Gannon, Executive Director, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), thanked the Council for their advocacy work. Mr. Gannon talked about the EVAS contract. He said OVR inner office reorganization, although 80% complete, was still underway. He talked about the Rehabilitation Services (RSA) retreat in Cambridge Maryland, and about some other changes occurring within RSA. Mr. Gannon said the Client Assistance Program (CAP) wrote a letter to the Hiram G. Andrews Center (HGA), stating OVR needed to look at something to offer disabled veterans returning from the Middle East. OVR hopes to have something by the end of the year. He said a significant amount of counselors were retiring, and mentioned Ms. Cindy Mundis' continued recruitment work. He encouraged advocacy to push for funds in the budget to help the new Center for Independent Living in Bucks County, which is moving ahead,

CareerLinks were the next agenda item. Ms. Marji Beyer, OVR Staff, reported test TTY calls have made progress, but there are still concerns, such as the phone not being answered or being disconnected. Ms. Ray suggested PaRC members visit CareerLinks that have ongoing problems. An Ad Hoc Committee was formed to gather information, develop a checklist, then execute spot checks on CareerLinks. Council Members then volunteered for the Committee.

Ms. Judy Jobes spoke about the OVR Board. She thanked the Council Members for their work with Legislators in Washington. Issued discussed at the last Board meeting included recruiting new counselors, the budget and EVAS.

Mr. Walsh reminded everyone that there would be a Public Forum following the Full Council meeting at 1:15 pm. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.

The next Full Council meeting will be June 15, at the Clarion Hotel and Conference in Erie. All interested persons are encouraged to attend.

A Public Forum followed the meeting. The meeting facilitator was Dr. Keith Williams. A Public Forum provides the opportunity for disabled individuals, and interested parties (ex., vendors, consumer advocates) to relate their personal experiences with the delivery of vocational services. There is an opportunity to talk about both good and bad experiences. The Public Forum is an open discussion that also provides an opportunity to have questions answered.

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Upcoming Outreach Events**Wednesday, June 8, 2005 10:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.**

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD)

Wednesday, June 15, 2005 9:30 a.m. — 3:30 p.m.

PaRC Full Council Meeting followed by a Public Forum

Wednesday, June 22, 2005 9:30 a.m. — 11:30 a.m.

OVR Board Meeting

The above events are open to the public, please contact Jamie Ray at Jamiocray@aol.com if you would like more information.

Visit PA CAP on the WEB
<http://www.equalemployment.org>