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COMMISSION ON DISABILITY ISSUES
MONTHLY MEETING
AUGUST 5, 2009
CITY HALL
550 MAIN STREET
HARTFORD, CT. 06103

In attendance: Janet Wallens, Chair; Commissioners Chris Kelly; Candace Low; Kathy Marseglia; Kathy Pacelle; Cheryl Zeiner, and Heidi Catalan, Sign Language Interpreter.
Guests: Maria Cerniauskas-Upton and Melissa Pinnick, New England Local 1199.
Staff: Gil Cortez
Excused: Linda Schnitzer.
Absent: Deborah St. Germain.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35PM.

Introductions were made

Melissa Pinnick representing local 1199 for Health Care Providers described the consumer directed/person centered waiver that allows individuals to live in their homes and communities without the necessity of going into a skilled nursing facility. This waiver enables the individual in need of Personal Care Attendant (PCA) services to interview and hire their own PCA. The only limitations are imposed by the state budget, no health benefits or vacation time for the PCAs. Ms. Pinnick indicated that local 1199 is in favor of the consumer directed waiver, however is working on a strategy to obtain benefits for the PCAs. She is working to mobilize them to work on these issues. Quality care councils are being developed in each state to achieve these goals. She indicated that local 1199 is working to obtain Federal funds to assist financially in these efforts.

Ms Pinnick indicated that there are other significant challenges for the success of this waiver. One of the major ones is that there is no statewide registry of PCAs so that consumers are not able to tell whether the PCA they are hiring is qualified or not. There is also no emergency backup system available if the PCA becomes ill and is not able to work.

Independence Unlimited is currently being used as a single entry point for inquiries and referrals and disseminating information.

A request was made for the Commission to support local 1199 in their efforts to review legislation and support efforts to obtain benefits for the PCAs. These activities will include

partnering with many agencies and commissions to make certain that money is available for this and not cut from the budget.

Kathy M made a motion that the Commission support local 1199. Cheryl Z. seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

The minutes of the July Commission meeting were reviewed. Kathy Marseglia indicated that her name was misspelled. The correction was made. With that correction made, she made a motion that the minutes be accepted. Kathy Pacelle seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

A motion was made by Kathy Marseglia to send a letter to Governor Rell to support the restoration of funds to the independent living centers. Motion was seconded by Cheryl Zeiner and was passed.

A discussion ensued regarding the possibility of the Commission meetings taking place in other locations of the city. It was felt, however, that it was more convenient for members to attend the meetings at City Hall. This was particularly true for members with mobility issues. It was further decided that future discussions should center on having speakers from various agencies and organizations present at the meetings. Further discussions of this will take place at the September meeting.

A discussion took place regarding the possibility of having refreshments at the meetings. A motion was made by Kathy M and seconded by Cheryl Z. Motion, however, did not pass. It was felt that this would take away too much time from the meeting.

Gil reported that the Commission budget passed in the amount of \$960.

The scholarship for the high school student was successfully given to the student. Money for this came from the remaining amount in last year's budget.

Cheryl Z will be calling Meg Geary-DeLoreto to see if she can suggest any student, former students or teachers who might be interested in becoming Commission members.

The subject of the new brochure for the Commission was discussed. Chris offered to meet with Janet the next day to review the old one, make any revisions and email the brochure with revisions to the Commissioners. If the Commissioners approve of the brochure, with any revisions, the new one can be printed out.

Cheryl reported on her efforts to recruit Hartford residents who are disabled veterans to join the Commission. Gary Waterhouse from VA/CACIL will get the word out at meetings he attends and invite any interested veterans to contact Janet Wallens. An email was sent to Comm. Linda Schwartz of the Dept. of Veterans Affairs with the same message.

Janet reported on the pre-meeting that took place between herself and Cheryl regarding the awards ceremony during Disability Awareness month in October. It was decided that there was not enough time to set this in motion properly. It was further decided that the activities of the Commission should center on making the Commission more visible in the community.

Candace took this opportunity to report on two activities that she is taking part in that could also help with making the Commission more visible. She will be presenting at the first one on 9/17/09 at the NEAT marketplace on Coventry Street in Hartford. The training is sponsored by the North Central Aging and Disability Partnership. She will focus on improving access to health care and legal rights

She will also be participating in the Health and Wellness Fair sponsored by Channel 30 in the near future. She will be able to disseminate information about the Commission at the fair.

Janet reported on the teleconference training that she has recently been participating in. It is sponsored by Easter Seals and is focusing on transportation issues. She reported that trainees are from all over the country. She mentioned that in San Francisco there are 100 accessible taxis. A flat fee of \$5 allows a person with a disability to get \$30 worth of service.

The building committee will meet the last Thursday of the month to review building code issues.

There was no report on the closing of the Arch Street entrance of the Hartford Public Library.

There is nothing further to report regarding the lip at the end of the ramp at Barca's Restaurant.

There was no education report. Schools in Hartford start at the end of August.

Cheryl will contact Merva Jackson of AFCAMP to see if she has been able to recruit anyone for the Commission.

Candace reported that the bill to allow one taxi to have a lift for persons using wheelchairs passed.

Commission by laws is on hold. Chris will be meeting with Janet and Gill to update any activity.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Cheryl Zeiner, Secretary

