
Real Choices in New Haven

Promoting Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Our Community • Summer 2005 Publication



Disability Mentoring Day 2005

National Disability Mentoring Day: Career Development for the 21st Century, or NDMD, began in 1999 in order to increase the acknowledgement of Disability Employment Awareness Month (which takes place each year in October). NDMD is a joint program of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).



The goal of National Disability Mentoring Day is to increase employment and internship opportunities for young adults with disabilities. On NDMD, young adults with disabilities pair with employers from the educational, non-profit, private, and public sectors for a day of job shadowing, one-on-one time with mentors, and career-related activities. These activities allow each mentee to explore one of his or her career interests and give all mentees the opportunity to form potentially lasting connections with employers; participation in NDMD may result in internship opportunities or serve as "interviews" to full- or part-time employment. NDMD will undoubtedly encourage mentees to be confident in their abilities to achieve their dreams in whichever career paths that they decide to pursue. In addition, NDMD will hopefully serve to increase employers' understanding of persons with disabilities and dispel myths/alleviate fears that may cause employers to hesitate when hiring individuals with disabilities.

This year, National Disability Mentoring Day will take place October 19, 2005. The Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities will be planning this year's NDMD activities as it did in 2004. Young adults with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 24 who are interested in becoming NDMD mentees may contact Kristin Barber at the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities at (203) 946-7833 or TTD (203) 946-8582. The deadline for application is June 30, 2005.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services: How can they Help You?

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is an organization comprised of three main elements geared toward assisting individuals with significant physical and/ or mental disabilities in the areas of education, work and independent living. These three over-arching elements are the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Disability Determination Services and the Independent Living Program.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a program of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services that assists people with significant physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, find or keep a job. If one is eligible for services from BRS he/she may be able to receive vocational counseling as well as acquiring skills and education incumbent for furthering his/her career. Also, BRS can provide services in restoring or improving a physical or mental condition. There are also opportunities to gain greater access to other services a person may need in order to meet the goals of an Employment Plan, a document that outlines one's future abilities and goals regarding employment. A common example includes help with transportation

In addition, the Bureau's Disability Determination Services (DDS) unit is responsible for determining eligibility for the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) as well as Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) programs. These programs provide cash benefits to individuals who are unable to maintain employment due to the significance of their disabilities. Recent policy and programmatic changes at the state and federal levels affords individuals who receive Social Security disability benefits a greater number of incentives to work, while maintaining some or all of their benefits. Benefits counseling is available to assist individuals to assess the impact that returning to work will have on their disability benefits. The Medicaid for Employed Disabled program allows people with disabilities to be employed without risking eligibility for necessary medical services through the Medicaid program. The program also allows certain individuals to keep other services they must have in order to remain employed.

The final element of BRS's services is their Independent Living (IL) program provides, "comprehensive independent living services,

through contracts with Connecticut's five community-based independent living centers (ILCs). These centers offer four core independent living services." These services range from peer support, information and referral to self-advocacy and systems advocacy as well training to acquire independent living skills. Independent living centers are directed, staffed and managed by qualified individuals who have severe disabilities. Centers are community-based with a goal to "identify gaps and barriers that challenge and interfere with the independence of people with disabilities, making these centers responsive to a multitude of disabilities in a non-residential setting. All the services discussed above are intended to assist people with disabilities in leading productive lives.

One success story is that of Phil Keyser who had a stroke in 2001, but never doubted that he'd return to work. Elinor Hill, A BRS counselor out of the Bridgeport Office worked with Phil to compensate for his speech, processing and balance difficulties and through a clinical review of his functional abilities determined he possessed good work potential. Phil wished to return to the business world, a fitting goal for someone with a background in management consulting. BRS funded an evaluation at Goodwin College that would help assess if Phil's computer skills, which had been extensive prior to his stroke had been retained at all. Keyser emphasized that "the partnership between BRS and Career Resources has resulted in my having the ideal job. Brenda Moore had a great relationship with them already; she made the connections so I could work at a high level, doing something that really helps people. Because of the challenging work I am doing, my verbal skills continue to improve."

"BRS defined his strengths," says Moore. "Phil capitalized on them."

For further information regarding this success story and the services of BRS go to: <http://www.brs.state.ct.us/index.html> or call the local office of BRS at 974-3000.

Connecticut Religions Organizations Serving the Deaf

written by Marc Gallucci, Esq., edited by Kristin Barber

Did you know that Connecticut's houses of worship are becoming more aware of the needs of people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing? Some have ASL interpreters at least some of the time, and some have assistive listening devices. A complete listing of interpreted or signed services in Connecticut can be found at www.state.ct.us/cdhi Go to "A Guide to Services for the Deaf," click on "Table of Contents", scroll down to "Interpreted or Signed Services". (download)

In the Greater New Haven, services can be found at these locations, although we suggest you contact them directly to confirm in the event of scheduling changes.

BAPTIST

First Baptist Deaf Church of Waterbury

(860) 482-1247 TSS/V

(Basement of 1st Congregational Church)
222 West Main Street, Waterbury, CT 06707
Bible study class for deaf adults and children at 10:00 a.m. Deaf Worship Service at 11:00 a.m.

Meriden Hills Baptist Church

(203) 237-0302 Voice/TDD

(203) 237-5738 TDD

71 Parker Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450
All services and activities are interpreted for the deaf:
Sunday 11:00 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Bible Study every Wednesday 7:00 p.m.

River Valley Baptist Church

(203) 735-4079 Voice

355 Main Street, Ansonia, CT
www.rivervalleybc.com (Pastor Norm Aabye)

Pond Hill Baptist Church

(203) 239-7708 Voice

85 Pond Hill Road
North Haven, CT 06473 (Pastor Mike Carbough)

Harbour Light Baptist Church

(203) 795-0570 Voice

380 Boston Post Road, Orange, CT 06477

CATHOLIC

Catholic Deaf Apostolate

(860) 523-7530 Voice/TDD

Archdiocese of Hartford
243 Steele Road, West Hartford, CT 06117

The Catholic Deaf Apostolate offers a complete range of pastoral services to deaf children and adults in Hartford, Litchfield and New Haven counties. The sponsors occasional meetings to be announced in church and socials for deaf adults.

St. Brendan's School Hall

(203) 865-0561

342 Ellsworth Avenue, New Haven, CT
(ICDA) Chapter #34
Every third Sunday, September-May, at 2:30 p.m.
The Apostolate also publishes two periodicals that are available free of charge.
• CATHOLIC DEAF NEWSLETTER-monthly for deaf adults
• CONTACT- six times during the school year for parents of deaf children.

Finally, the Connecticut's Roman Catholic Dioceses has a special outreach office for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The contact out of Bridgeport is Sister Nancy O'Neil at 203-372-4301 X335 voice

EPISCOPAL

Episcopal Mission for the Deaf of Connecticut

(860) 527-7231 Voice

(860) 272-9958 Voice/TDD

199 Eastgate Drive, Cheshire, CT 06410
Television, Channel 20 Waterbury
Every 1st & 3rd Friday of the month - 10:00 a.m.

- 1st Friday, mass is offered by Fr. Robert D. Bergin • 3rd Friday, Mass is interpreted by Sister Maura Joseph

The MISSION offers pastoral counseling, advocacy and interpreting services for the deaf. It publishes a monthly newsletter, THE CONNECTICUT DEAF EPISCOPALIAN.

JEWISH

Congregation B'nai Jacob

(203) 389-2111 Voice

75 Simmon Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525

Service on the first Friday of the month at 7:30 p.m. is interpreted in sign language. Call for announcements for additional signed service or special program.

Oh Summertime!



Summer is the time of year for fun. For children with disabilities and special needs it may be one of the few times of the year where the he or she is not categorized or looked upon according to their disability. Camp is the ideal child centered environment for this to take place.

Sending your child to camp for the first time can be a worrisome experience and even more so when your child has a disability. Remember each child is unique, so talk to the providers, ask questions and make sure you are comfortable with the services.

Resources...

Summer Directory of Camps and Programs for Exceptional Children in Connecticut. SERC – Special Education Resource Center, (860) 632-1485, www.serc.rh.edu

Camps 2005: Resources for Children with Special Needs. (English/Espanol) A directory of camps in the metro New York area and overnight camps in the Northeast. (212) 677-4650, www.resourcesnyc.org

Access Connecticut: A Guide to Recreation for Children with Disabilities and their Families. Available at local libraries and disability organizations (including the Yale Center).

Whats Available in Your Community?

Youth Service Bureaus - Many towns have one, check the blue pages.

Little League – Challenger Division. Contact the Eastern Regional Center in Bristol to find out if there is a one in your area (203) 932-486 or email eastregion@littleleague.org

Park & Rec. programs – call your local department for information on camps and programs. Let them know what your child's special needs are and that they need programs to meet it.

Local Playgrounds – *Hannah's Dream* – a beautiful, fully accessible, state of the art playground at East Shore Park in New Haven.

Infoline 211 – an excellent up to date resource to inquire about community programs and possible funding sources.

Additional Information...

Yale Center for Children with Special Health Care Needs/Title V Program – a care coordination and resource center. Our staff has additional information about camps, respite and recreational resources, and tips for parents. Call (203) 785-7176 or 1-888-842-1937.

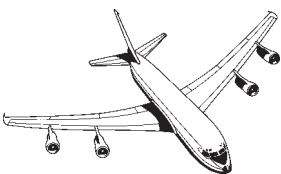
And Dont Forget...

SOCT – Special Olympics of Connecticut (203) 1-877-782-4888. A great resource for year-round sports and recreational activities.



Disabilities Airline Travel Hotline

Have you ever had problems with air travel while traveling on vacation or attending a business meeting that was out of state or even out of the country? There has been a hotline established to help travelers with disabilities resolve issues while traveling. The hotline has been accessible to air travelers with disabilities since August 2002 and is operated from 7am to 11pm, Eastern Time, seven days a week and can be reached at this toll free number: 1-800-778-4838 (voice) or 1-800-455-9880 (TTY).



The purposes of the hotline are two-fold: To educate and provide assistance in resolving disability-related air travel problems. Many travelers with disabilities are uninformed about their rights and this hotline seeks to increase awareness of air traveling rights. In addition, the hotline can assist in resolving current or future issues with air carriers. Assisting with current issues helps facilitate airline compliance with Department of Transportation

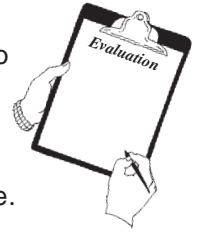
(DOT) rules. The hotline can help by suggesting the passenger and the airline consider alternate solutions to the consumer-service problem. There have been many situations in which Hotline Duty Officers have contacted air carriers and convinced them to accept service animals and electronic wheelchairs on board as well to store folding wheelchairs in the cabin and provide requested wheelchair assistance.

Air travelers who would like DOT to investigate a complaint about a disability-related issue should first call the hotline and then if needed, submit their complaint in writing to the carrier in question and a copy to:

Aviation Consumer Protection Division
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 7th Street SW • Room 4107, C75
Washington, DC 20590

Access New Haven: Accessibility Evaluation of Mediterranea Restaurant

Mediterranea Restaurant, located on 140 Orange Street, offers a welcoming environment and two spacious dining areas. Although *Mediterranea* presents some accessibility issues, the restaurant's staff is always willing to assist their patrons with disabilities.



The main door weighs in at a very heavy 14 lbs. (the recommended weight is 8). Though the height of the self-serve coffee and cutlery table is compliant, the table offers no knee clearance. The self-serve refrigerator's sliding doors may also cause some trouble for patrons with disabilities.

The path of travel leading to the bathrooms may be challenging, especially for patrons with mobility impairments. In order to get to the bathrooms, which are located outside of the restaurant proper, one must pass through a door at the side of the restaurant that possesses knob hardware and has no latch-side clearance. A second door also possesses knob hardware, but is always left open. Although the bathroom door hardware is compliant, turning the key to gain access may prove difficult for some people. However, as always, staff members are willing to assist patrons having difficulty with the door.

The stalls in the men's and women's bathrooms have a wonderful, new Connecticut-code feature — inside closing handles. This type of handle is still rarely found in the state of Connecticut; in fact, *Mediterranea* was the only restaurant surveyed that included this accessibility feature. In both bathrooms, the paper towel dispensers are located a bit too high off the ground, at 58" instead of 48".

Overall, then, *Mediterranea* is very accessible. In addition, the restaurant's staff members are welcoming, eager to help, and have an excellent attitude.

Access New Haven: Accessibility Evaluation of Modern Pizza

Modern Pizza, located at 874 State Street, is reasonably accessible to persons with disabilities. Parking and getting to Modern Pizza may pose a problem for some persons with disabilities, since the restaurant's adjoining lot has no accessible spaces and there is some irregular pavement on the walk leading from the lot to the restaurant entrance.

Entering the restaurant may also present some difficulty, on account of a platform-less, steep, 3 foot ramp (1 ¾" per foot), an exterior door with non-compliant knob hardware, and a non-standard lever handle on the heavy, interior door. However, these issues are mitigated by the fact that the exterior door is usually kept open (except in cases of inclement persons with disabilities weather), and the fact that the interior door handle is still easy for most persons with disabilities to use.

Traveling throughout the interior of Modern Pizza should not pose a problem for most people. The lighting inside the restaurant is somewhat dim, which some may find problematic if they have a visual impairment. The dining area consists mostly of booths; however, there are also a few tables that can accommodate persons using wheelchairs or individuals with mobility impairments. The takeout counter is somewhat high off the ground, at 42".

Though the bathroom hallway is compliant as far as width is concerned, there is not enough room for persons using wheelchairs to make comfortable turns into either bathroom, on account of the location of the bathroom doors. The women's bathroom door is too heavy and has non-compliant hardware. The room measures 5 by 7 feet, though the length is somewhat shortened by the location of the sink. The mirror and soap dispenser, located 45" and 49" above the ground, respectively, are both too high. There are no grab bars in the toilet area.

The door to the men's bathroom is also too heavy and also has non-compliant hardware. The room's width ranges from 8' to 4' 3", depending on fixtures placed at or on the walls. The mirror in the men's bathroom, as in the women's restroom, is located too high off the ground (45"). The placement of the wastebasket in the men's bathroom obstructs access to the soap dispenser on the wall. The men's toilet lacks grab bars and is located a bit too low to the ground, (16"). In addition, the urinal may obstruct transfer space somewhat.

The pizza at Modern is outstanding and if the accessibility issues highlighted above are not going to be problematic for you, you should give it a try!

The Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities

165 Church Street, New Haven, CT 06510 • (203) 946-7833 • TTY/TTD (203) 946-8582

Funding for this newsletter and the Model Communities project is provided to the City of New Haven by the UCONN A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) under a federal Real Choice Systems Change Grant.