

SUMMER 2012

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The Community Issue

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A Collaborative Publication from MS CDD, DRMS, and IDS



FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

Welcome! Thank you for reading the third issue of FUSE, a joint publication of the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities (MS CDD), Disability Rights Mississippi (DRMS) and the Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) at The University of Southern Mississippi. All three agencies are funded by the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) to ensure that people with developmental disabilities receive services as required by the DD Act.

You may have heard about the recently released report by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) that cited the findings from their 2011 investigation of the service system for adults and children with mental illness

and developmental disabilities in Mississippi.

The report holds the state to be in violation of the **ADA's integration mandate and the United States Supreme Court decision, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999)**. It specifically points out that compared to other states, Mississippi serves the highest percentage of individuals with developmental disabilities in large institutions.

In an effort to address concerns and enlighten readers, this edition of FUSE will focus on community: what it means, the importance of involvement and inclusion for individuals with disabilities in Mississippi communities, and the benefit for us all.

Community: an interacting population of various kinds of individuals in a common location; a group or society helping each other; the public in general

Why Community?

Most people choose to live in communities – places and spaces where they are free to come and go, work and play, live and laugh. Communities include our own special homes, however humble or grand, where we can lock ourselves in or open the doors wide to friends and family. Communities also include neighbors, and a choice of churches, schools, workplaces, stores and recreation sites. Communities include people who are similar to us and people who are different from us. For our communities to be whole and healthy, they need people with disabilities to be a part of them. A community can find its maximum strength and power only when it includes all.



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Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities (MS CDD) - Meet the New Executive Director , Mr. Charles Hughes, Jr.

Charles Hughes, Jr. is the new Executive Director for the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities. He has worked in the areas of postsecondary education, training, and disabilities for over 20 years. Before joining the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, he worked at the Institute for Disability Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi, coordinating projects, evaluation, dissemination, data, grant development, and human resources activities. In addition, he has provided business development and training in entrepreneurial skills for a planning and development district. He believes there is no greater service than helping others.

Mr. Hughes received a specialist in education degree in Adult Education with a minor in research and a master of business administration degree from The University of Southern Mississippi. In addition, he is a certified teacher in the areas of computer applications, business education, and marketing education.

Join us as we welcome Charles to the agency. He may be reached at charles.hughes@dmh.state.ms.us.

Below: Deonte has experienced significant improvements over all. Here he is at Goodwill Industries demonstrating his abilities.



Customized Employment in the Community

The Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities has provided grant funding to Hudspeth Regional Center with much success! The project uses the Customized Employment Model and is one of the first employment programs in the state of Mississippi for individuals with more severe developmental disabilities. This model allows the capabilities along with the interests of the individual to be negotiated with a job of their choosing in the community.

Businesses participating include T.J. Maxx in Flowood and Goodwill

Industries in Jackson. Currently, Verna Mae works at T.J. Maxx applying foam padding to hangers and enjoys interacting with the other employees. She also likes to shop with the money she earns. Due to her success, T.J. Maxx is interviewing two more individuals for the program. Another participant, Deonte, works at Goodwill Industries receiving and sorting donations, offering receipts, and working a compactor machine. Since his time at Goodwill, he has made a good deal of improvement in social interaction and skills. He loves his job!



Above: Verna Mae hard at work and all smiles at T. J. Maxx. A great example of community inclusion and participation.



DISABILITY RIGHTS MISSISSIPPI

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DOJ Issues Findings Letter -- MS System Must Change ASAP!

On December 22, the US Department of Justice issued a letter with its findings regarding Mississippi's system of services for people with disabilities. In summary, it condemned the state's reliance upon an outmoded system of large segregated facilities and concluded the state was in violation of the ADA and the integration mandate as recognized by the US Supreme Court in the *Olmstead* decision.

The letter included several recommendations for change, including increases in the number of ID/DD waivers that are funded, a shift in resources to community services, and development of a system of quality control for all services. The state will have a chance to work cooperatively with DOJ to develop and implement a plan. If they do not do so, the Justice Department will consider other measures, including possible litigation.

These findings will be further discussed during the community forums that the three partnering agencies will host in August, listed on page 5 of this newsletter.

Community Choice Alliance: A Response by Organizations From Across the State ~ "We Can't Afford to Wait"

Shortly after the findings letter by the DOJ was issued, disability advocacy and service organizations in Mississippi agreed that they wanted to organize and speak with a common voice, so they could present a strong, united front in discussing next steps with DOJ, policymakers, state agency staff, and the public. Over the following weeks more organizations joined, and the group is now named Community Choice Alliance (CCA).

One of the key points of the CCA is that adequate appropriate services **must be available in the community for all who choose them**. Moreover, the DOJ findings **do not mandate closing all institutions**. Some states have made that choice, but it is a decision for Mississippi to make.

Mission: The Community Choice Alliance is a coalition of disability advocacy and service organizations. We support prompt, good faith negotiations toward improving Mississippi's system of care for people with mental illness and/or developmental disabilities.

For more information about the CCA and a complete list of participating agencies, please contact Ann Maclaine at amaclaine@drms.ms.

DRMS provides information and advocacy services under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to ensure equal access to the ballot and a barrier free voting process for individuals with disabilities. The agency also hosts a hot-line during elections to assist with questions and concerns to help resolve problems on election day. The hot-line is 1-800-772-4057 and is open from 7am to 7pm during elections.

Institute for Disability Studies



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI



Mississippi Communities: A Place for Everyone

The Institute for Disability Studies believes the community is an important place in the lives of people living with developmental and other disabilities. Most of IDS' work—early childhood education, health, housing, employment, recreation—focuses on assisting individuals with disabilities and their families in being an integral part of their Mississippi communities.

IDS' mission, belief statements and guiding principles address community inclusion, self determination, community supports, independence and integration. For the more than 30 years that IDS has served Mississippi, staff has envisioned and supported inclusive communities with community-based resources and services.

"One of IDS' strengths through the years has been the driving philosophy that people with developmental and other disabilities are vital members of our communities," said Royal Walker, JD, Executive Director of IDS. "Our current and past projects at IDS reflect our beliefs."

Over a period of 15 years, IDS, through the Mississippi Home of Your Own homeownership project, has assisted more than 450 individuals with disabilities and their families in becoming homeowners in their chosen Mississippi communities.

The HousingSmart fair housing project has educated and trained individuals with disabilities and other community members to recognize their fair housing rights and lenders and landlords to recognize their fair housing responsibilities. Through Project Prepare, IDS has trained and provided technical assistance to early childhood providers serving children with disabilities and their families in their communities.

The Technology Learning Center provides the Gulf Coast community with adapted toys and electronic equipment as well as providing recreation through adapted golf carts and beach bikes and wheelchairs.

IDS has advocated for community-based services for children and youth with special health care needs, assisting families and health care providers with resources and best practice information through the Family to Family (F2F) Health Information and Education Center and Mississippi Integrated Community Systems (MICS) projects.

"The new collaborative employment project, Mississippi Partnerships for Employment for Youth and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Including Intellectual Disabilities, again brings community to the forefront in systems change efforts for increasing community employment opportunities for youth and young adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities," said Walker.

Mississippi Partnerships for Employment for Youth and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Including Intellectual Disabilities

AWARENESS SESSIONS:

Starkville – Greater Starkville Development Partnership (Conference Room), 200 East Main Street

Mon., June 4 - 1 p.m., community leaders and elected officials

5:30 p.m., youth with developmental/intellectual disabilities and their families

Tues., June 5 - 10 a.m., business leaders
1 p.m., educators

For more information on times and dates for these sessions call **Jerry Alliston** at [1.888.671.0051](tel:1.888.671.0051)

Jackson – Mississippi Library Commission (Conference Room), 3881 Eastwood Drive
Thurs., June 21 - 1 p.m., community leaders and elected officials

June 21, 5:30 p.m. session for youth with developmental/intellectual disabilities and families will be held at the MS disAbility MegaConference at the Jackson Marriott, 200 East Amite Street.

Fri., June 22 - 10 a.m., business leaders
1 p.m., educators

IN THE SPOTLIGHT!! DISABILITY PARTNERS COLLABORATE TO OFFER THE 1st Annual - Mississippi disAbility MegaConference

In what we hope to be the first of many, over 17 disability related agencies or groups have come together to plan and host a MegaConference in Mississippi. There will be vendors from across the state, opportunities to earn CEUs as well as CLEs, breakout sessions led by inclusive panels of speakers, incredible networking with individuals and professionals, a silent auction, exceptional door prizes, and an evening entertainment event that is sure to be a blast!



●Knowledge●Hope●Choice●Fulfillment●

The Mississippi disAbility MegaConference will bring together, at an affordable price, hundreds of individuals with disabilities, family members, and professionals to share best practices, provide training, and inspire innovation among attendees. Almost all of the disability related agencies from across the state are being represented in some way and hopes are high for a fantastic turnout of approximately 750 attendees.

The link to the conference web-site is: <http://megaconference.drms.ms/>

The Facebook page link is: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100003766235007>

Call 1-800-772-4057 to ask about registration.

Call Judy at 1-601-969-0601 to inquire about the **stipend** process.

Call the Marriott at 601-969-5100 to reserve your room and you must tell them you are with the MS disAbility Megaconference.

Registration and room reservation deadline has been **extended to June 4, 2012!!**

June 21-22, 2012 • Downtown Marriott Jackson, MS

Coming to You!!

FUSE PARTNERS WILL AGAIN HOST STATEWIDE COMMUNITY FORUMS—Public Input Opportunity

August 2 - Tunica, MS

The Tunica Museum - off of Hwy 61

August 9 - Meridian, MS

The East MS Electric Power Association -
auditorium

August 15 - Natchez, MS

Co Lin College Natchez Campus - Activity room

Events are free to the public, townhall type meetings, with light refreshments offered, to provide an opportunity for parents, individuals, or service providers to have their voices heard regarding needs, gaps in service, and concerns. It's a chance for the public to help guide the work these agencies do.

For info, call 601-968-0600 and ask for Shirley.

All events are from 1:30pm to approx 3:30pm.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER!

June 5, 2012 - At the Hattiesburg Historic Train Depot, 308 Newman Street, Hattiesburg, MS - Opening Doors to Home-ownership 2012 Housing Fair - Cosponsored by The Institute for Disability Studies.

Mississippi Families as Allies: The Jackson Family Support Group meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at St. James Episcopal Church from 5:30-7:30pm.

The Biloxi Family Support Group meets the first Tuesday of every month at Church of the Redeemer Episcopal Church from 5:30-7:30pm.

Brain Injury Association Support Group: Meets monthly in Jackson as well as on the coast. Call for info—601-981-1021.

Multiple Sclerosis Support Group: Meets monthly in different areas. For info contact email is ylexey@bellsouth.net

October 6, 2012 - LAST DAY to register to vote if you want to vote in the General Presidential Election on Tuesday November 6, 2012. All Circuit Clerk offices will be open from 8am to 12pm on this day statewide.

FUSE: News You Can Use

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WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY STRONGER, HEALTHIER, AND MORE ADVANCED?

REGISTER TO VOTE, GET TO KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES AND ELECTION DATES, THEN REMEMBER TO CAST YOUR VOTE! If you have a question about voter ID call your local circuit clerk to see if the measure has been approved by the DOJ yet. If not, you will not have to provide a photo ID.



FUSE is a collaborative effort of the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights Mississippi, and the Institute for Disability Studies and can be made available in alternative formats if requested.

Links and Helpful Resources

www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/add - The Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) is the U.S. Government organization responsible for implementation of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, known as the DD Act. ADD, its staff and programs, are part of the Administration for Children and Families, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

www.tkmartin.msstate.edu - Center at Mississippi State University focusing on advanced assistive technology for individuals of any age with a disability.

www.yourtickettowork.com - Employment program for people with disabilities who are interested in going to work.

www.communityinclusion.org - Institute for community inclusion. ICI offers training, clinical, and employment services, conducts research, and provides assistance to organizations to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in school, work, and community activities.

www.lifeofms.com/index.php - Living Independence for Everyone—the independent living specialist in the state of MS with the goal of empowerment of people with disabilities.

Community involvement is central to advancing our mission and issues. As non-profits, our foundation is about strengthening lives and communities and the connection between accomplishing that and democracy is very clear. One of the most fundamental ways to have a voice in your community it to have your voice heard by participating in the electoral process.

GO VOTE!

We want to hear from you!

If you found FUSE to be helpful and informative, but would rather receive it via email, then please call and make sure we have your email address (1-800-772-4057).

If you have suggestions for future FUSE topics, please let us know! Call or email us.

Together we can spark a new idea!