

**Real Choice Systems Change Grant**  
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and the Connecticut Department of Social Services*

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## **I. Project Overview**

On May 22, 2001, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) invited proposals from States and others in partnership with their disability and aging communities to design and implement effective and enduring improvements in community long term support systems. These systemic changes will be designed to enable children and adults of any age who have a disability or long term illness to:

- (a) Live in the most integrated community setting appropriate to their individual support requirements and their preferences;
- (b) Exercise meaningful choices about their living environment, the providers of services they receive, the types of supports they use and the manner by which services are provided; and
- (c) Obtain quality services in a manner as consistent as possible with their community living preferences and priorities.

The first round of grant applications was due in July 2001. The submission from Connecticut's Department of Social Services was not approved, and the grant was re-submitted in a revised format in 2002. The Real Choice Systems Change grant (Appendix P) was awarded on October 1, 2002 to the Connecticut Department of Social Services, and the A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Research, Education and Service (UCEDD) was selected to administer the grant. There are two primary goals:

Goal 1: To build the capacity within the state of Connecticut to support informed decision making, independent living, and a meaningful quality of life for persons with disabilities across the life span.

Goal 2: To assist three communities in Connecticut to become models of support for opportunities and choices for persons with disabilities across the lifespan.

Throughout this project there is to be close collaboration with two other Systems Change grants: the Nursing Home Transition grant and the Connect- to-Work Project. Two areas will be addressed concurrently: conducting a statewide assessment of the 169 towns in

the state to determine the level of inclusion available in those communities, and selection of 3 specific communities which are already demonstrating good progress in this area for further building capacity through technical and financial assistance.

## **II. Project Background**

In recent years, Connecticut (CT) has made significant strides in enhancing its community-based support options, improving communication and planning among State agencies, and building on its past efforts to obtain input and participation from persons with disabilities and their families. Despite these efforts, there continues to be a significant need to improve the capacity of Connecticut communities to offer the best opportunities for self-determination and improved quality of life for persons with disabilities across the lifespan.

Two and a half years ago, in response to the Olmstead Supreme Court decision, Connecticut began a process to develop a comprehensive community integration plan. A Community Options Task Force (created by the Department of Social Services), composed of individuals with disabilities and family members spearheaded the development of this plan. The completed plan was delivered to Connecticut's Long-Term Care Planning Committee, which forwarded the plan to the Governor and legislative leaders with its approval. The Long Term Care Planning committee was created by the CT General Assembly in 1998 and is composed of representatives from ten (10) State agencies, as well as the Co-Chairs and Ranking Members from the Aging, Human Services and Public Health Committees of the General Assembly. The Office of Protection and Advocacy and Department of Children and Families were added in the spring of 2001 by the legislature to expand the scope of the committee beyond services for the elderly.

On April 9, 2001, the Olmstead Coalition (a group composed of members of CT's disability and family support communities formed in response to the Olmstead Supreme Court decision), in collaboration with several other organizations, hosted an all day forum

to identify issues the participants wanted addressed in CT's Real Choice Systems Change Grant applications. The CT Council on Developmental Disabilities sponsored the forum. An outgrowth of the April 9 meeting was the formation of the Real Choice Task Force, which worked with State agencies in the development of CT's original Real Choice grant proposal submitted in 2001 and this revised proposal. The Community Options Task Force formed the base of the Real Choice Task Force, and other individuals were added to assure a broad and diverse representation. The following concerns were among those identified by numerous focus group participants:

1. CT lacks a comprehensive, coordinated system of information regarding services and supports on both the state and community level. While numerous public and private programs exist, many are unknown or unrecognized by the people needing the services they provide, and finding information about services is very difficult for consumers.
2. Providers need training, technical assistance and support on fostering self-determination through consumer-driven best practices.
3. State and town systems are poorly integrated. While many State agencies have a positive working relationship with one another, there remains a lack of interagency coordination and joint projects. In addition, even towns of similar size and constituency have wide variation in their understanding and implementation of State services.
4. There is a critical shortage of personal assistants to support individuals with disabilities, whose community integration is dependent upon the availability of qualified support personnel.
5. A consensus exists that there is a need to raise awareness and educate community members without disabilities in order to overcome their fears and misconceptions regarding people with disabilities. When the larger community understands and

values people with disabilities, true inclusion can take place to the benefit of the whole community.

The goals and objectives of this grant address the community support needs of people with disabilities across the lifespan; increase self-determination through flexibility and consumer choice; demonstrate significant systems change; and provide a template for future statewide, replicable systems' improvement.

The State of Connecticut has many groundbreaking initiatives that support individuals with disabilities across the life span. Federal, State and Local policy-makers and grants are targeting areas of system change such as transition, employment and mental health services.

The Real Choices initiative builds from this strong foundation and is one of three grants CT will have received from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that seek to create effective systems to support individuals with disabilities. The other grants are: Nursing Facility Transition and Medicaid Infrastructure. The three grants will be closely coordinated to allow for an integrated systems change effort, covering the range of needs across the life span, from institutionalization to self-sufficiency.

### **III. Project Status**

#### **Personnel**

David Guttchen from the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management and Mary Beth Bruder from the University of Connecticut A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence are the Principal Investigators. Project Coordinator is Christine Gaynor. Dale Fink is on staff as 10% faculty, and Rick Fortinsky as project evaluator. Originally, the Community Facilitator was Molly Cole, and Training Coordinator was Lynda Pletcher. Both of these staff members left in January 2003 to pursue other career opportunities. The position formerly held by Ms. Cole was divided between two individuals: The position of Community Facilitator was immediately filled by Susan Zimmerman. On March 1, 2003 Kristina Gonzalez was hired as the Assessment Coordinator. The position of Workforce Developer was posted through the University of Connecticut Health Center

as well as in the Hartford Courant newspaper. Following a search, Andrew Bate was hired on as Workforce Developer on December 2, 2002. It is a condition of the grant that a portion of the staff be persons with disabilities or family members; Mr. Bate, Ms. Zimmerman, Ms. Gonzalez and Dr. Fink all fulfill that requirement.

**The following is a description of activities to date by grant objective:**

**Objective 1.0 Develop a Steering Committee**

**Activity 1.1 Identify members**

In September 2002 the recruitment process for Steering Committee members was begun. Letters of invitation were sent to members of the Real Choice Task Force (which was put in place to develop CT's initial Real Choice proposal), existing consumer advisory board of the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Connect to Work Center, Connecticut Association of Centers for Independent Living, Nursing Facility Transition Grant Steering Committee, and other advocacy networks. Affirmative responses were received from seven state agency representatives and three consumers by the end of September. Three additional consumers joined the Steering Committee in October, one in November and one in December, to bring the full complement to fifteen members. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held on October 2, 2002. (See Appendix A for a current roster of Steering Committee members. Full meeting minutes are available in Appendix B.)

**Activity 1.2 Support the development of bylaws, governance structure, and meeting schedule for the Steering Committee.**

Bylaws were written, reviewed and revised by the Steering Committee at the October and November meetings. Final approval was unanimous at the meeting of December 12, 2002. It was agreed that meetings would be held on the second Thursday of the month. Christine Gaynor, project coordinator, and Jessica Dybdahl, consumer, were appointed Steering Committee co-chairs. In September 2003 the standing meeting day was changed

to the second Wednesday of the month to accommodate new Steering Committee members.

It was agreed to establish workgroups that would focus on the major grant objectives. Each workgroup must include a minimum of one Steering Committee member who will serve as a designated liaison between the workgroup and the Steering Committee. Individuals were solicited by the Coordinator of the grant based on expertise and interest in the topic. The Coordinator and the group will mutually agree to frequency and location of meetings. The workgroups are as follows:

The tasks listed under each are just to give an initial framework for the first 6 – 12 months.

- Research and Assessment

This workgroup will focus on Objective 2 of the grant, which is to conduct a statewide assessment of community inclusion. Initial tasks may include developing a definition of what we mean by community inclusion, creating a list of criteria, developing data collection methods (deciding how we will gather the information), reviewing the collected information, and creating a format for the resulting inventory of information.

- Workforce Development

This workgroup will focus on the development of a workforce of personal care assistants (Objective 3.0). Initial focus will be to develop a joint action plan with the Connect to Work grant, network with the Connecticut Association of Personal Assistants (CTAPA), and develop outreach materials. As model communities are selected, efforts will be focused on workforce development within those communities. The Workforce Developer is an integral member of this group.

In October 2003 the Workforce Development Workgroup was folded into the Oversight Committee for the new Connecticut Community Integration Personal Assistance Support Services (C-PASS) grant, also named **C.H.O.I.C.E.: Connecticut Has Opportunities for Independence, Choice and Empowerment**. This committee was established in order to provide leadership, oversee grant activities and

coordinate efforts among other grants and State community integration projects. The Oversight Committee reports on its progress to the Real Choice Steering Committee. It will follow the same structure and bylaws as the Real Choice Steering Committee.

- Model Communities

Initial work will be to develop a selection process for the three communities to be selected as models of capacity building. This includes establishing selection criteria, methods for inviting community participation in the project, reviewing the entries, and selecting the communities (Objective 6.0). The Community Facilitator will work with this group.

- Professional Development and Training

This workgroup will work with the Training Coordinator on Objective 4.0: increasing the capacity of state agencies to provide inclusive services. Tasks will include developing criteria for training requirements and creating a listing of agencies to be surveyed as well as best methods for contacting and networking with them. One of the future activities of this objective will be to sponsor forums for state legislators.

- Communication and Public Awareness

This could initially be included with the Model Communities workgroup, but will eventually have the task of developing and disseminating information and resources on Real Choice to the general public to increase awareness of community inclusion (Objective 5.0). This will include media, Question and Answer sheets, an advocacy media tool kit, and an interactive, accessible website.

Other workgroups may be established in the future as needed, for example, Monitoring/Evaluation, a Volunteer Peer Support workgroup and a State Conference committee.

**Objective 2: Assess the extent to which persons with disabilities living in Connecticut are throughout their lifetime able to receive an inclusive education (including early intervention), participate in community life, seek and obtain employment and housing, and generally access the supports and services they need in a manner that enhances their fullest community participation and independence.**

### **Activity 2.1 Develop paper surveys, telephone surveys, and other methods of data collection.**

The workgroup first met on December 2, 2002 (see minutes in Appendix C), chaired by Molly Cole, Community Facilitator. Present were Mary-Ann Langton from the Developmental Disabilities Council, Peter Baird from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Dale Fink, Andrew Bate, Chris Gaynor, and Lourdes Janer (graduate assistant). The workgroup agreed that they would develop a definition, and then develop assessment criteria and a plan for data collection and analysis. The definition that was agreed upon follows; it was approved at the Steering Committee meeting of December 12, 2002.

#### **Definition of Community Inclusion**

Community inclusion is the opportunity for all citizens to become involved and valued members of the community in which they live. Community inclusion is as important for people with disabilities as it is for the rest of the citizens of a community, as people with disabilities share the right of all citizens to participate in all aspects of community life. An inclusive community is one that minimizes or eliminates barriers to full participation. Persons with disabilities may need additional supports from the community in advising them about what is available and accessible within their community. They also need to be given opportunities to try different places and experiences in order to use services, pursue interests and meet people that will assist them to be valued and included members of their community.

An inclusive community is therefore one that offers all the benefits of citizenship to all residents of that community throughout their lifespan. These include access to:

- ⌘ Municipal buildings, voting and participation on councils, committees etc., and jobs within the city government
- ⌘ Community services such as shops, doctors, hairdressers, etc.
- ⌘ Affordable housing
- ⌘ A transportation system
- ⌘ Health care and allied health services
- ⌘ Employment opportunities

- ⌘ Volunteer opportunities
- ⌘ Child care services
- ⌘ An inclusive education system
- ⌘ Faith based or civic events, including social events
- ⌘ Recreation opportunities within the community such as sporting events, cafes, markets, beaches, parks, theaters etc.

Based on this definition, a list of core indicators was developed on which to base survey activity. Development of the survey was begun at the Assessment Workgroup meeting of January 9, 2003. It was determined that the survey should distinguish ADA compliance from inclusive services: the key issue is whether people with disabilities feel welcome in their communities, and are able to fully participate in community life if they choose to do so.

From a meeting held with several members of the Steering Committee regarding the topic of quality assurance in community supports, three crucial elements of community inclusion were identified and defined as follows:

**Access:** Can individuals get there, and can they get in? This refers to basic ADA implementation as well as transportation available within a community.

**Participation:** Are individuals actively engaged in community activities and do they receive accommodations and support as needed?

**Welcome:** Do persons with disabilities feel that they are valued and welcome members of the communities in which they live?

The assessment tool asks questions based on these three areas.

Grant staff reviewed the findings of the Harris Poll 'Community Participation Survey' conducted in March of 2000. The Assessment Workgroup decided to use several sections of this questionnaire in the Connecticut survey, as we would then be able to compare data obtained in this state with national results. The Assessment Workgroup met six times between March 27, 2003 and June 3, 2003. The assessment was revised numerous times based on feedback from members of the Assessment Workgroup, which includes Dr.

Rick Fortinsky, the Real Choice Project Evaluator, and Celia Feinstein from Temple University CED. Ms. Feinstein was retained by the Community Living Exchange Collaborative through the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) grant, which is providing technical assistance to the Real Choice grant in Connecticut. (The survey may be found in Appendix D.)

The survey instrument is used to conduct telephone interviews with individuals with disabilities or their family members. Individuals who wish to participate are able to call in to an 800 number, either reaching a researcher directly, or leaving a telephone number and time to be reached. A TTY line is also available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Respondents will not be identified by name, nor will any identifying information be requested or retained for reasons of confidentiality. Only a code number will be used to identify callers. The questions in the survey include basic demographic information, including employment status; questions regarding the respondent's experience with accessibility in his/her town of residence; questions regarding the extent to which the respondent actively engages in community activities; and how welcomed the respondent feels in his or her community.

The survey was finalized in June and submitted to the University of Connecticut Health Care Center Institutional Review Board on June 20, 2003. Also submitted was a copy of the recruitment announcement that is to be distributed through various newsletters and list serves operated by advocacy organizations in Connecticut, as well as through a mailing from the Department of Social Services to approximately 2200 Medicaid recipients who are employed. Additional mailings may occur depending on the response rate. The interview protocol and recruitment notice may be found in Appendix D. The survey and research protocols were approved on July 11, 2003. Dissemination of the subject recruitment notice began on July 14. The first response was received July 30, 2003, and interviews began on July 30, 2003.

As of September 30, 2003, 58 consumers (persons with disabilities or their family members) had been interviewed. A Graduate Assistant, Lisa Ziobro, assisted with the

interviews as of August 12, 2003. Recruitment continues. However, in order to reach a wider constituency, including persons with disabilities in verbal communication, the Assessment workgroup determined that an alternate format of the questionnaire needed to be developed. A web-based online version is in the process of being created that will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board for approval in early October. This will be accessible through a web-link that will be disseminated in future recruitment materials.

In October 2003 twenty three (23) surveys were completed. Fifteen (15) more were completed in November, and thirty six (36) in December. In November a mailing was sent out by the Connecticut Department of Social Services to Medicaid recipients who are employed (up to 2700 people). This has resulted in an additional seventy nine (79) calls between November 20<sup>th</sup> and Dec 31<sup>st</sup>.

Respondents to date represent a wide diversity of disabilities, and come from sixty two (62) different towns in Connecticut. While the data being collected on disability demographics is based on self-reported information, it is then being sorted into eleven different categories of disability. Disabilities are being grouped into the following:

- Mental and Emotional Disability
- Learning Disability
- Cognitive
- Blind/Visual
- Hearing
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- System Disease, Autism
- Physical Disability
- Neurological
- Other

Consideration was initially given to following the Harris Poll format, which asked about the following: learning disability of any kind, emotional or mental disability or condition, any physical handicap or disability, any talking, hearing, or visual disability, except for ordinary eyeglasses. Based on the data received to date from respondents the Harris Poll

listing was deemed too restrictive and did not recognize a number of disabilities reported to our surveyors.

In February 2004 the online version of the survey went live and the link to the survey was placed on the website of the A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence. Notification of on-line access was sent to over 450 people and disability organizations via email lists and fliers during February and March. Responses as of the end of March reflected 62 online surveys received in addition to a total of 153 telephone surveys. Data had been recorded on individuals from 69 Connecticut towns, ages 3 to 94, with an equal number of male and female respondents.

The survey was closed to respondents April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Final figures indicate that a total of 251 surveys (84 on-line and 167 telephone surveys) was received. The survey data was entered into an SPSS database for analysis. Due to personnel changes in the data team at the UCEDD, this process was delayed; however, as of June 30, 2004 all survey information was in the database and in the process of being analyzed.

It is hoped that a meaningful report will be generated that will (a) permit us to describe some general trends and impressions, and (b) permit us to identify questions that need further exploration. Because of the lack of randomness in the way the sample of respondents was drawn, we will avoid making any unjustified claims about statistical reliability and will avoid drawing conclusions based on inferential statistics. We will discuss our findings by using descriptive statistics and acknowledging the limitations of the data base. As a way of measuring the reliability and trustworthiness of our respondents, sample data is undergoing a “spot-check” regarding the responses to certain questions of respondents who come from the same community. For instance, selection of a sample of the towns/cities which are represented by two or more respondents allows examination of responses to several questions in Section I (“accessibility in your community”) and the final question (“overall rating”). Our hope is that among (for instance) the 3 respondents from Westport or the 8 respondents from Norwalk, there would be considerable convergence on questions such as the accessibility of town offices, the post office, and public beaches and parks. To the degree that we find wide disparities

in these responses, we will seek to understand the divergence by looking at factors such as types of disability and age of respondent.

Final data will also be broken out by three categories of town size: small, medium and large city, as well as by five regions, corresponding to regions served by Connecticut's five Independent Living Centers.

*At the Steering Committee meeting on October 13, 2004 Dr. Dale Fink reported on the analysis of the data collected from the survey. He stated the largest number of the approximately 250 responses were by phone, with a significant minority over the web. Approximately 70% answered for themselves, with 30% answering for others (a child with a disability or a person with a disability who was unable to respond). Dale discussed responses to several questions, including those answered by respondents within our three model communities. He stated the data will be looked at in many different ways (e.g., dividing the state by size of communities, by regions of the state, by our model communities, by age groups and disability groups, etc). It is anticipated that the final report will be ready for comment by February 2005.*

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**Objective 3: Facilitate the development of an expanded workforce to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in Connecticut.**

**Activity 3.1 Collaborate with the Connect to Work grant (Medicaid Infrastructure Grant) and the Connecticut Association of Personal Assistants (CTAPA) in their efforts to increase the work force of personal assistants throughout the state of Connecticut, including development of a strategic marketing/recruitment plan.**

A Workforce Development workgroup was established in December of 2002 chaired by Andrew Bate, grant workforce developer. The first meeting was held on December 20, 2002 and included Debbie Barisano and Cathy Ludlum from the Connecticut Association of Personal Assistants (CTAPA). Recent recruitment and lobbying efforts by CTAPA were reviewed and ideas on future collaborations discussed. The following six questions were addressed during this meeting and set as priority items for future meetings as well:

1. What has already been done in regard to long-term care workforce development in Connecticut?
2. How do we access the untapped pool of labor (retirees, mothers with young children etc.) that may want to work as a PCA, but are unaware that the opportunity exists?
3. How do we identify employers of personal assistants, and help potential workers to connect with them? If we cannot demonstrate that jobs are available, people will lose interest.
4. What are the policy priorities that we want to set in regard to long-term care workforce development in Connecticut e.g. health insurance, HR position within the PCA Waiver Program, and case management within the PCA Waiver? How would these goals be accomplished?
5. Who are our partners in this endeavor of long-term care workforce development in Connecticut?

Richard Edmunds from the Department of Public Health (DPH) and Anastasia Giamalis from the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) joined the workgroup at the meeting of January 30, 2003. Ms. Giamalis is in charge of a project called “CT HEALTH JOBS.ORG”. This is a website, linked to the “AMERICA’S JOB BANK” site which is used as a recruitment tool for direct support workers for private providers in the Mental Retardation sector. There has been discussion between DMR and the Connecticut Association of Personal Assistants (CTAPA) regarding opening the CThealthjobs.org website to potential Personal Care Assistants (PCAs) and employers. While there had been some concern over opening the site to the general public (the site has historically only been available in order to post and apply for jobs within DMR), this concern has been alleviated. The future vision of the project is to enable employers and employees to post and apply for positions online.

A significant limitation of this site was discussed: the job categories on the new website such as the personal care and service category as well as personal and home care aide

category and the descriptions of those categories do not fit the actual duties of a PCA. Anastasia indicated that these categories and descriptions come directly from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles of the United States Department of Labor and could not be modified by any entity without revision to the dictionary itself. A workgroup involving personnel from the state DPH, DMR, and OPM as well as members of the Long Term Care Advisory Council has been assembled to work on the new website. Anastasia will keep the workgroup up to date on the status of the project.

Anthony LaCava (Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County, an Independent Living Center) joined the group in February 2003. In both February and March discussion continued on recruitment issues and tools. Scot Cregan from the Center for Excellence joined our group for the purposes of discussing some of the several aspects to consider when producing a recruitment video. Some of the aspects mentioned were the length of the video, budget, whether or not to put it on other multimedia outlets such as the CD-ROM and the format, for instance one long video showing one aspect of personal assistance or a video with multiple segments showing several places and environments in which a personal assistant might work.

Concerns regarding retention include the issue of the lack of health insurance for PCAs. Andrew Bate, the Workforce Developer, contacted the offices of long-term care as well as the Developmental Disabilities Council offices of states that indicated they were at least considering offering health insurance to personal care assistants and other direct care personnel. This data was gathered from a study done by Robyn Stone of the Institute of the Future of Aging Services. These states are: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, and Vermont.

Donna Holt and Melissa Swartz from North Carolina's office of long-term care and developmental disabilities council responded to his requests for information. While North Carolina did consider offering health insurance to direct care personnel, by way of a buy-in program, it was determined that because direct care personnel were not considered state employees, a buy-in program would not be possible. Andrew further went on to

outline the status of North Carolina's Real Choice project, which solely focuses on workforce development. Part of the project deals specifically with recruitment and retention, and in the first year they have produced a video. Videos from Montana and Massachusetts were viewed at the meeting on March 25, 2003. The group agreed that the materials from Montana, which consisted of three thirty second commercials, were ideal in that they were short, emphasized a mutual relationship between the person providing assistance and the person being assisted, and finally, the advertisements encompassed a variety of populations.

At the meeting of March 25, 2003 the consensus of the workgroup was that the development of recruitment materials was somewhat premature, given the current limitations of the various waiver programs available in Connecticut and the lack of consistency and coordination among them. A future direction for the workgroup is the development of a Comprehensive Joint Work Plan. This plan outlines a collaborative process between the Connect to Work project of the Department of Social Services and the Model Communities project of the UCEDD in which materials and polices will be developed in order to enhance the recruitment and retention of direct care personnel in the state.

A great deal of discussion was undertaken to determine whether or not to look at gaps within specific waivers, and avenues through which to pursue systems change among all of them. The group consensus was to look at specific providers and then examine them based on certain common elements that they provide to all programs. The goal of this is to try and establish ways in which a single point of entry system for direct care personnel and direct care employers may be established for direct services in the state.

Prior to the April 2003 meeting, an analysis of state providers of services was undertaken to determine if any of the providers resembled a single point of entry for recruitment. It appears as if there is no one single provider that is providing truly streamlined services. The consensus of the group was that more work needs to be put into determining how all of the separate agencies such as DMR, Allied Community Resources and some of the

Independent Living centers in the state maintain a registry of Personal Care Assistants (PCAs). All three of these entities, however, do this differently, and their methodologies may be contradictory to one another. It was agreed that a next step would be to have representatives from the separate entities meet and discuss how they are currently working together, and working against each other to facilitate the recruitment and development of an effective direct care workforce. Attendees at this meeting would work together to identify what is desired in regard to supports around the registry, and address previously expressed concerns such as lack of consumer input, lack of accommodation for those with speech impairment, and ensuring multiple access points. The meeting was planned for the end of July, 2003.

A mission statement and specific goals for the Workforce Development Workgroup were drafted and reviewed at both the May and June meetings. The initial statement is as follows:

Mission: To develop an infrastructure and products that will allow for the effective recruitment and retention of direct support personnel. Our work will endeavor to enhance the opportunities for community inclusion among people with disabilities across the lifespan.

Goal 1: To achieve a spirit of collaboration and establish a set of common goals among key stakeholders in regard to workforce development issues, including fiscal intermediaries, consumers and state agency personnel.

Goal 2: Establish a central point of recruitment for direct support personnel and their employers.

Goal 3: To develop recruitment materials that will attract a wide variety of individuals to work for people with disabilities across the lifespan while emphasizing a mutual relationship between employer and employee.

Goal 4: Support advocacy efforts around the issues that impact direct support personnel such as a lack of access to health care insurance, low wages and the absence of workers compensation benefits.

The full mission statement and minutes of all meetings are available in Appendix E.

Discussion of recruitment and retention included not only the need for a centralized, effective recruitment tool, but also the need for training, particularly of consumers who hire their own staff. Therefore, the Workgroup supported pursuing application for another Federal Systems Change grant opportunity, the C-PASS or Community-integrated Personal Assistant Support Services grant. At the June workgroup meeting there was significant discussion of various possible grant objectives and activities, including centralized recruitment and marketing, training initiatives by consumer/PCA teams, and voluntary formal training for PCAs in centralized locations. The grant proposal was completed and submitted on July 29, 2003.

On July 22, 2003, the Workforce Development Workgroup met to continue work on the development of the above-mentioned goals and objectives and ensure participation of all relevant agencies. Ms. Darlene O'Connor is the director of long-term-care policy within the Center for Long Term Care Policy and Research at the University of Massachusetts medical school, and currently working on the development of "Rewarding Work", a recruitment website. Mr. Mickey Verno, of the state Department of Mental Retardation, presently works in the area of self-determination at DMR. Specifically, his role includes organizing the information necessary to enable individuals and families to hire their own staff under this initiative. Ms. Carol Bohnet is the Executive Director of Allied Community Resources. Allied is the fiscal intermediary for the ABI, PCA and Elder waiver and pilot programs. Allied is also responsible for maintaining a registry of potential direct support employees under each of these programs. There was discussion of the current framework of waivers and registries as well as barriers present in establishing a central point of recruitment. These included:

- No authorization for release of information

The Department of Social Services (DSS) currently does not allow Allied Community Resources to release information that is contained on registries for its programs outside of people who are receiving services from the various waivers. Therefore, an approval from DSS would have to be obtained in order for Allied to upload its registry information to the web-based point of recruitment.

- Maintenance of a centralized web site

There were two key points raised on this issue. First, there must be an equal distribution of labor between all parties involved in regard to maintenance of the web site. Second, it needs to be determined whether or not a fee should be charged to employers wishing to register on the site, or for that matter if a fee can be charged to begin with.

- Population size

One other potential barrier may be that the population size between all the various groups is too large and the needs too disparate. This needs to be clarified during the planning process.

Despite the barriers that may be inherent in establishing a central point of recruitment for direct support personnel, there was a clear willingness by all parties concerned to engage in a collaborative process for change. Furthermore, there are many interesting possibilities that may serve to facilitate this goal. The group consensus was that consumer input was needed in regard to what the central point of recruitment should look like, possibly through a series of focus groups.

The meeting on August 23, 2003, was primarily devoted to review and revision of the new **rewardingwork.org** web site. Items discussed included site accessibility, security, language utilized on the site, in particular the use of “personal care assistant” versus “personal assistant”, and searchable fields such as special skills, geographic options, and travel distance to work.

No meeting was held of this workgroup in September, pending the outcome of the application for grant funding described above. In October 2003 the Connecticut Department of Social Services received funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid for a new Real Choice grant, the Community-Integrated Personal Assistance Support Services or C-PASS grant. This project, called **C.H.O.I.C.E.**, or **Connecticut Has Opportunities for Independence, Choice and Empowerment**, will continue and expand the work that began under the Workforce Development objective of the original Real Choice grant. The Workforce Development Workgroup was folded into the Oversight Committee for the C-PASS grant. This group was established in order to

provide leadership, oversee grant activities and coordinate efforts among other grants and State community integration projects. The Oversight Committee reports on its progress to the Real Choice Steering Committee. It will follow the same structure and bylaws as the Real Choice Steering Committee.

A full description of continuing activities can be found in a separate report for the C-PASS “C.H.O.I.C.E. “grant.

**Objective 4: Work with state agencies to enhance their capacity to provide services by including persons with disabilities and their families as partners and decision makers in service design and delivery.**

**Activity 4.1 Assess the current status of staff orientation and development activities across and within relevant state agencies regarding self-determination through consumer choice and decision-making.**

Lynda Pletcher, Training Coordinator, began assessing the status of staff orientation & development within and across state agencies. The formation of a workgroup had been slow due to low membership to date. Ms. Pletcher pulled information from the web to find state agency contacts. She spoke with the director of the State Training Commission, who is currently from the CT Department of Transportation regarding attending meetings of State Training Coordinators. He did not feel it would be appropriate for Lynda to attend their committee meeting to talk about the Real Choice Grant, since their committee meetings focus on professional development and how to do training. He also indicated that only 4-5 individuals attend the meetings, and that they are not all Training Directors. A discussion at the Steering Committee meeting of January 19, 2003 clarified that training is indeed conducted very differently by each agency and that better definition of the objective was needed in order to:

1. Define what, in fact, is being assessed
2. Determine which agencies are most relevant to work with in order to obtain outlines of training curriculum of agencies to evaluate.

Further discussion produced the names of several contacts that may be of assistance in narrowing the focus of the objective.

In January, 2003 Lynda Pletcher left Connecticut for a position in North Carolina. A search for a new Training Coordinator was not successful despite the interviewing of four potential candidates. This delayed the implementation of this objective. The project director met in March with Linda Rammler M.Ed., Ph.D., who submitted a proposal to conduct the statewide assessment of training needs by August 15, 2003. The UCEDD contracted with Dr. Rammler to accomplish this task. (See Appendix F for a copy of this proposal.)

Dr. Rammler identified three overall goals for the Training Needs Assessment:

- To identify model examples of training materials already developed by state agencies that address best practices in community inclusion and self-determination in whole or in part (i.e., to determine what can be replicated “as is” or with minor modifications as part of a comprehensive training package)
- To identify gaps in training materials and practices within and across target agencies
- To develop recommendations for replication and/or development of training materials and practices to be used within and across state agencies to foster a unified agenda of community inclusion and self-determination and to close identified gaps

Targeted for assessment was the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) because it has general oversight capacity. In addition, 10 other state agencies were to be assessed, each of which has a specific mission that includes supporting people with disabilities in making decisions about their own lives. These agencies were:

- Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services/Department of Social Services (BRS/DSS)
- Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI)
- Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)
- Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)

- Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)
- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A)
- Department of Education (DOE)

**Agencies selected for review are described in the following table:**

State agencies whose staff development policies we reviewed for this report

Category	Agency name
A. Agencies that target services to specific disability constituencies	1. Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) 2. Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) 3. Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)
B. Agencies that target services to constituencies with diverse disabilities	4. Vocational Rehabilitation Division, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services/Department of Social Services (BRS/DSS) 5. Bureau of Special Education, Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
C. Agencies which have as their primary mission advocacy or the monitoring of compliance with laws or regulations	6. Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities (CCDD) 7. Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A) 8. Division of Health Systems Regulation, Bureau of Health Care Systems /Department of Public Health (DPH)
D. Agency with oversight role	9. Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

The following types of documents were reviewed from these agencies:

- Pre-service manuals or other materials, outlines, etc., geared toward new employees or newly contracted service providers
- Continuing training manuals or other materials, outlines, etc., geared toward current employees or existing service providers under contract with the target agency
- Brochures or similar announcements of topics covered in the last year at workshops, seminars, training institutes, or other events sponsored or co-sponsored by the target agency
- Minimal data (to the extent it is available) about pre-service training, continuing staff development, and other training opportunities, i.e., who typically attends and for whom it is required versus optional
- Anything provided or sponsored prior to the past year that specifically addresses promising practices concerning inclusive community living and self-determination
- A list of any conferences, etc., that addressed relevant content and were attended by key agency staff
- Any documents that relate to follow-up, e.g., how do agencies that have provided training know that training contents has been internalized and implemented as anticipated?

An assessment format was developed to be filled out on each agency (See Appendix F).

While the initial deadline for completion of the assessment was August 15, 2003, the assessment team cited a number of reasons for delay. These included:

- Recent staff lay-offs, early retirements, and transfers as a result of the state's dire budget situation left most agencies reeling from staff shortages, displaced employees (e.g., new people in positions that they've not yet become familiar with), and insufficient resources to perform any but the most essential job duties. Unfortunately, responding to a training needs survey in this climate is seen as a "nice to," not a "need to."
- During the summer many state employees (e.g., at Protection & Advocacy and the Department of Education, as well as in the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services) have simply been on vacation.

A meeting was held on August 21, 2003 between the contractor and the grant coordinator to review progress and to discuss options for the write-up of the final report. The contractor submitted a draft on October 2, 2003 for review. The final report was scheduled to be submitted in the first week of January 2004.

A draft of the report was submitted by the contractor in January of 2004. This draft was reviewed by the Real Choice Grant Steering Committee. Feedback from committee members confirmed a need for further extensive revisions to the report. Dr. Dale Fink from the UCEDD undertook this revision in March 2004.

The revised draft report highlighted how each agency incorporated currently understood principles such as self-determination and consumer decision making into their ongoing professional development activities.

In March 2004, a letter was sent to representatives of each agency making available the sections of the draft that were descriptive of the agency's efforts, together with material from the introduction and conclusion, and requesting their suggestions, corrections, and additions.

The letter also requested face-to-face meetings with representatives of each agency at a time and place of their convenience to receive their comments and suggestions in preparation for revising and generating the final draft of the report. The recipients were asked to consider the following:

- Have we made note of the content areas related to self-determination and consumer principles such as self-determination and consumer decision making into their ongoing professional development activities.
- Have we made note of the format by which these content areas are transmitted to staff (e.g., initial orientation, mandatory in-service, voluntary in-service, attendance at conferences and meetings, individualized mentoring, etc.)?

The letter was sent to fifteen (15) individuals, and the interviews were conducted over a four week period beginning March 25, 2004 and ending April 22, 2004.

The report was re-drafted incorporating many of the comments received during the interviews, and submitted to the Real Choice Steering Committee for final review. The report was completed, submitted on June 4, 2004, and printed in August 2004. (See Appendix F for the text version of this report, entitled “Beyond Services to Clients: Are We Training Staff to Support Self-Determination and Consumer Decision Making?” which replaces the earlier draft copy.)

The concern was raised by some members of the Steering Committee that this report, while reflective of the extent to which agency leadership has embraced the values of self-determination and person-centeredness, does not address how these principles translate into action at the consumer level. Therefore, as a follow-up to the completed report on State Agencies’ approaches to professional development, it was initially recommended that the next step be to seek feedback through focus groups of consumers with disabilities who have sought services from these agencies. The plan was to recruit consumers of state agency services from the three Real Choice model communities, Bridgeport, Groton, and New Haven, in order to give some parameters to the population.

The purpose was to triangulate with additional perspectives the information we received from those responsible for conducting training and to gain information that would be useful to the agencies in improving their practices. The following work plan was to be implemented between July and December of 2004:

1. Recruit consumers of the same agencies that were the subject of the earlier report, with exceptions indicated below.
  - Omit the Bureau of Special Education because the number of consumers (parents of children with disabilities) would be unwieldy, and they are more likely to have feedback for their local school districts rather than for the Bureau of Special Education.
  - Omit OPM and the DD Council because they really are not direct (public) consumers of their activities.

- Find out whether BEHS has anyone available to collaborate with us about this phase of the project. (They had no one available for the earlier report and so were omitted.)
  - Seek as participants in the focus groups, individuals whose involvement with an agency is somewhat long term (months or years rather than days or weeks) as it does not seem that someone who has had only brief contact with an agency could meaningfully contribute to a two hour discussion. Find out if this eliminates P & A from the scope of the work, as we are not certain if some consumers receive services of a long term nature from them.
2. Find out what consumer feedback mechanisms are already in place at each of the agencies under review. To the extent possible, we would also want to know what the content of feedback has been (if they write up any kind of summary, for instance). Most importantly, find out if they can point to instances where they have changed or modified policies or practices in response to consumer feedback.
  3. Begin our contact with the agencies by reaching out to the same individuals who were the key contacts for the assessment of training. We recognize that they may not be the same ones who are best situated to work with us on issues of consumer feedback. Request their help in linking us to the correct person.
  4. Seek help from each of the agencies in order to identify focus group participants and also in order to determine the key questions we need them to answer.
  5. With regard to selection of participants:
    - We are hoping that each agency can identify service recipients by zip code and that we can supply a letter the agency can disseminate for us, inviting those who reside in the three model communities, and those who would like to find out more (or sign up), to contact us by telephone or e-mail.

- This way, confidentiality will be protected, and we will only know about persons who choose to self-identify to us.
  - If that is not practical or feasible, we will ask each agency to help us determine some other method for conveying our invitation to consumers in the three communities.
6. With regard to the content for the focus groups, we will be seeking help from the agencies in general, and in particular from the agency that is the subject of the pilot test. What information or experience can we capture that their already existing consumer feedback mechanisms cannot?
  7. Conduct one pilot focus group with service recipients from a single agency. The determining factor in choosing the agency will be which agency is most eager to work with us and has the technical means to help us do the outreach to consumers in the three (or one selected) communities. We anticipate that the remainder of the focus groups will take place after a hiatus of four to six weeks, giving us time to analyze the outcome and process of the pilot and to plan the next round of focus groups with those insights in mind.
  8. Set a cap on the number of participants we want for a focus group; if we have more consumers interested in participating, we will draw randomly from among those that indicated their interest by the designated deadline. Presently we anticipate that 10 to 12 would be a good number. We might consider a cap of 15 acceptances in order to achieve that number.

A letter was sent on July 6, 2004 to representatives of the following agencies: BESB, BRS/DSS, DMHAS, DMR, DPH, P&A explaining the above process. Assistance was requested and described in the following steps:

1. “We would like to find out what mechanisms your agency (or bureau or division) already has in place to solicit consumer feedback, and what kinds of feedback you have received.

2. We would like your agency's input on the contents of the focus groups. What questions can we ask that might enhance (and not simply duplicate) what you may already be learning from recipients of your services?
3. We would like your logistical help in recruiting participants in our focus groups. For instance, would you be able to identify service recipients residing in the three communities noted above and mail a letter from us to them? (We would cover the mailing expenses.)"

Follow up telephone calls were made throughout July to letter recipients. There were two responses in July 2004, one from the Office of Protection & Advocacy and one from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, referring Dr. Fink to alternate sources of information within the departments. In August, correspondence with the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) resulted in a lengthy conversation with the Director of Staff Training & Personnel Development, Charlan Corlies. Ms. Corlies provided the information that DMR does have numerous ways that they already receive feedback from consumers of their services. Much of their data has been collected by the Braceland Center which is part of the Institute for Living in Hartford, CT, which has conducted about 18 or 20 focus groups in the past year. In addition, data is collected from an ombudsman's office which operates a toll-free line for consumers or families who may have complaints. A request was made by Dr. Fink for summaries of this data.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services also conducts consumer surveys. A copy of the 174 page report on the survey findings prepared in March of 2004 was given to Dr. Fink on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004. The report is being reviewed extensively to see if any complementary or supplemental data collection is indicated.

Given the above information, a revision of the original work plan established in June 2004 was deemed prudent. Before proceeding with focus groups that would possibly duplicate the efforts of some state agencies to obtain data from their target group, it appeared that a more detailed effort on our part was warranted to look in some depth and detail at all the different ways that agencies are obtaining consumer feedback and, in

some cases, tapping the consumer constituency as partners in their development of policies and practices.

Contact was originally limited on this phase to those agencies where it seemed logical to consider focus groups. With the new priority on getting information and data about their consumer input, and knowing they had all received the printed version of the previous report, an additional letter was sent out in September to BESB, CCDD, CDHI, CSDE, DCF, DMHAS, DPH and P & A. This letter explained more fully that the focus of our current inquiry following up that report was to learn what mechanisms agencies have in place for soliciting feedback and involvement from consumers with disabilities in shaping departmental policies or practices. The letter asked for any information each agency could provide about the channels by which it seeks feedback and input from consumers, and whether there are any examples of policies, practices, or priorities being influenced as a result of feedback received from persons with disabilities or their families.

In addition to the initial responses from BRS and DMR, further information was provided at the end of September 2004 from DD Council and Department of Education, and the latter has made available (or is in the process of sending) a great deal of information, including the results of statewide and regional surveys of parents of kids with disabilities and interviews in selected school districts of students with disabilities aged 14 and up.

The intent of this analysis is to develop a report that can generate meaningful recommendations on “best practices” in obtaining consumer input in a meaningful way, how the methods are similar and different across the different agencies, and to compare and contrast the input they are getting and see where it converges and where it diverges. Most importantly, this analysis will focus on how (and if) these agencies are tapping the consumer constituency as partners in their development of policies and practices.

*At the Steering Committee meeting of October 13, 2004 Dale stated that before developing a plan for holding focus groups, as discussed at previous meetings, efforts would be made to contact the agencies surveyed for the original report (Phase I), to see*

*what method the agencies are using to access feedback from their own consumers. How do they incorporate the people that receive services as decision makers? Do they have surveys, focus groups, etc? Focus groups of our own would be held only if we can add value to what's already in place.*

*Of the agencies Dale has contacted so far, two agencies (BRS and DMR) both have mechanisms in place to track consumer feedback, including focus groups and surveys. He reported being actively involved in gathering information from the remaining agencies originally surveyed to see what mechanisms each is using. Dale planned to send a draft of the Phase II report to steering committee members by mid-November.*

*A draft report, on the findings from interviews with agency representatives regarding their methods of obtaining consumer input entitled "What Are The Perspectives Of Consumers With Disabilities And Their Families Toward The Activities Of Selected State Agencies In Connecticut?" was circulated to the Real Choice Steering Committee on November 19, 2004. At the Steering Committee meeting of December 8, 2004, Dale and committee members discussed this first draft report on information gathered from agencies surveyed about feedback from their consumers. Questions asked of agency representatives included: How do the agencies incorporate the people that receive services as decision makers? What methods do they use to solicit feedback? We want to know how the consumers who are receiving services from the agencies feel. Do they feel empowered and supported and like partners rather than clients? Dale said he hoped to have a second draft report ready to share with the people at the agencies surveyed, so that they may review the information they contributed, by the end of January 2005.*

*It was suggested that when Dale's research is completed and the Phase II report is issued, a workshop be held for agencies that would facilitate group sharing and highlight the findings in both reports: a forum that allows the state agencies to learn from each other. Stan Kosloski suggested that in addition to reviewing the process state agencies use to solicit feedback from consumers, it might be useful to also solicit feedback from external advocacy organizations that have experience supporting individuals and*

*families with disabilities. He agreed to send Dale a list of such organizations, identifying the relevant state agency state agency that with which the organization has the most contact.*

***Activity 4.4 Sponsor forums for state legislators on the current status of services and supports for persons with disabilities in relation to national trends and ongoing state needs.***

*The University of Connecticut Center on Disabilities, in collaboration with the Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Office of Protection and Advocacy, is sponsoring a series of legislative forums on disability topics. The most recent was a Forum on Employment for People with Disabilities on October 8, 2004. The day was used as a kick-off for the Connecticut page of [www.rewardingwork.org](http://www.rewardingwork.org). There were a number of presentations on Connect to Work, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, ADA accommodations in the workplace and personal care assistance. The event was broadcast through the Connecticut Network (CT-N), which is managed and operated by Connecticut Public Affairs Network, Inc., a not-for-profit company founded to educate citizens about state government.*

**Objective 5: Develop and disseminate information and resources for the general public on the Real Choice System Change Grant, and increase public awareness of inclusion in the community.**

**Activity 5.1 Seek opportunities to disseminate information about Real Choice activities and about the underlying values and goals of Real Choice, into local newspapers, organizational newsletters, and other publications.**

### **Brochure**

A brochure was developed on the Real Choice grant for the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) open house on December 12<sup>th</sup>. A copy of the brochure may be found in Appendix Q. The brochure was also distributed at

the Systems Change conference in Baltimore in March 2003, and an updated version was distributed at the CMS Systems Change conference in Baltimore in March 2004. (See Appendix Q for the updated version of the brochure.)

### **Poster Session**

The Project Coordinator developed a poster presentation, which included a map of CT showing towns in Connecticut that had expressed interest in becoming model community applicants. Handouts were developed which were a synopsis of grant objectives and progress made to date for distribution to interested attendees at the Systems Change conference.

On November 21 and 22, 2003 the poster and various informational handouts were displayed and distributed at the “Families and Individuals Living Self-determined Lives” conference in Farmington, CT. Approximately 250 self-advocates, family members and professionals attended the conference.

The poster and handouts were updated in March and presented at the CMS Systems Change conference in Baltimore in March 2004.

### **PowerPoint Presentation**

A PowerPoint presentation was developed on the basic tenets of Real Choice Systems Change, with specific emphasis on Community Inclusion. This presentation was shown to the representatives from 26 towns that were interested in applying for the Model Communities project. The same presentation was also shown to members of the Long Term Care Planning Committee of the Connecticut Legislature on March 11, 2003.

### **Articles**

The June issue of the ConnSENSE Bulletin, which provides practical resources on assistive technology for individuals with disabilities, distributed an article on the Real Choice grant. On July 30, 2003, the Bridgeport area newspaper “The Connecticut Post”

printed a column highlighting Bridgeport's award of funding as a model community under the Real Choice grant.

The August 2003 issue of "Hospital News, Connecticut" contained an article on Real Choice and model communities, incorporating interviews with project staff.

On November 3, the University of Connecticut weekly newsletter, "The Advance", featured a story on the Real Choice grant and the model communities. The newsletter was widely disseminated throughout the University community. Additionally, the article was disseminated via email to various interested groups and individuals.

*On April 2, 2004 the weekly publication "The Groton Times" printed an article entitled "A Parks and Rec Program for Everyone". The article highlighted the inclusive Real Choice grant activities in the town of Groton, including the mentoring program under development.*

### **Miscellaneous activities**

On September 24, 2003, the Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut visited the A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in order to learn about the various projects being implemented at the UCEDD. Information on the Real Choice grant was shared through a poster presentation and handouts, and questions on current activities answered in detail.

On December 4, 2003 the UCEDD hosted an open house, which was attended by 77 visitors, 12 of whom were legislators from various parts of Connecticut. The same poster format was used and project staff was available to present information and ask questions.

On November 13, 2003 the project coordinator participated in a cable access television program entitled "Welcome to Groton" hosted by Carol Pratt. The program consisted of a 30-minute interview by the reporter on the Real Choice grant, the selection of the Town of Groton as a model community, and the activities of the project in Groton. Participants included Representative Lenny Winkler from Groton, Mary Hannigan from the Groton department of Parks and Recreation, and Christine Gaynor, project coordinator from the UCEDD. The program aired multiple times on the public access channel during the first two weeks of December 2003.

On November 17, 2003 the project coordinator gave a presentation entitled “Community Integration” to an audience of approximately 65 consumers with mental illness who were participating in a training day organized by Advocacy Unlimited at the Legislative Office Building at the Connecticut capitol. An overview of the project was given with an accompanying PowerPoint presentation and handouts.

On November 22, 2003 the project coordinator participated as a panelist in a presentation on new Systems Change grants in Connecticut at the “Families and Individuals Living Self-determined Lives” conference in Farmington, CT. Other presenters on the panel were representatives from the Department of Mental Retardation and the Department of Social Services.

On March 26, 2004 the project coordinator and the workforce developer conducted a joint presentation at the conference of the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. The presentation, “Challenges in Transition to Community Living,” described barriers to community integration for people with disabilities as well as successful strategies and recent initiatives under the Systems Change grants in Connecticut.

On April 13, 2004, the project coordinator attended Community Partnership Awards at Chapel Haven on behalf of the Real Choice project and the A.J. Pappanikou Center, a co-sponsor of the event. Chapel Haven is an independent living and educational program for young adults with learning disabilities in New Haven, CT. Awards were given to educators who had created opportunities for community inclusion and partnership for their students with disabilities.

*On September 21, 2004 the Project Coordinator participated in a panel presentation to the Long Term Care Committee of the Connecticut Legislature with other Systems Change grantees in Connecticut. This presentation was intended to highlight the*

*collaboration between grantees and the integration of this work with the Long Term Care Plan.*

*On September 29, 2004 the Project Coordinator participated in a panel presentation with other Systems Change grantees in Connecticut at the Connecticut Community Providers Annual Association conference.*

*On October 10, 2004 the Project Coordinator and several project staff participated in the statewide conference of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Presentations included a panel on “The Role of the Community in the Transition Process: Combating Isolation” and “Finding Your Home: Options for Community Living”.*

### **Reports**

Several reports have been disseminated in a variety of ways as products of the Connecticut Real Choice project. The report entitled “Beyond Services to Clients: Are We Training Staff to Support Self-Determination and Consumer Decision Making?” was distributed in late September to representatives of the participating state agencies and other key individuals. It was also given to members of the Long Term Care Planning Committee of the Connecticut Legislature via mail and during a presentation on Systems Change grants in Connecticut given on September 21, 2004. The report was posted to the UCONN Center on Disabilities website in early July, 2004.

The First Model Communities Forum report, an overview of the discussion held in Farmington in May 2004, was distributed to the Long Term Care Planning Committee on September 21, 2004. Additionally, the report was given to participants at the annual Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA) conference held on September 29, 2004. The report was first posted to the UCONN Center on Disabilities website on August 31, 2004.

*The Model Community Forum Report was also distributed at two subsequent Regional Forums: The First Southwestern Regional Forum and the First Eastern Regional Forum, held October 7, 2004 and December 3, 2004 respectively. The summary reports from these two forums were also posted to the UCONNUCEDD website.*

**Activity 5.2 Develop handouts or Question-and-Answer sheets** addressed to the general public as the need for education is identified on specific topics (e.g., accessible housing, inclusive schools, independent living).

Handouts have been developed for each of the presentations given by project staff, including fact sheets on employment of people with disabilities and person-first language.

**Activity 5.3 Develop a media tool kit for self-advocacy.**

**Activity 5.5 Develop and maintain an interactive, accessible website on project activities and findings.**

The website of the University of Connecticut Center on Disabilities ([www.uconnucedd.org](http://www.uconnucedd.org)) has devoted web pages specifically to all of the activities under the Real Choice Systems Change grant. It contains minutes of all meetings, reports in downloadable format, and other pertinent information that is easily accessible. The development of a separate website was not deemed cost effective by the Steering Committee. At the end of the grant period, information can be placed on the Connecticut Long Term Care website that is currently under development.

**Objective 6: Select three Connecticut communities to be models of capacity building.**

**Activity 6.1 Develop a competitive selection process, in which cities, town, or urban zones from across the state will put together applications and compete for the**

**opportunity to be designated as Connecticut's first three "model communities" in their efforts to support the life choices of persons with disabilities.**

The Model Communities workgroup first met on December 12, 2002 and was moderated by Molly Cole, Community Facilitator. In attendance were Barbara Parks Wolf from the State of CT Office of Policy and Management, Diana La Rocco from the Department of Mental Retardation, Mary-Ann Langton from the Developmental Disabilities Council, Andrew Bate, and Chris Gaynor. (See Appendix G for Model Communities Workgroup minutes.)

The committee agreed that each town and municipality would be given the opportunity to self nominate, using an application form developed by the committee. The applications were reviewed by a selection committee, which then made recommendations for selection to the larger Steering Committee. The application was sent to each of the 169 cities and towns in the state. Announcements that the applications were available were sent to consumer groups across the state, encouraging them to work with their city government in developing the application. The application from the towns needed to reflect collaboration, both in the development and submission process, but also in other efforts in the municipality. Each applicant was expected to develop a Model Community Task Force that demonstrated collaboration among consumers, city government, transportation, elderly services, child care, schools, recreation, health care, private providers, and community service organizations. Additionally, the Task Force needed to include members of the general public as well as representatives from some of the following: private providers, childcare, and community service organizations.

A two-page announcement was developed in December, 2002 and submitted for revision and approval to the Steering Committee in January, 2003. The timelines established were as follows:

1. Announcement to be ready for distribution at end of January, 2003
2. Dissemination plan ready at end of January, 2003
3. Deadline for intent to apply February 28, 2003

4. Bidders' Meetings/Question and Answer sessions held mid-March
5. Application due April 18, 2003
6. Decisions made by May 16, 2003
7. Awards made by July 1, 2003

A cover letter was written to elected town officials, legislators and advocates. Grant staff worked with the UCEDD dissemination team on the final graphic format for the flier.

Mailing of the Model Communities announcements began January 30, 2003. One hundred sixty (160) were distributed in January, two hundred eighteen (218) in February for a total of three hundred seventy eight (378). The breakdown of recipients is as follows:

Two hundred fourteen (214) were mailed to Town representatives, including Mayors' and Selectmen's' offices

Thirty-nine (39) mailed to ADA Coordinators

Forty-three (43) mailed to select legislators

Twenty-one (21) mailed to members of the Connecticut Family Support Network

Sixty-one (61) distributed at various meetings by Steering Committee members and grant staff

Fliers and cover letters were also sent out via email on various list serves. Due to the nature of the worldwide web, it is not possible to establish a count of this.

**Activity 6.2 Select review panel**, ensuring consumer representation.

A decision was made by the Steering Committee that the review panel would consist of five (5) members of the Model Communities Workgroup. Whereas originally the intent had been to invite other representatives as needed, such as city or town government representatives, it was felt that doing so provided too much opportunity for conflict of interest. There are three consumers on the Selection Committee.

**Activity 6.3 Develop selection criteria.**

A draft of an application packet was developed and distributed at the December 12, 2002 Steering Committee meeting. The packet contains a synopsis of the project, a list of award criteria with a point system, a cover sheet, form, a budget sheet, and a worksheet for applicants to use in reviewing the current status of inclusion within their community. The application was reviewed and amended by the Steering Committee at the February 2003 meeting. The application contains a section on award criteria following a point system. These criteria are as follows:

### **Award Criteria**

**30 Points: Consistency with Principles.** The activities, actions, events or projects described in this application are consistent with the following basic principles:

- ❖ **Lifespan:** The community demonstrates that the activities address the inclusion of persons with disabilities across the lifespan from infants through elderly persons.
- ❖ **Inclusion:** The community makes a consistent effort to include persons with disabilities as full participants in the same activities and at the same locations as all other community members. Efforts are made to reach out to persons with disabilities and to encourage them to join or be fully included in the community activities with non-disabled neighbors.
- ❖ **Respect:** The community demonstrates a respectful attitude toward persons with disabilities. Efforts are made to limit and discourage discrimination, stereotyping, and negative attitudes or myths about disabilities and people who have a disability.

**20 Points: Innovation.** This is the degree to which any of the proposed initiatives represent innovative and creative ways to support and include persons with disabilities across the lifespan in all aspects of community life.

**20 Points: Scope of Benefit.** The degree to which persons with disabilities have benefited from the initiatives already in the community, and the degree to which persons

with disabilities will benefit from the proposed project. This includes the number of persons affected (taking into account the size of the community) and the extent to which the initiative will impact each of the following. (See the Community Inclusion Worksheet, Appendix H.)

**20 Points: Collaboration.** This is the degree to which the application reflects a documented collaborative effort and the degree to which the community has a demonstrated history of collaboration to promote full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

**10 Points: Budget.** The degree to which the community will use in-kind and matching funds to achieve the project outcomes, and the degree to which the proposal demonstrates the ability of the community to continue inclusion efforts beyond the project period.

Forty-six (46) towns expressed initial interest in the project. Forty-two (42) made requests for application packets. A total of forty-two (42) were mailed, and an additional seventeen (17) emailed upon request. Staff spoke by telephone with twenty-seven (27) town representatives and three (3) other parties in February, 2003 regarding the model community application; an additional twenty-five (25) conversations were conducted in March, 2003 and twenty-nine (29) emails exchanged. Three regional meetings were set up as follows: March 12, 2003 in Farmington, March 17, 2003 in Norwich, CT and March 20, 2003 in Naugatuck, CT. Arrangements were made for meeting space; the first meeting was held at the UCEDD, the second at the offices of the Disability Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC), and the third at Independence Unlimited; both are Independent Living Centers. All bidders were notified of the dates and 16 interested parties received emailed directions.

Representatives from twenty-eight (28) towns attended the meetings. A PowerPoint presentation on the project was presented at each meeting, and time provided for all attending to ask questions. The entire project staff attended each meeting, as did the

UCEDD Director of Administrative Services. A master list of questions and answers was created and distributed by April 4, 2003 to all attendees.

**Activity 6.4** Review panel will **select three communities** based on selection criteria, and inform the communities of their selection.

At the Model Communities Workgroup meeting on April 14, 2003 a scoring sheet was developed based on the scoring criteria listed above (see Appendix H for the Scoring Sheet). Grants would be read up through 25 pages. If proposals exceeded 25 pages, only the first 25 were given to the reviewers to be read. The grant was not to be disqualified, but the extra pages would not be read.

It was decided that all five reviewers would read each of the submitted proposals to ensure consistency, scoring on each of the criteria independently, then meeting to reach consensus. The scoring sheets were emailed or hand-delivered to grant staff by April 21, 2003.

On April 18, 2003, the deadline for application submissions, copies of the applications received by that date were reviewed by the grant staff to determine if all basic elements were present within the application. Twenty (20) grant applications were received. Upon review by grant staff, one application did not meet the criteria and was removed. Copies of the remaining nineteen (19) applications were hand-delivered to all five reviewers. The reviewers each completed scoring sheets for each application. Copies of the grants were then delivered to Selection Committee members.

On May 7, 2003 the Selection Committee met to review their findings and to reach consensus. The findings were presented to the Steering Committee for final approval on May 8, 2003. The three communities selected were the town of Groton, and the cities of New Haven and Bridgeport. Three other communities received honorable mention: Manchester, Hamden and Old Lyme. The communities were notified by telephone with a follow-up confirmation letter of award (see Appendix I). Budget negotiations were

conducted, and contracts in place as of July 1, 2003. Each community is to receive \$25,000 per year to implement grant activities, with year one (1) being only a three-month “year from July 1, 2003 to September 30, 2003.

**Activity 6.5 Continue to engage communities** that put together applications for “Model Community Development” and were not selected. Award “honorable mention” status and give positive feedback and recognition to every community that put together an application that met the basic criteria.

Letters were also sent to the remaining thirteen (13) towns that had submitted an application but did not receive the award. A short summary was attached of comments from reviewers, giving feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals, as well as the final score. The communities were invited to participate in a list-serve that would continue to keep them informed of grant activities and let them know of any trainings or other events to which they could send representatives. One example was a workshop by John McKnight on community mapping in August sponsored by the Connecticut Olmstead Coalition.

### **Community Inclusion Forum**

On May 25, 2004 representatives from seven Connecticut towns gathered at the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) in Farmington to share ideas and experiences related to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the life of their communities. The purpose of the gathering was to create networking opportunities and for the communities to share experiences with inclusion. Three of the towns were those selected as Model Communities: Bridgeport, Groton and New Haven. The four other community representatives were from municipalities that had submitted proposals, but were not selected for funding: Danbury, Old Lyme, Southbury and New Britain. The forum offered participants an opportunity to share experiences, talk about community inclusion barriers in their town, and offer strategies that are being employed to overcome barriers.

In preparation for the Forum a questionnaire was developed to conduct telephone interviews with representatives from the towns which had applied for the Model Communities grant funds but had not been selected. (See Appendix S for a copy of the questionnaire.) Of the 16 towns contacted, 14 had a Task Force in place at the time that they had applied for the model communities' grant. As of the date of the survey, 11 towns still had a Task Force in place, and 5 were working on objectives contained in their proposals despite not receiving funding. 12 town representatives had indicated that they would be interested in attending the May forum, and 11 would be interested in sharing information on their efforts with each other.

Invited to present at the May 25th meeting was special guest Nicole LaPointe, Project Director of the Model Community Project for the Town of Littleton, New Hampshire. Her focus on "Lessons Learned" offered much fodder for discussion as did activities and materials developed in Littleton as part of the New Hampshire model community project. Other topics included:

- Experiences with Community Inclusion: Personal Perspectives,
- Barriers to Community Inclusion,
- Strategies for addressing these barriers,
- An overview of Task Forces in the various towns,

Discussion of project themes.

Regarding this last item, a review of the various grant proposals submitted by towns revealed a number of common themes that would enhance community integration. These included:

- dissemination of information regarding disability issues to residents with disabilities;
- identifying resources for residents with disabilities (e.g., developing a resource directory);
- increasing community participation by people with disabilities;
- promoting self-advocacy;
- conducting accessibility surveys within the municipality; and
- promoting disability awareness.

At the end of the Forum, a participant survey was distributed. The following table gives the ratings from 8 respondents on a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being the highest:

<b>PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION SURVEY</b>	
<b>I. <u>CONTENT</u></b>	<b>MEAN N= 8</b>
1. The information I received is relevant and can be applied to my community	<b>4.25</b>
2. Time was well organized.	<b>3.75</b>
3. The presenters information was valuable	<b>4.5</b>
<b>II. <u>FACILITATORS</u></b>	
1. The facilitators were skilled in eliciting our input to the questions presented.	<b>4.5</b>
2. The facilitators were prepared and organized.	<b>4.5</b>
3. The facilitators valued our input.	<b>4.5</b>

The following were comments regarding things that participants identified as most helpful about the session:

- The concept of TimeDollars.
- Sharing of ideas
- Lessons learned
- Sharing of information
- Opportunity to meet people from other parts of the state/other municipalities
- Presentation
- Success stories from other communities
- Perspectives from variety of individuals
- Specific tools we can implement almost immediately

The idea of taking the lessons learned in the model communities and hosting regional meetings was introduced during the meeting; both the comments written in response to the participant survey and ensuing emails indicated a shared enthusiasm for the idea. A

group of towns in Fairfield County had previously expressed interest in hosting a meeting in their area, as did several of the towns attending the Forum from the southeastern part of the state (Groton, Old Lyme). Topics were requested for regional meetings, which will begin in early Fall 2004.

(A full report of the Forum is available in Appendix U and from the UConn UCEDD website.)

In response to the request for Regional meetings, it was determined that three Forums would be held in Fall/early Winter 2004-2005. The ultimate intent is to organize and establish three regional groups to support efforts being made in other cities and towns that want to make their communities more “welcoming” to people with disabilities and their families. The Town of Ridgefield, in southwestern Connecticut, offered to host the first Forum. This Forum is scheduled to be held October 7, 2004. Sixty two (62) letters of invitation and agendas were sent to City and Town chief elected officials (Mayors, First Selectmen), Town Managers, Building Inspectors, Directors of Social Services departments and ADA Coordinators in fifteen (15) communities in the region. An agenda was developed with the intent of guiding meaningful discussion around community inclusion as well as to provide information of specific interest to the attendees. Topics included [short presentations](#) on

- The status of the ADA as it pertains to cities and towns
- Requirements for accessibility of polling places and voting machines
- How to develop effective disability commissions and committees at the community level
- Information and resource sharing: what are some examples of success your town has had with inclusive practices, as well as barriers that have stood in your way?

The meeting [began](#) with a showing and discussion of 16-minute community integration video produced last year in the state of Connecticut.

#### **Activities as of December 31, 2004**

*Two Regional Forums were held this quarter. The plan is to hold three meetings in each of the three regions (Eastern, Southwestern and Central Connecticut) and to hold a state-wide conference in September 2005 (the end of the grant period). Darien offered to host the second Southwestern regional meeting on January 20, 2005.*

*Agendas for all first regional meetings follow similar formats: Viewing the Interrobust video, discussion around inclusion barriers/solutions, the ADA and barriers to implementation within the different communities, and establishing or strengthening of Boards and Commissions on Disabilities in communities. The first Real Choice Regional Forum was held in Ridgefield, Connecticut on October 7, 2004. Participants were from the communities of Stratford, Danbury, Fairfield, Darien, Bridgeport, and Ridgefield. The Interrobust video was viewed and stimulated a lively discussion. The group indicated they would like to meet quarterly; for a future meeting, they would like to see Bridgeport, Groton and New Haven present on their model communities' activities. Stan Kosloski, Community Facilitator for the Real Choice grant, suggested inviting local advocacy groups in Southwestern CT for a future meeting. Some representatives of towns that did not attend this meeting called indicating they would like to be a part of future meetings.*

*The first regional meeting for Eastern Connecticut was held in Groton on December 3, 2004. Towns attending the Groton forum included Griswold, North Stonington, Waterford, Old Lyme, and Groton, and were represented by officials ranging from First Selectmen, Building Officials, to Directors of Parks & Recreation and ADA Coordinators. In addition, the director of the New London ARC and a parent of a young adult with a disability, who is a regional Coordinator of the CT Family Support Network, were also in attendance. Conversation at the Groton forum revolved around physical and money barriers to transportation and accessibility in the towns, strengthening of local commissions and getting consumers involved in town government. A reporter from the Groton paper was present and remained after the forum to interview some of the participants.*

Numerous ideas for action were shared by participants at each Forum. The plan is to hold quarterly meetings in each region over this last year of the grant. All forum participants are asked to fill out evaluation forms at the end of each meeting indicating their level of satisfaction with the format, content and facilitation, and giving ideas for future meetings. Combined responses from the Groton and Ridgefield meetings are reflected and means are presented in the table below:

<b>PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION SURVEY</b>	
<b><u>I. CONTENT</u></b>	<b>MEAN N= 18</b>
1. The information I received is relevant and can be applied to my community	4.67
2. Time was well organized.	3.89
3. The presenters' information was valuable	4.59
<b><u>II. FACILITATORS</u></b>	
1. The facilitators were skilled in eliciting our input to the questions presented.	4.61
2. The facilitators were prepared and organized.	4.56
3. The facilitators valued our input.	4.72

The majority of attendees noted that networking, sharing ideas and information with other communities, and learning from each others' successes were valuable reasons to keep the process going. In Groton, a second meeting was enthusiastically supported, with the Town of Griswold offering to host a second Forum in March 2005. Several participants suggested inviting community members with disabilities to future meetings. A forum dedicated to making Parks and Recreation programs more inclusive was requested at which 'resource sharing' by municipalities could be explored. Another suggested topic was to have presentations on what other communities are doing to eliminate attitudinal barriers, as well as information on developing natural and informal supports. In Ridgefield, other ideas for future topics included Principles of Universal

*Design, Employment issues, and what communities are doing to eliminate attitudinal barriers.*

*Full reports on the proceeding of each Forum are available by request or on the UConn UCEDD website at: <http://www.uconnucedd.org/Projects/RCSC/Products.htm> (See **Appendix V** for summary reports.)*

### **Objective 7: Build capacity in each of the three selected target communities**

#### **Activity 7.1 Develop a Task Force for change in each selected community.**

As a part of the application process, each community was required to submit a roster of Task Force members and letters of support to indicate that a Task Force was indeed included in the grant activities. Two of the three communities selected had in fact already met with their Task Forces to develop the goals and objectives of the proposals. Despite the start of the grant year being July 1, 2003 the Town Of Groton scheduled a Task Force meeting for June 27, 2003, which was attended by the grant team from the UCEDD. At this meeting, the Model Communities Facilitator gave a presentation on the background of the grant and led a discussion of Task Force expectations and the availability of technical assistance from the grant staff. The Groton Task Force plans to meet every other week during the first few months of the grant period.

The Model Communities Workgroup met on May 15, 2003 to determine its future role now that the communities have been selected. Its primary focus will be on collaboration between the model communities and other statewide initiatives. These include the Nursing Facilities Transition Grant, Connect to Work, the Interagency Developmental Disabilities Workgroup, and Quality Assurance. The suggestion was made that steering committee members or other individuals identified with these statewide initiatives could meet with members of each of the model community Task Forces. Additionally, members of both the Steering Committee and the Workgroup could assist with fostering linkages that already exist between various town Task Forces and other initiatives. Some identified linkages are: Bridgeport Task Force Members Karen Roseman is part of the Community Integration Collaborative; Tony LaCava from the Stratford Independent

Living Center (ILC), which serves Bridgeport, is on the Workforce Development Workgroup; New Haven Task Force member Marc Gallucci is Executive Director of the New Haven ILC; Groton Task Force members are also part of Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC).

The implementation of each Task Force is different in each of the selected model communities. Bridgeport's Task Force is the largest, with thirty-six (36) members. The first meeting of this group was on July 23, 2003. They will meet every other month, with the majority of the work being done through committees, which will meet more frequently. New Haven's Task Force has 15 members; the first meeting was on July 1, 2003. They will meet on a quarterly schedule. In Groton, the Task Force has 17 members and meets every two weeks. As stated earlier, they met on June 27, 2003, then July 11, 2003. The Groton Task Force has met a total of 5 times from July 2003 to September 30, 2003.

The Real Choice grant staff will monitor the effectiveness of each Task Force and compare the effectiveness of each model throughout the time span of the grant in order to evaluate which, if any, in fact works better.

To aid in monitoring the effectiveness of each Task Force, an evaluation form has been developed by the grant staff, who plan to distribute annual self-evaluations to the Task Force members in the three model communities. See Appendices K through M for all Task Force meeting minutes. A sample evaluation form may be found in Appendix N.

In order to coordinate and broaden the effectiveness of the Task Forces, the grant staff arranged a meeting of the coordinators of the three model communities. The first meeting held in September, 2003 included representatives from the three communities, from the Real Choice Steering Committee and from the grant staff. The focus of the meeting was a discussion of grant initiatives among the three coordinators and sharing of resources. (See Appendix R for the minutes of this meeting.) Another meeting is

planned for January 2004 and meetings will continue on a quarterly basis for the duration of the grant.

**Activity 7.2 Assess areas of need in each community**

Each of the winning proposals contained an overview of the community; its strengths and areas of need. This served as a basis for each town’s grant objectives and activities. Due to the unique nature of each community these vary widely, with ‘community education’ in some form central to each. See Appendix J for the grant proposals, goals and objectives. The Town of Groton, as one of its objectives, plans to conduct a detailed needs assessment in order to try to identify specific individuals with disabilities in the community and their specific concerns. In New Haven, a comprehensive study on the disability community was commissioned by the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities in 1999 and was conducted by the research firm Center for Public Policy in 1999. Based on this study, the City of New Haven identified accessibility in public restaurants as one grant activity. Six restaurants self-identified as accessible were selected for site surveys in the first grant year. Another concern in New Haven, as in the other two communities, is the issue of attitudes towards persons with disabilities. In the 1999 Disability Survey respondents were asked how they were treated after people learn they have a disability. The following table depicts the percent of disabled respondents believing they are treated in each of the ways presented:

Treat you as an equal:	61.0%
Act as if sorry for you	29.7%
Shy away from further contact	23.8%

Targeting the elimination of this barrier will be a continued focus of the New Haven Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities and will play a central role in fostering inclusion of people with disabilities.

**Activity 7.3 Develop a community action plan.**

As stated earlier, the proposals submitted by each community in fact contain an action plan. The original objectives, to be implemented between July 1st of 2003 and September 30<sup>th</sup> of 2005, are as follows:

## **Bridgeport:**

### **1.0 Public Attitudes: Promote inclusion of people with disabilities on boards and commissions. Local public awareness campaign.**

1.1 Twelve individuals with disabilities will participate in Project Blue Print and be placed on Boards and Commissions

1.2 Fifteen hundred youth and adults in the general community will be reached through the public awareness campaign.

### **2.0 Resource and Information Gap**

2.1 Nine thousand guides will be distributed to adults and seniors with disabilities.

2.2 Twelve hundred guides will be distributed to youth with disabilities in the community.

### **3.0 Affordable, accessible, acceptable housing and support services.**

3.1 Continuum of Care will apply for \$600,000 over three years in additional funds to increase permanent supportive housing opportunities in Bridgeport by 10 one-bedroom units.

3.2 Minimum of ten landlords per year will receive awareness training.

3.3. Meeting will be held in year one to discuss homeownership opportunities.

### **4.0 Diminishing infrastructure for resources, referral and advocacy.**

4.1 A minimum of one meeting will be held with Legislators and local elected officials to advocate for increased resources.

4.2 Staff will ensure objectives are achieved and Task Force and Sub Committee work is accomplished. They will increase service levels by a minimum of 10%.

### **5.0 Access to Public Parks**

5.1 Inventory of necessary accommodations and access issues will be prepared on the City Parks.

5.2 Funds will be sought to make improvements and accommodations to children and adults.

### **6.0 Prioritization of curb cuts**

6.1 A prioritized list of curb cuts will be put together and submitted to Public Facilities.

6.2 A procedure will be established with Public Facilities for notification of future needs.

#### 7.0 Access to Medical Facilities

7.1 List of medical facilities with access issues will be compiled.

7.2 Better accessibility will be promoted through meeting annually with medical facilities.

7.3 Minimum of five facilities will make changes.

#### 8.0 Grandparents raising grandchildren with disabilities

8.1 Two best practice initiatives will be presented to the Task Force for consideration regarding grandparents raising grandchildren with disabilities.

8.2 Grandparents raising grandchildren with disabilities

Initiatives could include policy changes with the Housing Authority and expansion of the DSS Grandparent program.

#### 9.0 Trained personal assistants

9.1 Job training and additional funding for personal assistants resulting in minimum of ten additional, available well-trained staff.

#### 10.0 Disparity of resources for people with certain disabilities

10.1 Service providers will report a reduction in the number of individuals unable to access services.

### **Groton:**

1.0 To institute disabilities and sensitivity training for current and future Town of Groton employees

2.0 To establish a comprehensive training program for early childhood centers and preschools

3.0 To establish a comprehensive needs assessment study to begin Sept. 2003 and be completed by Dec. 2003

4.0 To provide a ‘user-friendly’ listing of all inclusive pre-schools and day care centers and facilities within Groton

5.0 To develop listing of names and contact information for all employers, housing units, transportation services, and spiritual opportunities that welcome those with disabilities

5.1 To highlight those services that are ADA compliant

6.0 To present inclusive training to the local Chamber of Commerce businesses

7.0 To develop a web page with current information concerning program and inclusive opportunities and school registration

## **New Haven**

### **Task Force**

Grant funds will help defray the cost of participation of the Task Force members and pay for accommodations. As mentioned earlier, the Department assumes the projects of the Task Force, through its support staff from the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities, will go far beyond that of a newsletter. It is anticipated that members of the Task Force will be interested in sustaining their involvement once a non-profit entity is developed through the City.

### **1.0 Four-page insert in the New Haven Advocate and the New Haven Register in July 2003:**

The focus of the Department and the Commission has been awareness. In an effort to increase awareness to the greatest number of individuals in the New Haven area a newspaper insert on disability issues and resources appears to be an effective way to accomplish this. The insert will be up to four pages with articles and information for the disabled and non-disabled community. Publication of this insert is intended to coincide

with the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Disability Awareness Day on July 26.

#### 2.0 First issue of quarterly newsletter published and distributed

A quarterly newsletter is the initial product of the efforts of the Task Force and this grant, which can later be sustained through mainstreamed communication, such as newspapers. As well, it is feasible to approach business to provide the funds for a quarterly insert in local papers, especially if a non-profit entity was formed and business could donate funds. The City also intends to post the newsletter on the City's website in an accessible format for persons with all types of disabilities to access

#### 3.0 National Disability Mentoring Day in October

A small portion of the grant funds would be used in the first three years to offset the cost of accommodations, transportation, and meals, as the Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities will be coordinating local efforts on this project.

#### 4.0 Six accessibility site surveys (in year one)

A key element to inclusion is providing access. This grant will enable the Department to assess places of public accommodations, such a restaurants, theatres, shops and recreation areas, to assess and promote real access for persons with disabilities. Although one of the Department staff is a certified access monitor, a different access monitor from the ADA Coalition of Connecticut would best manage evaluation of Title III entities.

#### 4.1 Thirteen accessibility site surveys (in year 2)

#### 4.2 Thirteen accessibility site surveys (in year 3)

#### 5.0 Non-profit Incorporation

The establishment of the non-profit would enable the Task Force and the Department to access private foundation and local resources for funding projects further promoting inclusion and public awareness, such as producing the video "If You Only Knew What I

was Thinking”. Private donations could also be used to sustain the efforts of the Disability Mentoring Day.

#### 6.0 Copyrighting of materials on community awareness

There is a one time only line item for attorney’s fees for services needed regarding establishment of the non-profit and copyrighting of materials to enable distribution of proprietary materials, including the video on inclusion.

#### **Progress**

The following are activity updates by quarter for each community as reported on their quarterly progress report and minutes of Task Force meetings.

#### **Bridgeport:**

##### **As of September 30, 2003**

A total Task Force composed of thirty-six (36) members meets every other month, six times a year. Membership of the Task Force is composed of persons with a variety of disabilities, community agency representatives and municipal employees. During the subsequent months, teams meet to accomplish their goals and objectives. Each team has a leader and facilitator, similar to Total Quality Management Teams. Teams arrive at consensus and individual team members volunteer for assignments to be completed by the team’s next meeting. At Task Force meetings, teams report back to the total group and suggestions by the membership are given. In addition, UCEDD staff attends Task Force meetings and technical assistance and other information is provided by the UCEDD staff.

At the first Task Force meeting on July 23, 2003, the original ten grant objectives were discussed and then prioritized, in order to select four for initial action. These include the following:

1. Public Attitudes: Promote inclusion of people with disabilities on boards and commissions: It was determined that Project Blueprint is non-operational at this time. Other training for board membership is being sought. Several alternatives have been discovered and are being investigated, namely UCEDD assisted board training program and the Greater Bridgeport Leadership Program through the Greater Bridgeport Business Council. On November 5, 2003 from 6pm to 8 pm a Community Conversation is planned to discuss board/commission/committee membership with Bridgeport residents with disabilities. Focus will include discussion of how people with disabilities can be placed in positions of power, how they can acquire the skills and abilities to serve on boards/commissions, and what supports are needed to successfully serve on boards/commissions.

2. Resource and Information Gap: Nine thousand guides will be distributed to adults and seniors with disabilities. This team has met several times and current discussion is the development of a small generic pamphlet outlining various local services with contact information to Infoline for follow-up. The target date for development is September of 2004.

3. Affordable, accessible, acceptable housing and support services: This team has met three times to review housing objectives. In addition, the team has developed six action steps:

- Create an inventory of resources that will assist individuals to make necessary modifications to accommodate persons with disabilities;
- Create an inventory of current housing that will accommodate people with any disability;
- Work with city officials to modify zoning regulations that currently limit occupancy to families related by blood, marriage or adoption;
- Support current efforts to create supportive housing for single individuals, which requires petitioning the Planning and Zoning Commissions for a special permit, as denying this type of housing is discriminatory to people with disabilities and in violation of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

- Incorporate the principles of Universal Design in housing: educate housing developers and provide preference to developers who incorporate Universal Design in their housing units.
- Obtain a more precise census of persons with disabilities living in the City of Bridgeport.

In addition, the team began discussion on landlord awareness training. Joe Wincze, the City of Bridgeport's Fair Housing Director, is invited to the next team meeting to discuss his perspective on current landlord awareness.

4. Diminishing infrastructure for resources, referral and advocacy: The team met two times and discussed the potential difficulty in successfully obtaining a moratorium on service cuts and increasing service levels by 10%. Goals discussed were: conducting a gaps and needs analysis and review of available services to determine whether the service is truly shrinking or if there are there barriers and obstacles preventing individuals from accessing services. The team is also developing a timeline and agenda to schedule a legislative breakfast.

#### **Activities as of December 31, 2003**

The Public Attitudes workgroup: has continued to meet two or three times per month. This group sponsored a "Community Conversation" held on November 5<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 PM with a light meal served. The location was the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport (see Appendix K for minutes). The intent was to hold a facilitated discussion on the subject of raising the visibility and participation by people with disabilities in the community. A total of 72 people with disabilities and family members attended the Community Conversation despite inclement weather. Attendees broke into small groups with a facilitator at each table to focus discussion around issues such as why people would want to be on boards, what supports are available, and what some of the barriers are. It was clear that people were interested in getting further training in areas such as: what being a member of a board is like, and what skills are needed. Thirty four (34) people expressed interest in this training. Training options have been considered with Democracy Works a possible collaborator. Democracy Works is a partnership of the African American

Affairs Commission, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, and the National Conference for Community and Justice. More recently, it has added the ADA Coalition as a partner and is interested in broadening its mission to include people with disabilities. An initiative of Democracy Works is **Reflecting Connecticut**, a project to increase the representation of people of color and women on Municipal Boards and Commissions. The co-chairs of the Public Attitude Team and staff from UConn Center on Disability met with the Director of Democracy Works, a non-profit organization whose mission is to make democracy work fairly, inclusively and vibrantly throughout Connecticut. Joyce Hamilton, E.D. for Democracy Works expressed a strong interest in conducting inclusive and integrated board training in Bridgeport. A meeting is scheduled with staff from the Bridgeport Mayor's office to discuss the board training on January 27<sup>th</sup>. The team developed a timeline for future efforts that includes:

January 27<sup>th</sup> – Meeting with Mayor's staff and Joyce Hamilton, Tony LaCava and Karen Roseman

Early March – Reconvene interested participants from the Community Conversation

Late March – Determine the first group of board trainees

April – Begin board training

To date, one non-profit agency has expressed an interest in seeking board membership of a person with a disability. In addition, the Mayor has requested one of the Task Force members with a disability to serve on a city board.

The Housing workgroup has discussed incorporating the principles of universal design in all new housing applications. This team is still in the process of creating an inventory of resources to assist individuals to make necessary modifications to housing and creating an inventory of current housing for persons with disabilities. The workgroup also plans to review and amend the two housing plans that impact housing opportunities for low-income people with disabilities, which are The Certificate of Need Plan and The Bridgeport Housing Authority Five-Year Plan

The workgroup has proposed that a copy of the regulation is enclosed when builders pick-up a building permit from the building department. As it is often costly to create accessible housing, the suggestion has been made to create a Tax pilot program whereby the investment to create accessible features does not result in a higher tax base.

The team distributed to the Bridgeport Task Force the following accessibility definitions:

Accessible home: is one that is designed with special permanent features (such as lowered countertops) that allow people with certain disabilities to live there.

Adaptable home: is one where these features can be easily added or removed dependent on the individual's need.

Universal design: designed features that are comfortably useable by all people, not just people with disabilities, i.e., lowered light switches, levered doorknobs.

Visitable housing: Have features that allow guests with disabilities to enjoy the housing as well as allowing the resident to remain in the housing over time, as his/her physical needs change, e.g. a unit where there are no steps in the entryway and the doorways are wide enough to accommodate a wheel chair.

The Resource Guide group has met a total of five times. It is working on a simple visual map of 13 categories of services (i.e., health care, workforce, transportation), to be distributed to youth and adults. The visual map is a jigsaw puzzle format in the shape of a phone. Included are two telephone numbers most commonly used for Information and Referral: 211, or Infoline, and the number for the Office for Persons with Disabilities. The major focus now is deciding on formats for the phone, material to use for the phone, and distribution methods. Options discussed include a magnet, or a cardboard cutout with sticky tape on the back. Team consensus is to produce a magnetic telephone that can adhere to any metal object. The team wants to produce 10,000 of these magnets to share with adults and seniors with disabilities in the community. The cost is \$3,800 and efforts to raise these funds are being discussed.

The Infrastructure workgroup is conducting an informal needs analysis, reviewing services available and determining whether the service infrastructure is shrinking or if

there are there barriers and obstacles preventing individuals from accessing services. To address resource issues, a legislative breakfast was initially discussed. The team plans to investigate other options in order to best ensure local legislator's attending.

### **As of March 31, 2004**

The Public Attitudes workgroup: The workgroup is proceeding with their collaboration with 'Democracy Works' to provide training to individuals with disabilities to serve on city Boards and Commissions. Task Force members met with the Mayor's staff to discuss further implementation and Board vacancies.

On March 31, 2004 thirty-six individuals attended a meeting to follow-up on the progress to date regarding board training. A quick review of the comments and highlights from the previously described "community conversation" were discussed, as several individuals were new to the group. The progress the team had made since November was discussed, including a meeting with the Mayor's staff. Joyce Hamilton of Democracy Works discussed the train-the-trainer model with the attendees. Productive and interesting discussion and questions were asked such as:

- Supports available to assist individuals participating in Boards
- Benefits of being a member of a board/commission
- Benefits of being a trainer
- Training timetable – hours, days etc.
- Discussion about pursuing boards of interest to avoid boredom and lack of motivation

Following this discussion, it was explained that about 12-16 people were being sought as trainers and once they were recruited, the train-the-trainer sessions will begin. A total of four (4) individuals volunteered as trainers from the meeting and twelve (12) individuals were interested in participating in the training. These figures were shared with the Mayor's office staff and further recruitment of trainers will be discussed with them as well as Public Attitude Team Members.

The Resource Guide group: A colorful magnet with the phone number for the Disability Resource office is in production, and another item aimed at youth is being designed by a youth committee. The magnet order was sent to the printer and 10,000 magnets are being prepared. The team plans to publicize the availability of the magnets through the local press and radio as well as distribute them through agencies, soup kitchens, housing programs and community forums.

On March 10<sup>th</sup> the team met with youth from Central High School, a mentoring group that John Esteves from the Disabilities Resource Center organized. The team met with the group and consensus was reached regarding the kind of material/product we can develop to better inform youth with disabilities about services available to assist them in their community. The team and the youth decided that an address book containing important names, addresses and telephone numbers of resources would be of great help. Additionally, the address book would serve as the teen's address book to use as needed. Further, John was contacted to help recruit a teen from the group to work through the Lighthouse Program and receive pay to help with this project.

The Housing workgroup:

This team decided to become educated on many of the housing issues before they actually began to work on the objectives. Most of the team felt they needed to be informed on the various housing issues; consequently Kathleen Hunter and Jeri Boyd decided to provide the team with the necessary information. Therefore, the team continues to work on an inventory of resources to assist individuals to make necessary modifications to housing and creating an inventory of current housing for persons with disabilities. The team plans to investigate the website [www.housingregistry.org](http://www.housingregistry.org) to assist with accessible/adaptable local housing units.

During the quarter, the Corporation for Independent Living (CIL) gave a presentation on providing accessible housing. CIL discussed a five-year tax amnesty followed by five-year phase in tax plan for Bridgeport residents with disabilities who want to own their own homes as this program is currently working in the Hartford area. Bridgeport legislators and city officials will need to be contacted and educated on this program. The

concept of a Design Review Committee was presented to the team by the CIL. Its purpose is to improve the reporting of accessible housing units in the Connecticut Housing Registry and encourage the development of accessible housing units by educating builders, architects, the housing authority, developers, and local boards. This would hopefully increase the number of accessible housing units.

The Continuum of Care committee applied for supportive housing funds and was awarded \$2.9 million in December 2003. As compared to the application in the previous year, an additional \$700,000 was received in December. The housing plan called for additional 2 bedroom units as a priority, consequently an additional eight 2 bed units will be constructed.

A representative from The Home-of-Your-Own program is scheduled to speak to the team at their April meeting. The team wants to understand the focus, scope and requirements of their program in order to refer individuals with disabilities. The team wants to encourage home ownership among Bridgeport residents.

The Infrastructure workgroup: This group has determined that it needs to refocus on the original grant objective, stated as 4.0 Diminishing infrastructure for resources, referral and advocacy.

Team members decided that this original goal was not worded specifically enough for the team to develop a strategy; therefore they adapted a more precise goal statement for which the specific objectives can be more workable. This is as follows:

**4.0 Increase advocacy, information and referral supports for residents of Bridgeport with disabilities.**

**4.1 A minimum of one meeting will be held with Legislators and local elected officials annually to advocate for increased supports.**

This meeting will be planned prior to the beginning of the next legislative session.

**4.2 Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD) staff will work to ensure objectives are achieved and Task Force and Team efforts are accomplished. The staff will increase Information & Referral and advocacy by a minimum of 10%.**

OPD staff has prepared a proposal to increase the OPD staff through city cash funds. This proposal was submitted to the Mayor of the City of Bridgeport as part of the Human Services plan. By May 24, 2004 OPD will know if this increase was approved. In addition, OPD staff applied for an increase in Community Development Block Grant Funds from the City of Bridgeport. Several consumers and team members wrote letters of support for this increase.

### **As of June 30, 2004**

The 32 member Task Force continues to meet every other month and teams meet monthly to accomplish their goals and objectives. Some teams are meeting more often and some less often, depending on the work that needs to be accomplished. Productivity is consistent and each member seems to play an integral part in the process. Project staff from the UConn UCEDD attend Task Force meetings and some of the Team meetings. They provide technical assistance and other information at the meetings and serve as guest speakers on relevant topics. With the retirement June 30, 2004 of Karen Roseman, Valerie Sorrentino will be responsible for the Real Choice Grant and its teams.

### **The Public Attitudes workgroup:**

During this quarter, a meeting was held with Karen Roseman, Director of the Office for Persons with Disabilities, Tony LaCava, Director of the Disability Resource Center, Joyce Hamilton of Democracy Works and a representative of Mayor Fabrizi's Office. The purpose of the meeting was to bring the Mayor's Office up to speed on Real Choice, this team's work in particular, and to get a commitment from the Mayor regarding the appointment of people with disabilities on City boards and commissions. Since that meeting, Karen Roseman has retired and the representative from the Mayor's Office also left. Valerie Sorrentino, Deputy Director of the City's Human Services Department, will follow-up on this initiative in the next quarter by meeting with Caryn Kaufman, Mayor Fabrizi's press aide, to re-confirm his commitment. She will be asked for a list of current vacancies and a commitment to consider our recommendations.

Valerie Sorrentino spoke with Joyce Hamilton of Democracy Works regarding the board training. She confirmed that as a result of the community conversation, there is a list of 10 – 15 people who want to serve on boards. Out of that group, 4 – 5 people want to participate in a “train the trainer” program. Joyce confirmed that the training could be scheduled for the end of August 2004.

**The Resource Guide workgroup:**

10,000 magnets containing the telephone numbers of the Office for Persons with Disabilities and Infoline have been printed. The team will meet again on July 22, 2004 to discuss a plan for distribution to persons who would need this information and resources. The current plan is to start with the 18 housing sites for the elderly and people with disabilities in Bridgeport. A suggestion was made to conduct informal “coffee hours” at each site where a member of the team meets with the residents, briefly explains the program and distributes the magnets. The team is also exploring media coverage for these events.

Feedback was received from the Central High School students, who are involved in the mentoring group supported by the Disabilities Resource Center, regarding the items they would like to see in the youth directory. They targeted 4 categories: transportation, repair of medical equipment, personal information and recreation. Under transportation, they are interested in information on Metro North railroad, accessible vans, People to Places and other public transportation available to them. In terms of repair of equipment, the students need to know who to contact for wheelchair repair and for vans and lifts, especially if they are out in the community and need emergency service. Regarding personal information, they would like a section in the address/telephone booklet where they can store information such as blood type, special precautions, medications and emergency contact information. Students were also interested in a listing of recreational areas which are accessible to them such as arcades. While the arcades themselves may be

accessible to wheelchair users, often the games are not, due to the height of the screen or the controls.

Karen Halliday, from the CT Department of Education has offered a mini-grant in the amount of \$1000 from the Special Education Resource Center to be used for a Youth Transition oriented project. In June 2004, a proposal from Bridgeport to hire a student with a disability to create and construct a Disability Resources guide in the format of an address book was accepted. The cover of the address book is to be designed by a high school student and coordinated by the employed student with the assistance of The Office for Persons with Disabilities. The next phase of the project will include training youth from the Central High School group to train students, teachers, and other school staff on the use of the address book. The youth trainers will travel to each of the city's high schools, Harding High School, Bassick High School, and Central High School, to distribute and train others on its use. They may also distribute the address book to middle schools in Bridgeport.

**The Housing workgroup:**

The team continues to work on an inventory of resources to assist individuals in making necessary modifications to housing and creating an inventory of current housing for persons with disabilities. The team is investigating the website [www.housingregistry.org](http://www.housingregistry.org) to assist with accessible/adaptable local housing units. The team reported that as part of a larger consolidated application, the City is submitting an application for Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health Services which will fill a gap in housing services and extend the continuum of housing opportunities in the Greater Bridgeport area. The proposed project, Homestead Residential Community Support, will provide 12 new units of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless people with disabilities, including veterans, in the Greater Bridgeport area. Psychiatric disorder disabilities can co-occur with substance abuse disorders in the homeless population.

Kathy Hunter, team leader and the City's Housing Director reported that CHFA approved Low Income Tax Credits for the Old School Common projects (formerly Roberto

Clements School) to create 25 units of accessible adaptable apartments. The conversion will begin to address the housing needs of those with physical challenges in the City. The work of the Real Choice committee was noted in the City's letter of support. The team continues to educate themselves on the Home-of-Your-Own Program so that people with disabilities can be encouraged to apply for home ownership.

### **The Infrastructure workgroup:**

The team met in April to continue to discuss ways to increase awareness of services and promote empowerment and inclusion. While the team has discussed a wide variety of ideas, they have yet to select a specific target area. Valerie Sorrentino, Deputy Director of the City's Human Services Department, will attend the next team meeting and reconsider all previous ideas. Some of the team's ideas included a legislative breakfast, community bus tour and community needs assessment.

A legislative breakfast or tea will be discussed at the next team meeting. With the upcoming election, something may be scheduled in October that could be billed as a 'Candidates Forum' or 'Meet the Candidates' event, but would also allow the team to increase awareness among the legislators of disability issues and low resources in Bridgeport and to advocate for increased funding.

The Office of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) and Human Services staff will work with the City's Central Grants Office to identify possible grants to increase service levels for the elderly and people with disabilities.

### **Activities as of September 30, 2004**

#### **The Public Attitudes workgroup:**

A discussion was held in September with Caryn Kaufman of Mayor Fabrizi's Office to re-affirm his commitment to this project. Mayor Fabrizi has agreed to review the names

of people with disabilities who met with Joyce Hamilton of Democracy Works, who will provide the training. She suggested setting up two sets of trainings: the first will be a 'Train-the-Trainer' which will last two to three hours and will involve four to five people with disabilities along with some City staff and possibly some community leaders; the second will consist of four to six sessions and will train people to serve on boards and commissions. Joyce will be sending the curriculum and a proposal to the Coordinator. Her cost is \$700 which includes everything but refreshments. Once the curriculum is received and the training scheduled, Mayor Fabrizi will send a letter inviting civic and community leaders to participate. The Public Attitudes Team will also look into posting board vacancies on the City's website and, ultimately, training individuals with disabilities to be appointed to boards and commissions within the City of Bridgeport. The people recommended would have to go through the Ethics Commission and successfully complete a police background check.

During this quarter, the Public Attitudes team met several times to discuss the Train-the-Trainer workshop. It is hoped that the training can be scheduled by the end of October 2004. On 9/16/04, the Public Attitudes workgroup met with Joyce Hamilton of Democracy Works to discuss the details. The Train-the-Trainer training would consist of 2 to 3 hours on a one-session basis. The Board member training would consist of 4 to 6 hours with several sessions needed. This training is not to exceed 25 people with the cost approximately \$700.00. Letters will be sent out to interested parties, letting them know the team plans to start training by late October of this year and asking about any accommodations needed. An accessible location with computer access needs to be found to host the training sessions.

**The Resource Guide workgroup:**

Distribution of the 10,000 magnets containing the telephone numbers of the Office for Persons with Disabilities and Infoline has begun. The team will visit 19 senior housing complexes during the month of September to meet with the seniors and distribute the magnets. In addition to senior housing, the following locations will also receive magnets:

- ABCD
- Ahlbin Center
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services office
- Career Resources/Workplace/One Stop
- Disability Resource Center (ILC)
- Family Services Woodfield
- Goodwill Industries
- Office for Persons with Disabilities
- The Kennedy Center
- Workers Compensation Office
- YMCA-Crescent Building
- YMCA-Fairfield Apartments
- YMCA-Harrison Apartments

Eileen Lopez-Cordone of United Way-211-Infoline will make sure that her staff is trained to receive and properly refer any disability-related calls.

Regarding the Youth Resource Guide; A Central High School student from the Youth Mentorship program at the Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County is moving forward with the resource guide. The guide will be organized in four categories: transportation, repair of medical equipment, personal information, and recreation. Under transportation, the guide will include information on Metro North railway service, accessible vans, People to Places and other public transportation available to them. In terms of repair of equipment, the students can look up contacts for wheelchair repair and for vans and lifts, especially if they are not in the area and it is an emergency situation. They can also store personal information such as blood type, special precautions, medications and emergency contact information. There is also information on accessible recreation areas as well as space for personal notes.

**The Housing workgroup:**

The City recently submitted an application for Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health Services to fill a gap in housing services and extend the continuum of housing opportunities in the Greater Bridgeport area. If funded, the project, Homestead Residential Community Support, will provide 12 new units of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless disabled people including veterans in the Greater Bridgeport area.

The team continues their discussion regarding the need for a tax incentive program; educating landlords on incorporating the principles of universal design in housing; and including the need for accessible housing in the City's Consolidated Plan and the Bridgeport Housing Authority 5 year plan. They want to ensure community input into these plans. The team is exploring offering a workshop on accessible housing design for builders, landlords, architects and City and BHA staff. They are also looking at incorporating principals of universal design into the City's RFP process for housing.

The team continues to educate themselves on the Home-of-Your-Own Program so that people with disabilities can be encouraged to apply for home ownership. The team is using the Open Door Publication as a resource guide.

**The Infrastructure workgroup:**

There were no specific activities to report for this quarter.

**Activities as of December 31, 2004**

***The Public Attitudes workgroup:***

*The Public Attitudes Team continues to try to work with two organizations that could possibly facilitate a training to prepare people with disabilities to serve on boards and commissions. Unfortunately, minimal progress was made on this objective in this quarter. Both groups, Democracy Works and Project Blueprint, offer training but their training is geared for women and minorities and not for people with disabilities. Although there were several meetings and conversations with Democracy Works, nothing was ever formalized. Project Blueprint did accept two applications and these people will begin the training in February. The application process is an onerous and detailed one, discouraging to people with little to no experience with advocacy or political*

*involvement. The workgroup will continue to recruit others who are interested in serving on boards and commissions. Hopefully training, tailored to our needs, can be scheduled this spring. The team continues to look for an individual or organization who can tailor the training to meet our needs. We have contacted the Connecticut Coalition of Municipalities (CCM), and UCONN is researching some web sources.*

***The Housing workgroup:***

*The City of Bridgeport recently submitted a response to an RFP for homeownership production and stipulated that developers had to incorporate the principles of universal design into their proposals. The City is also assisting United Cerebral Palsy, Inc. in their development of the conversion of an old school to 25 accessible/adaptable housing units. Both of these efforts should increase the supply of housing for people with disabilities. The team, along with the City's Housing Department, is also looking at incorporating the needs of the disability population into the Consolidated Plan and Bridgeport Housing Authority's five year plan.*

*The Housing team is moving forward with disability and ADA awareness training for builders, landlords, architects, and City and Bridgeport Housing Authority (BHA) staff. A new member, Jonas DeGuzman from the Bridgeport Housing Authority has been very helpful with this. They are getting together the list of targeted groups, list of possible trainers, date and accessible location. An additional topic may include homeownership possibilities.*

***The Resource Guide workgroup:***

*The 10,000 magnets have been printed. The Resource and Information Gap team has worked diligently to personally distribute the magnets at various senior housing complexes throughout the city. The magnets were also given to City and State offices. The Office for Persons with Disabilities is keeping track of the calls generated from information on the magnets. To date, they have documented 40 calls as a result of the distribution of magnets.*

*Regarding the guides for youth, the workgroup is waiting to receive the final draft of the resource directory in order to obtain a price quote from the City's Print Shop. The directory is divided into four categories: transportation, repair of medical equipment, personal information and recreation. Transportation includes information such as the Metro North schedule, access vans, People to Places and other accessible public transportation. Repair of equipment includes such things as who to contact for wheelchair repair and for vans and lifts, especially if they are not in the area and it is an emergency situation. For personal information, there is a section for information such as blood type, special precautions, medications and emergency contact information. Recreation lists accessible parks and beaches in the area.*

***The Infrastructure workgroup:***

*The team has been struggling with this objective. Valerie Sorrentino will attend the next meeting and offer some technical assistance. One idea is to have a reception just prior to a City Council meeting. A one page fact sheet can be distributed and a 10 minute presentation can be made on the issues facing people with disabilities. By piggybacking another meeting, the council people are more likely to attend. State legislators will be invited well. The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD) and Human Services staff will work with the City's Central Grants Office to identify grants to increase service levels for the elderly and people with disabilities. They are currently working on a Department of Transportation (DOT) grant that would provide a 14 passenger mini van with a wheelchair lift that could be used to transport the elderly and people with disabilities to special events.*

**Groton:**

**As of September 30, 2003**

1. In order to institute disabilities and sensitivity training for current and future Town of Groton employees, the Task Force retained Melissa Marshall, who is an attorney and author of Getting It: Persuading Organizations and Individuals to be

more comfortable with People with Disabilities. Ms. Marshall completed one training for middle management for employees within the town on September 3, 2003. Planned is the same training for elected officials, Chamber of Commerce, and other municipalities in the Council of Government. New employees would also be required during their first week of employment to complete a disabilities and sensitivity training workshop offered through the town's Human Resources Division.

2. Compilation began in September 2003 of a listing of names and contact information for all employers, housing units, transportation services, and spiritual opportunities that welcome those with disabilities. While the initial goal was to focus on Groton, the Task Force has decided to also include services for all of Southeastern CT in order to include communities between the Connecticut River to the RI border and north to Willimantic. The primary focus would be continue to be on Groton, but would include services to cover Southeastern CT. The goal for completion is spring 2004
3. Other initiatives related to the grant are presentation of Kids on the Block puppet show to 800 children and 100 adults participating in the Town of Groton summer recreation programs and updating the Town website with ADA information.

### **Activities as of December 31, 2003**

Groton's Task Force continues to meet every two weeks with one daytime and one evening meeting per month. Of note is the fact that Groton has been given in-kind funds or received donations for several services budgeted in the grant allowing the Task Force to stretch their funding as much as possible.

The awareness training with Melissa Marshall was not scheduled for this quarter. Future training will be conducted for the Town Council and Commissions, for the Council of

Government which includes 20 surrounding communities, and for town employees. They are also looking into conducting training sessions with the local businesses.

The Task Force continues to discuss training on inclusion for early childhood providers. Proposals discussed include a Kids' Fair in January to combine a showcase of preschool services and inclusion training and professional training using a training curriculum originally developed by the UCONN UCEDD and offered by Project Learn, the regional education services provider.

Following the quarterly Coordinators' September meeting, Groton decided to participate in National Disability Mentoring Day on October 15<sup>th</sup>, working with the police department, the library and the Parks & Recreation Department. Twelve (12) mentees (students from Fitch High School) were selected to spend their entire school day at the town facilities. National Disability Mentoring Day guidelines were followed. Excellent feedback was received. Several of the Town of Groton department heads have put it on their calendar for next year already and felt they got more out of this one day than they expected. The ones that declined the opportunity to participate will be urged to participate next year.

The director of Operation Respect in Connecticut worked with Groton's public schools to train teachers in a one-day session (10/24/03) around the curriculum "Operation Respect" (the anti-bullying program). This is Groton Task Force's first opportunity to work with their public schools.

In November, 2003 the Groton Department of Parks and Recreation distributed in the Winter Leisure Services Guide a description of the Real Choice grant and a Needs Assessment to be filled out by persons with disabilities and families in Groton. The Guide was distributed to all residents of Groton and was also available at the Groton Senior Center, Town Hall, Town Hall Annex and all Groton Public Schools. The assessment covered services that exist within the Town and solicited information concerning the areas that Groton needs to focus on to improve services and fill gaps.

Information for a resource directory is currently being collected concerning employment, housing, transportation, medical, education and recreational opportunities in Southeastern Connecticut from the Connecticut River to the Rhode Island border. Updated information on state and national services will also be included in the directory, which will be published in printed form and online.

### **As of March 31, 2003**

Melissa Marshall completed several workshops for the town's Administration including heads of the following departments: Finance, Recreation, Police, Public Works, and Human Services etc, in addition to recently completing this workshop for the Town's elected and appointed officials. Representatives from the Board of Education, the Town Council, the Representative Town meeting and several individual commission members attended this workshop. The topic that Melissa covers in detail is "Sensitivity Training and working with people who are living with a disability". Recently a similar workshop was held for representatives from New London, Montville, Waterford, Norwich, East Lyme, Colchester, North Stonington and Stonington. This workshop was open to members of the area Council of Government. Planned for the near future is a workshop for the supervisory employees within the town. These workshops are being coordinated by members of Groton's Human Resources Department.

Inclusive training to the local Chamber of Commerce businesses is also being planned. Melissa Marshall will be the guest speaker for this training, which is scheduled for later in the spring. Members of the Mystic Chamber of Commerce and the Southeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce will be invited to this workshop. Groton's Human Resources Department is also overseeing this workshop.

Groton's local Disabilities Resource Guide handbook, a listing of state and local organizations that provide assistance, information and support to individuals with disabilities, is in its second draft and is being reviewed by a Task Force sub-committee.

This Guide is intended to provide Groton residents with a compact listing of resources organized by disability and age that can be found primarily in New London County if not Groton itself. Thus far, information has been collected on services on the federal, state and local level that would provide comprehensive supports for those with disabilities who reside within Connecticut. The goal is to make this booklet available to parents of children with disabilities and members of the community who are living with a disability. The plan is to make this resource guide available at the Board of Education, Senior Center, Town Hall and through members of the Grant Committee. The distribution would be for residents first and non-residents second. The goal is to have approximately 800 guides printed and to have them distributed beginning this summer.

The Needs Assessment published in the Winter 2004 Leisure Services Booklet did not receive an overwhelming response; however, some valuable information was obtained concerning the services available and the areas that Groton needs to focus on. The goal for the spring is to have parents fill out the surveys at individual program sites, including the pool, various gymnasiums and the Senior Center. The intent is to get a sampling of parents and participants of all ages from pre-school to seniors.

An objective for 2004 is to establish a comprehensive training program for early childhood centers and preschools on inclusion. Members of the Task Force had previously met with representatives of "Project Learn", a Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) serving 24 school districts in southeastern/shoreline Connecticut. Initial discussion was to explore the possibility of planning a Pre-School and Early Childhood Training program for agencies and parents using the resources at "Learn". After reviewing the options available, the Task Force is currently leaning towards designing their own curriculum that would cover issues for pre-school and day-care centers in addition to specific workshops for parents of pre-school and school-age children. With input from the Board of Education, they currently are in the process of forming a subcommittee of members to work specifically on this aspect of the grant.

Some of the other projects that are in the works presently include a “Leisure Mentoring Program” that is the community’s most recent undertaking. Although still in the exploratory phase, the Task Force is trying to implement a program that would allow the Parks and Recreation Department to pursue a mentoring program that would include leisure and everyday “life” skills.

Plans are underway to also offer a “Mentoring Day” in October where students from the Special Education department at Fitch Senior High School will be paired up with Groton Town employees for a mentoring day. This program was a huge success last year and the department heads are eagerly anticipating this fall’s mentoring day.

The Model Community Task Force in Groton is a very good working committee that continues to meet twice a month. They have had an increase in the involvement on behalf of the Board of Education, whose staff attends with support and enthusiasm. The number of parents on the committee has increased in addition to Town employees and an elected official involved in the decision making process.

#### **As of June 30, 2004**

##### **Leisure Inclusion Mentoring Pilot:**

This quarter the framework of the Leisure Inclusion Mentoring Pilot was finalized and approved by the Real Choice Steering Committee pending minor changes in language. The goal of this pilot is to enhance the opportunities for citizens with disabilities in the town of Groton to become involved in fully integrated recreational opportunities and enhance the awareness and sensitivity of the community to people with disabilities. The focus of this proposal is to assist persons with disabilities in increasing the skills and opportunities they need to be able to participate successfully in their existing communities. Concentrated mentoring would be provided in the areas of public transportation, recreation and leisure activities, cultural activities, public service center activities such as libraries and senior centers and any other uniquely desired community service or activity in which the person with disabilities would want to participate.

An outreach coordinator will be hired and trained by a Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator from Groton Parks and Recreation. Leisure inclusion mentors will be recruited and trained from local organizations to implement these goals. A search began in June 2004 for appropriate candidates. Final selection and hiring is anticipated by the end of July 2004.

The outcomes of this program:

- Improve self esteem
- Increase times involved in the community
- Improve comfort level in community
- Increase community skills
- Increase awareness and sensitivity of other community members to people with disabilities.

The following methodology will be implemented:

1. Identify individuals with disabilities who would be interested in participating in this project. This would be done in conjunction with the local independent living centers.
2. Recruit and train facilitators. Qualified persons both with and without disabilities will be sought through area agencies to fill these mentor positions. Outreach to local agencies to develop programs for leisure facilitation. Potential sites are churches, civic organizations, senior centers, etc. Host events to educate the public and service clubs
3. Determine each individual's unique interests and needs and match these with leisure facilitators
4. Develop strategies for community participation based on the individuals needs and make connections to already existing supports.
5. Facilitate specific community integration skills (use of public transportation, knowledge of available community resources, etc).

**Disabilities and sensitivity training for Town of Groton employees:**

The most recent training for employees was held during the Summer Playground Leaders' Orientation. At that time, Melissa Marshall held two sessions for the summer

seasonal staff of approximately 80 employees. The emphasis for her sessions was sensitivity training for employees working with children. At the conclusion of the sessions, the feedback from the staff was extremely positive. Atty. Marshall's focus was to encourage the staff to see the special needs child and the typical child, as children rather than as abilities or disabilities. Planned for this next phase of the grant will be the training for the Chamber of Commerce and outside agencies such as the Lyon's Club, Rotary Club, etc.

**Training program for early childhood centers and preschools:**

A meeting was held with Project LEARN staff to explore options regarding using the LEARN curriculum in implementing a program for parents and teachers of Pre-School and Day Care Centers. After discussion, the Model Community Task Force chose to design a separate curriculum that would focus on parents and teachers, but in different programs. They are working in conjunction with the Pre-School Collaborative within the Groton Board of Education to explore options and to see how these programs can be offered together rather than separately. Both groups have the same goals and combining efforts for the same population would benefit everyone.

**Comprehensive needs assessment:**

The Needs Assessment was printed in the Winter 2004 Leisure Services Booklet. Although there was not an overwhelming response to the survey, some valuable information was obtained concerning the services available in Groton, especially the areas that needed more attention. The goal for the upcoming fall is to have the parents fill out the surveys at the individual recreation program sites including the pool, various gymnasiums and the Senior Center. The intent is to get a sampling of parents, participants and all ages from pre-school participants to the seniors. To conclude this portion of the grant, the goal is to have the assessments available during the fall programs at each site to see if a better sampling of the services that people are looking for within Groton can be obtained.

**Resource Book:**

This project is approaching the completion phase of the booklet, entitled "Making Real Choices". Thus far, information has been collected on services on the federal, state and local level that would provide comprehensive services for those with disabilities who

reside within Connecticut and Groton in particular. The goal is to make this booklet available to parents of children with disabilities and members of the community who are living with a disability. This resource guide will be made available at the Board of Education, Senior Center and Town Hall and through members of Task Force. The distribution would be for residents first and non-residents second. The goal is to have approximately 800 guides printed and distributed beginning in the fall of 2004.

#### **Activities as of September 30, 2004**

In July 2004, there was a change in personnel for the Groton Project. The Project Coordinator, Kate Peruzzotti, left to pursue a career in teaching, and Jim Flanagan was hired to replace her. Mr. Flanagan's first priority is to complete the revision of the Resource Guide. While the information has been compiled, it is being reorganized to make it more user-friendly. The target date for completing the booklet is December of 2004. At that time the information will be forwarded to be Groton's Information Technology Department to be entered onto the Town's Web page as well as printed.

A number of activities have been added to the original objectives of the Groton project as part of the ongoing discussions by members of the Task Force. The first is a videotape of the community. Shawn Greeley who runs the "Welcome to Groton" television program is overseeing this project. The taping is in its final phase and a finished presentation should be completed before the end of 2004. This video will be available to anyone in the Town and will be presented on the local cable access channel. A focus on inclusive recreation opportunities in Groton will enhance the efforts of the project to educate the community.

The second item is a mentoring program. This program is being developed to assist people with disabilities in accessing leisure opportunities through working with a mentor. An outreach coordinator was hired in early September 2004, and recruiting has begun for potential mentors from local organizations. This program is ongoing in its development. A training on November 12, 2004 will be attended by those who will train

the mentors. Once the training is completed, the program will be brought back to the Task Force for further development.

A third item is the Student Mentoring Day that will be conducted on October 27, 2004. The program was conducted last year with great success. Not only did students benefit from exposure to a variety of career opportunities, but Town employees had an overwhelmingly positive response to the experience. It is hoped that the program will again provide students with special needs the opportunity to spend a day with different Town department heads or their designees. Evaluations will be distributed at the end of the day to give both groups a chance to evaluate their experience.

The Task Force continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis, and in addition to a strong core of participants, has added several members this quarter. The members of the Task Force continue to be working strong on achieving the goals as set forth in the grant. The members also remain strong in their commitment to inclusion and are knowledgeable in their respective field.

#### **Activities as of December 31, 2004**

***Resource Guide:*** *The resource booklet is in its final phase of completion. The hope is to have the booklet go to print in early February. Once completed, copies will be available to Town residents and will be posted on the Town Web page.*

***Development of a web page with current information concerning program and inclusive opportunities and school registration:*** *The goal is to have the Town IT Department complete the Web Page in conjunction with the completion of the resource booklet. The booklet should be available to be posted on the website during February of 2005.*

***Inclusive training to the local Chamber of Commerce businesses:*** *A presentation will be made to the area Chamber of Commerce on February 17, 2005. At the presentation,*

*further training on making businesses more “user friendly” and accessible for customers with disabilities will be offered for those businesses that are interested in participating. There will also be a distribution of booklets on ADA with guidelines for small businesses.*

*The Task Force committee members continue to meet twice a month, and are flexible to changing their focus. As stated earlier, a number of additional initiatives not originally part of the Real Choice objectives have been started as a result of the committee’s involvement. Additional ways to accomplish the spirit of the grant have been explored, and implemented during the tenure of the committee. Below is the listing of the initiatives that have been chosen, and are either completed or in progress.*

***A production by the Second Step Players:*** *A presentation by the Second Step Players was held on October 26, 2004. This program is a show put on by a troupe composed of actors who have a variety of psychiatric illness. The humorous and irreverent performances serve to address issues of stigma and discrimination and educate the public about mental illness and recovery. The Task Force has decided to offer the program to the local High School. It is hoped that this can be done in either the spring or fall of 2005.*

***Inclusion of people with disabilities in the theater:*** *Along with this program, the Task Force will be working with the Groton Theater group to include people with disabilities in their next presentation. The idea of an inclusive theatrical production received enthusiastic support from their program director, and members from the Task Force attended their next meeting on October 27, 2004. The group has been asked and agreed to conduct work shops in various areas of the theater for town residents with and without disabilities through the Parks and Recreation department. It is the goal of the committee to have those that attend the workshops participate in the next production of the theater group. The theater group is in total support of this project.*

***Student Mentoring Day:***

The second Disability Mentoring Day was held in the Town of Groton on October 27, 2004. Mentors and mentees participated in the experience. Satisfaction surveys were distributed at the end of the day, and there were twelve respondents.

### Satisfaction Survey Results

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Student Mentoring Day was well organized	12	4.17	.389	.112
I felt well prepared to participate	12	3.92	1.240	.358
I felt at ease with my mentor(s) or my students(s)	12	4.42	.669	.193
I would participate again at this event	12	4.58	.669	.193

The following questions were also asked on the survey, and a sampling of responses follows:

1. What did you learn from this experience?

- A lot of people need help
- Selecting the right student leads to better cooperation. If the student is interested in the destination, he/she will listen and be interested in what you are telling them
- Their jobs are pretty boring
- I learned that there are many branches of Recreation and nature
- Everything.... I never know there was so much to do in Park & Rec

2. What did you like best about the day?

- Taking the 3 students "behind the scenes" of our dept., which most kids think is "fun" and games.
- One-on-one relationship. Ability to talk to student without any interruptions
- I got to meet new people
- To drive golf cart, got to know about older people, and what they could do

- *telling people what to do*

3. *What did you like least?*

- *Not a lot of things to do (no actions)*
- *Sitting down at the computer*
- *Touring the Senior Center*
- *The computer stuff like the files of data*
- *Nothing, everything went well*

4. *Any other comments?*

- *Suggest: name tags 4 all-I kept forgetting the students' names.*
- *Perhaps permission slips could go out sooner. But overall, a great idea*
- *This is a good program that will hopefully keep growing*
- *Almost fell asleep*
- *It was really educating and I have fun. All will love to do this again*

***Production of an Inclusive Video:** The Video has been filmed by the Town over the course of the summer and fall of 2004. The video is about 11 minutes in length, and explains those inclusive services that are available in the Town. The video needs to be edited, and once completed will be available for showing. The video, which will also be produced with closed captioning, should be completed in February of 2005.*

*The committee has and is supporting meetings in the Town that address the spirit or progress of the grant, including Regional Forums on Community Inclusion.*

**New Haven:**

**As of September 30, 2003**

A one page insert was published in the New Haven Advocate and the New Haven Register on July 26, 2003 to celebrate the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This insert announced the selection of New Haven as a model community and highlighted initiatives under the grant, particularly the quarterly newsletter and National Disability Mentoring Day.

First issue of a quarterly newsletter was published and distributed: The newsletter was completed and distributed throughout the community including senior centers, students with disabilities, and public housing residents with disabilities, Independent Living Center mailing list, and others that had expressed an interest.

Disability Mentoring Day: Utilizing the national model and format, Disability Mentoring Day is set to have 14 mentees and 14 employers from around New Haven, four more than originally proposed. Task Force members felt that that the additional mentees could be accommodated without difficulty and within budget. Mentees were recruited from local high schools, community and state colleges. Employers serving as mentors were contacted in a variety of ways, primarily through contacts of Task Force members, staff, businesses the City works with regularly and colleagues. As a result of recruiting employers for this year quite a few employers have become interested in helping us plan for next year including the New Haven Savings Bank, United Illuminating, Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce and Yale New Haven Hospital. The plans for the day (October 15, 2003) are to hold a breakfast meeting at an accessible restaurant, and then provide transportation for both mentors and mentees to their respective work sites. At the end of the day the group will re-convene at the same location to debrief and receive certificates of completion and appreciation.

### **Activities as of December 31, 2003**

Disability Mentoring Day: was held successfully on October 15, 2003. Mentees included 8 High School students, 3 college students, and 2 job seekers with disabilities. Fourteen Mentoring sites were used with a wide range of opportunities, including a bank, a car

dealership, city departments, and a massage therapist's office. All mentees and mentors who participated in the event received awards for appreciation or participation, signed by Mayor John DeStefano. The Mayor also joined the participants and addressed the group for the afternoon closing reception. As well, Mr. McKnight, current chair of the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, was present and addressed the group during the afternoon reception.

The majority of Mentors and Mentees filled out evaluations; the summary can be found in Appendix M. Comments from Mentees included the following:

Mentee responses:

- I would like to do this job as a career.
- Thank you for taking the time to show people (me) the great opportunity to get a job. Keep up the great program.
- I think I would like auto repair.
- This guy is my mentor is Human Resources and I was expecting to get a mentor in Business/Marketing cuz that's my major & career goal. That mentor today was interesting.
- I would like this as a career.
- Watching the patient care was interesting. I would like medical rehab as a job.
- I did not realize how much work setting up a daycare was.
- I learned how to do different Art projects.

Comments from Mentors included:

- Would like to meet mentee ahead of time.
- It was a great success and hope it never dies?
- Please don't forget me for next year.
- Overall, everything was excellent and extremely fulfilling for both mentors and mentees.

The event was considered a success and will be repeated next year. Recruitment of Mentees will begin earlier to allow more time for matches and recruitment of appropriate Mentors.

Access monitoring: was completed on seven restaurants. Two restaurants had good accessibility and a third was acceptable with a great staff that was willing to make accommodations to the space. The restaurants will be sent the results of the survey along with the ADA Guide for Small Businesses, tax information and the Department of Labor pamphlet on hiring persons with disabilities. The three accessible restaurants will be written up in future newsletters. Monitoring will continue on twelve more restaurants from the list.

Planning continues for the next issue of the newsletter. Approximately 3500 copies are to be distributed through the Board of Education, Housing Authority, Center for Disabilities and alternate formats including KRIS Radio and Braille. Interfaith Cooperative Ministry is considering distribution of the newsletter through its ministers. The newsletter will also be available in electronic format for wider distribution.

#### **As of March 31, 2004**

The second edition of the quarterly disability resource newsletter is complete and has been distributed through a mailing list of people with disabilities and other interested parties in the New Haven community. The coordinators are exploring an electronic format for the newsletter in order to have it on the web.

Access monitoring has been completed for 7 restaurants that had been listed in restaurant guides as accessible. All of the restaurants received a copy of their written evaluations, as well as information on tax credits and a booklet entitled "Disability Etiquette." The restaurants that are not substantially accessible will not be highlighted in the newsletter until they make the needed changes.

Arts and cultural facilities in New Haven will be approached for the next round of evaluations. The Shubert Theater, Peabody Museum of Natural History, Connecticut Children's Museum, Neighborhood Music School, and Creative Arts Workshop have all

been approached about receiving accessibility evaluations. These evaluations will cost more than the ones conducted at restaurants due to the extensive nature of the location. Therefore, there will be fewer sites evaluated than originally specified in the grant for 2004. This was presented to the Task Force at the meeting on February 3, 2004, and the group agreed that this was an acceptable approach. The members were asked to let the Coordinator know if they had any other places of interest that they wished to have evaluated.

Plans are being made for Disability Mentoring Day in October of 2004. April will be the time to begin organizing, as it will be easier to approach employers and students in April than in early October, when school is just getting underway. The coordinator wants to involve employers more deeply this year and change the format of events in order to address employer feedback from 2003 and improve the program. The coordinator also wants to involve the Chamber of Commerce in 2004. Organizers have cataloged contacts and have begun drafting plans for event. The planning committee is being re-formed and it is expected that more businesses and worksites will be developed in addition to those who volunteered their time in 2003.

Regarding establishment of a non-profit corporation, the Coordinator had a second meeting with counsel and reviewed forms that need to be completed for formation of the non-profit. Part of the grant funds have been allocated to costs associated with starting a non-profit 501c (3) organization. The non-profit will be able to apply for grant monies only awarded to non-profits. Once the model communities' grant is over, funds can be sought to continue the newsletter as well as Disability Mentoring Day. Michelle Duprey, project coordinator, has met with an attorney and now has the forms for completing the state tax ID and the federal ID number. The next step will be to look for board members. At the Task Force meeting on February 3, 2004 Marc Gallucci, Task Force member, inquired about whether a mission statement has been developed. He offered to contact a non-profit that he knows of in Chicago that has a broad mission statement. Ron Manning, Task Force member, asked if the board would be separate and distinct from the City. Michelle said that someone from the Department of Services for Persons with

Disabilities would probably be on the Board, but it would not be part of the City government structure.

The model community project in New Haven is being coordinated through the Office of Persons with Disabilities. The Coordinators noted that they are finding in-kind matching in staff time dedicated to this grant far exceeds what was anticipated in their budget proposal.

**As of June 30, 2004**

A second issue of the “Real Choices in New Haven” newsletter was distributed in May 2004. The issue contains articles on a program called Community Cousins, a volunteer program organized by members of the Center for Disability Rights. Its aim is to provide friendship and support to people with disabilities who have recently left nursing homes in order to live in their communities. Other articles included a piece on Person-First language, a description of upcoming Disability Mentoring Day, and accessibility evaluations of two New Haven restaurants. The Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities received many positive comments after the publication of the newsletter, as well as several requests for more copies from community organizations.

Work has begun on the next issue and the intent is to have it out at the end of July 2004. (See Appendix M for a copy of the newsletter.) It is also available on the A. J. Pappanikou Center for Developmental Disabilities website:

<http://www.uconnucedd.org/Projects/RCSC/default.htm> under “products.”

Applications for Disability Mentoring Day 2004 were mailed out at the end of April, and to date 14 young people with disabilities have submitted applications. The grant coordinators will begin working with employers in August to match them with mentees and organize the event with the facility. The event is scheduled nationally for October 20, 2004. Unlike the previous year, when all events took place on the day itself, this year an evening event is planned on the day before the actual mentoring is to take place; this will

give the young adult the opportunity to meet their mentor the evening before in order for both to get to know each other better.

Several larger public cultural sites have been assessed for accessibility and reports have been received for inclusion in the next issue of the newsletter. Assessments completed include the Peabody Museum, Shubert Theater, Connecticut Children's Museum and the Neighborhood Music School. Six restaurants were also contacted for potential assessments and three have agreed to be assessed before the end of this grant year, i.e. by October 2004.

Regarding the establishment of a non-profit corporation: incorporation and tax forms are in the process of being completed by a law student intern hired to help on this project. Submission of all documentation should be completed by September 1, 2004.

#### **Activities as of September 30, 2004**

The third issue of the "Real Choices in New Haven" newsletter was printed and distributed in July 2004. Articles included: "How Will the Future See the Americans with Disabilities Act?" by attorney Melissa Marshall - the second part of a series on "Correct Terminology: Person-First Language"; an overview of a recent "Law Enacted Protects Persons with Disabilities Under Existing Connecticut Hate Crime Laws"; and an accessibility evaluation of The Connecticut Children's Museum of New Haven.

The fourth issue of the "Real Choices in New Haven" newsletter went to print the last week of September. Many positive comments were received following the publication of the third issue of the newsletter and several requests were received for more copies from community organizations. For example, the office was contacted by a staff person from the Community Mental Health Center who thought the newsletter was excellent and wanted to sign up for it. Members of the New Haven Task Force contribute significantly to the idea development for the newsletter. At the August 2004 meeting, Toni Page, Student Disability Services Coordinator at Gateway Community College, suggested an

article on voting and how to register to vote. Judy Puglisi, Transition Specialist at Wilbur Cross High School, said that the articles on person-first terminology on persons with disabilities and other articles are now being used in the school as part of a discussion group. A Task Force member representing Infoline said that she would be interested in writing an article on 211 Infoline.

This quarter six (6) more restaurants had accessibility surveys completed by the access monitor from the ADA Coalition

Twelve young people with disabilities have been accepted for this year's Disability Mentoring Day. The event will include a reception on October 19, 2004 for mentees, their parents and mentors. Disability Mentoring Day on October 20th will thus be a full day experience for the mentees with their mentors. The process is underway to secure mentors for each of the mentees.

Regarding establishment of a non-profit corporation, a student intern who is a law student at Quinnipiac University has been brought on board to pursue this goal. She has been working with an attorney from Corporation Counsel on this project for the Department, focusing her efforts on filing the necessary paperwork to establish the non-profit. A name for the organization was discussed, and it was decided that it would be called "Disability Alliance of New Haven." The purpose of the organization would be to promote community integration for person with disabilities. As a 501 (C), it would be able to apply for many grant dollars in order to continue the efforts of the Real Choice Grant. At the August 2004 Task Force meeting, there was a question as to how long it would take to incorporate. Michelle Duprey explained that first the organization must be incorporated in the State of Connecticut, then IRS approval would be sought. She thought the IRS process may be expedited as the Corporation Counsel attorney would be attaching cases to the request which were very similar to the function of this non profit.

**Activities as of December 31, 2004**

*A new edition of the quarterly newsletter, entitled “Real Choices in New Haven,” was distributed in October 2004. It contained articles on: accessible voting; an invitation to attend the ARTspace celebration and ribbon cutting for an art gallery that has been made into a “barrier-free environment for all”; the third in a series of articles on person-first language; information about an undergraduate star-gazing club that uses a wheelchair accessible observatory; and information about two federal programs that offer discounts for low-income telephone users.*

*Disability Mentoring Day was held on October 20, 2004. Twelve young people with a range of disabilities participated. The event, which received coverage by a local news station, included a reception on October 19th for the mentees, their parents and the mentors. Mayor Di Stefano of New Haven spoke, and the coordinator of the youth mentoring program from the Fairfield County Independent Living Center was the keynote. Evaluations for the event were excellent. It was suggested that it might be more helpful for the mentors to meet with the mentees a week ahead of time to obtain more information about the mentees to help plan the day's events. All of the mentees enjoyed the experience, and one of them may become an intern at Corporation Counsel for the City of New Haven.*

*The Task Force continues to meet on a quarterly basis. The meeting this quarter was held on October 26, 2004.*

*Regarding incorporation: tax forms were completed by the law student intern hired to help on this project. The preliminary documentation has been completed and is awaiting a check from the City for the filing fees.*

### **Project Evaluation and Coordination of Activities**

#### **Quarterly Meeting of Coordinators**

In order to promote collaboration and sharing of ideas among the model communities, a quarterly meeting format has been established for the Task Force Coordinators from each community.

The first of a series of quarterly meetings with model community coordinators was held on September 22, 2003 to allow sharing of ideas and information. Susan Zimmerman, Chris Gaynor and Barbara Parks Wolf from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management and member of the Real Choice Steering Committee met with the following project coordinators from the model communities: Michelle Duprey and Paula Turner from the City of New Haven, Karen Roseman from the City of Bridgeport and Mary Hannigan from the Town of Groton. Each project coordinator presented their model community grant and talked about the process of developing their grant and objectives. There was discussion around meaningful involvement for persons with disabilities and planning and implementation activities. Quarterly evaluation forms were distributed and explained. These had been developed by the Model Communities Workgroup as a means of monitoring progress on grant goals (see format in Appendix G).

The second meeting of model community coordinators was held on January 8, 2004. In addition to the grant coordinators, the meeting was also attended by Jerry Domanico, Associate Director for Administration at the UCE in order to address any questions or concerns regarding budgetary issues. Points covered included:

- Carry-over of monies from one grant year to the next
- Budget amendments
- Terms of the grant award

The meeting was also attended by Dr. Rick Fortinsky, Evaluator for the Real Choice grant project. He discussed the model he would be using to evaluate systems change in the three model communities. The process is two-step beginning with three questions to be answered by the coordinator for each community:

1. Where would you like your community to be at the end of the project (fall of 2005) in terms of including persons with disabilities and their families in the life of your community?

2. What are the ways you will know if you achieve these outcomes; how much improvement in the fall of 2005 compared to when you first applied for the Model Community grant?
3. How are you measuring these outcomes and what are feasible, reliable sources of data available to measure these outcomes?

The second step was to develop a discussion guide from the answers to these questions for the Task Force in the model community and conduct focus group discussions.

The following questions were sent by Dr. Fortinsky to the three coordinators on January 21, 2004

1. Where would you like your community to be at the end of this project (fall of 2005) in terms of including persons with disabilities and their families in the life of your community? Concrete, measurable outcomes are desired in response to this question.
2. What are the ways you would know if you achieve these outcomes; how much improvement in the fall of 2005 compared to when you first received Real Choice support (July 2003)?
3. How could we find or collect the necessary information to be able to determine if your answers to question #2 actually happen?

Responses were received by the beginning of March, 2004.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Gabriela Freyre-Calish, also from the UCEDD, who would be conducting the focus groups with Task Force members. The method used is a focused conversation format. This method structures interpersonal communication in a natural, productive way. It is “natural” because it follows the path our mind often takes when it acknowledges and responds to stimuli. It is “productive” because it helps to build group consensus, which can lead to decision and action. It consists of a sequence of questions directed at four ‘levels of consciousness’. This flow enables participants to

thoughtfully look at an event, topic or issue, mull it over, decide their responses to it and consider courses of action in relationship to it. At a subsequent meeting on March 18, 2004, attended by project director Dr. Mary Beth Bruder, Dr. Rick Fortinsky, Christine Gaynor and Gabriela Freyre-Calish, a protocol for the focus groups was established, including the questions to be addressed. The protocol is as follows:

Rational Objective: To identify desired outcomes in their community for people with disabilities, as a result of the Real Choice grant and as perceived by Task Force members.

Experiential Objective: To enable participants to feel recognized for their roles and consulted on their views on outcomes on community inclusion.

Focus Question: How will you know that things have changed in your community for people with disabilities as a result of the Real Choice grant?

(See Appendix T for the focus group invitation and protocol.)

Three focus groups were conducted: Groton on April 1, New Haven on April 7 and Bridgeport on April 14, 2004. All Task Force members except for the coordinators in the three model communities were invited to attend. Focus groups were two hours long. After introductions, focus group participants were divided into groups of 4 and were asked to draw a picture together. They all received the following instructions: “You have been asked by a major advertising firm to develop a marketing campaign demonstrating how things changed in your community for persons with disabilities as a result of the Real Choice grant. Your first task is to develop a magazine ad featuring an 8 x 12 glossy photo showing what happens as a result of the highest quality community inclusion. Think about the components of such a picture.”

Once the pictures were completed, participants discussed the pictures by answering a series of questions (See Appendix T for a copy of the pictures, debriefing notes and protocol.) Once they had visualized changes, participants were asked to brainstorm and generate ideas answering the following question: “How will you know that things have changed in your community for people with disabilities as a result of the Real Choice grant?” Participants came up with a series of ideas that were then organized into clusters of themes that were related. For last part of this exercise, participants were asked to come up with a title for each cluster. To assist participants with this, they were given the following prompts: “What are the ideas in these clusters saying? What is the common

theme that links these ideas together? What are these ideas saying in response to the focus question?" (See Appendix T for the ideas and titles of the clusters.) The titles of these clusters are considered the answer to the focus question. Participants in all three focus groups were very satisfied with the process and outcome of the focus groups. (See Appendix T for the consumer satisfaction results for all three groups.)

On April 29, Mary Beth Bruder, Rick Fortinsky, Christine Gaynor and Gabriela Freyre-Calish met to review the data collected, identify common themes across the three sites, individualize themes for each site, and operationalize them (what does it mean and how do we measure them?). A common theme across the three model communities was awareness and attitudes. It was decided that a fourth focus group would be conducted to clarify and expand on the previous data collected aiming at defining awareness and attitudes. All members including coordinators were invited to this focus group. The focus group was conducted on June 10, 2004 in New Haven. The following is a list of the questions asked and the responses in brief from participants:

**What do you mean by awareness?**

**If people are "aware" how will you know it?**

**"Aware" of what?**

- Awareness of people with disabilities as a part of the whole population
- Acknowledge everyone
- Accept
- Include everybody
- Access: attitudinal and physical
- Natural event to plan for and include people with disabilities

**How will you measure it?**

**What questions need to be asked?**

- Do you see people with disabilities in the community participating in different events?

**What do you mean by attitudes?**

**Identify----Name**

**What attitudes?**

**Towards what? General community or among people with disabilities?**

- Acceptance

- See person with disabilities as a person (will not avoid looking or talking to him/her)
- Low expectations for people with disabilities (improve/change)
- Understanding/feeling that the difference is really not a difference
- Acceptance of individuals for who they are
- Patience
- Common courtesy (Please and thank you)

**How will you measure it?**

**What questions need to be asked?**

- Survey of people with disabilities (e.g. survey done in New Haven)
- Has your life improved since the ADA?
- What are the biggest barriers?
- Attitudes
- Transportation
- Low expectations---no discrimination

**How will you know that things have changed for people with disabilities as a result of the Real Choice System Project?**

**Employment:**

- Less unemployment for people with disabilities
- Better understanding/less fear of “reasonable accommodations”
- Better understanding/less fear of disabilities in general (Are they going to fit in with the rest of the employees? How will they get out in a fire? Liability?)
- Better understanding that their cost will not necessary go up

**Transportation:**

- To be fully funded by state
- All equipment to be wheelchair accessible
- Cleaning of bus stops (winter time)
- Available in every town/city (without being a special service)
- Better coordination of services (natural way to operate)

**Education:**

- Attitude needs to be “It can be done”
- Ability to individualize to meet the child’s needs and teacher supports
- Look at it as an ‘investment’
- Staff needs to be up to date with research based practices for ALL children “Life long learners.”

Grant staff is in the process of identifying and selecting a valid survey instrument that will measure attitudes towards people with disabilities by residents of the three model communities and three other similar communities in Connecticut. Resulting data will be compared to assess any significant difference that might be attributed to the activities of the grants.

**Activity 7.6 Collaborate with Connect to Work and Nursing Facility Transition staff to ensure coordination of resource utilization across the projects and avoid duplication of efforts.**

A regular meeting schedule has been established between the Coordinators of the Systems Change grants in Connecticut, and meetings were held in November 2002 and December 2002 with Dawn Lambert of the Nursing Facility Transition grant and Amy Porter from the Connect to Work project. At the November meeting a decision was made to get together a broader group of stakeholders, including people working on similar grants, to contribute to the development of joint strategies in order to prevent overlap of efforts. This gathering took place on December 13, 2002. It was attended primarily by consumers and state agency representatives and became an information sharing and brainstorming session regarding the concept of community inclusion.

In January, 2003 the Chair of the Interagency Developmental Disabilities Workgroup (IDDW), Diana LaRocco of the Connecticut Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) joined the grant coordination effort. She continued to meet with the other project coordinators until June, whereupon she left her position with DMR due to budget cuts by the State of Connecticut.

Several meetings were held in June and July of 2003 by Christine Gaynor, grant coordinator, with Peter Baird and Amy Porter of the Medicaid Infrastructure Connect to Work project to discuss other Real Choice opportunities for collaboration. In particular, discussion centered on collaboration on a Connecticut submission of a proposal for the C-

PASS grant opportunity. This grant was jointly written by the aforementioned and members of the Workforce Development workgroup of the Real Choice grant, and submitted to CMS on July 29, 2003.

Regular meetings of the CMS grant coordinators have continued. Beth McArthur from the Department of Mental Retardation has joined the group, representing two grants received by DMR from CMS in October 2003. Discussions center on ensuring smooth integration of grant activities between grants. For example, the coordinator of the Nursing Facility Transition grant is attending Task Force meetings of the Model Communities in order to describe NFTG activities in those communities and help identify individuals who want to move out of Nursing Facilities in those towns. Most recently, Paul Ford from the NFTG gave a presentation at the New Haven Task Force meeting on May 10, 2004.

Joyce Armstrong and Patti Clay from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services were also invited to present information on the Community Bridging/Resource Coordinators Youth Pilot grant to the Task Forces. In this project, a BRS Transition Coordinator will act as a bridge for young adults 16 – 25 between school and the world of work and adult services. They also presented on the Benefits Information Networks: a project that involves getting service agency representatives in a town together to talk about resources available in that area.

Collaboration has extended to participation in the planning of a statewide gathering of individuals with disabilities around issues of community isolation, entitled “Interburst 2003” (see below). The grant collaborative also prepared and delivered a joint presentation to the Long Term Care committee of the Connecticut legislature for September 21, 2004. This presentation was also given as a workshop at the annual Connecticut Community Caregivers Association (CCPA) on September 29, 2004. Both presentations focused on demonstrating how the Systems Change grants are supporting movement from less to greater independence for people with disabilities through their

activities, from assisting people in moving out of nursing facilities or other more restrictive environments to promoting employment and building community capacity.

The Systems Change Project Directors worked with the Connecticut chapter of the NASW in planning their fall conference for October 2004. With our guidance the conference, entitled “Current Trends in Aging and Disability Issues, has two tracks: one on issues of aging, the other covering a wide range of topics on disability and inclusion. Presenters include people with disabilities who are either project staff on the Systems Change grants, or serve on their Steering Committees. Presentations will include topics such as:

- Social Role Valorization
- The Role of the Community in the Transition Process: Combating Isolation
- From Dependence to Independence
- Waivers and Self-Directing

-

[Activity 7.9 Provide targeted training to disseminate information and resources to community leaders and other community members.](#)

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[See description of Regional Forums on Community Inclusion under Activity 6.5.](#)

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### **Objective 8: Disseminate information and resources for project replication**

**8.1 Plan and coordinate statewide conference to promote awareness of the project and share findings**

September 16, 2005 has been selected as the date for a day-long statewide conference on community inclusion, and a location reserved.

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#### **Other activities:**

##### **Interrobust**

On October 28 and 29, 2003 a select group of forty individuals assembled at the Nathan Hale Inn on the campus of the University of Connecticut in Storrs. The group was assembled to explore and discuss issues related to feelings of isolation many people with

disabilities and their families experience. The forty included people with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, communication disabilities, intellectual disabilities, family members, advocates, and human service workers. Many of the individuals with disabilities had a long history of living in the community, while four participants were recently assisted in moving out of nursing homes under the Nursing Facilities Transition Grant. Several others were members of Community Task Forces in the three towns participating in the Real Choice Grant “Model Communities” initiative. Individuals from the State Department of Social Services and its Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Mental Retardation, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the Council on Developmental Disabilities were also present.

In addition to anecdotal stories reported by individuals currently living in the community, the committee that planned “Interroburst” was motivated by a nationwide survey conducted in 2000 by the Harris organization. The Harris survey found that “one of the most serious consequences of having a disability is that it tends to increase social isolation and reduce community participation”. The “Interroburst” event was designed to first identify the elements of “community integration” (i.e., define the term), and then list the barriers that stand in the way of true integration, and lead in fact to isolation. Finally, the group discussed strategies that can be used by participating individuals to reduce isolation and enhance community integration, as well as action steps that can be taken by communities, agencies, and organizations.

“Interroburst 2003” was sponsored by the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities and implemented by a planning committee that included representatives of the State’s Systems Change grantees including the Real Choice Grant, the Nursing Facilities Transition Grant and the Connect to Work Grant, the Department of Social Services/Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, The Arc of Connecticut, the Council on Developmental Disabilities, the State Independent Living Council, Communitas, the Bridgeport Office on Disability Services, and the Department of Mental Retardation. The State Independent Living Council and the Connect to Work Grant provided funding to help support the event.

Meetings of the Interburst coordinating committee continue to be held regularly. The main focus has been the planning of a follow-up event to the October 2003 meeting, the editing of a video taped during the 2-day event, and next-steps discussion. Regarding the video, the original 3 ½ hours of interviews with participants have been reduced to 16 minutes, and the video is now being reviewed with the intent of developing a study/discussion guide. The video could then be used to stimulate discussion around the topic of community integration. The primary questions to be addressed are:

1. What does “Community Integration” mean to you?
2. What are the barriers unique to disability that stand in the way of true integration?
3. What are some strategies, both on a community and personal level that can be developed to address the barriers that lead to isolation for people with disabilities?

A follow-up meeting was held on May 7<sup>th</sup>. The original participants, who included community members from the three Real Choice model communities, were asked to invite additional community members who are either consumers or community leaders. Eighteen of the original attendees and thirteen newcomers participated. The focus of this meeting was to begin developing community action plans, possibly using an assets-based model. The video of the original October 2003 event was shown and sparked an animated discussion led by George Ducharme from Manchester Community College. After lunch, there was a presentation by Greg Ryan from the Connecticut Assets Network, Inc. Greg uses “Asset Based Community Development” developed by John McKnight to “promote healthy neighborhoods, schools and communities”. Greg’s presentation included an introduction to a “Discovery Kit for Building Community” which utilizes a Discovery of Gifts exercise to identify an individual’s gifts that they can share with other members of their community. This exercise was used in smaller break-out groups to facilitate discussion.

The evaluations of the event were quite positive, encouraging us to continue the work in addressing issues of community integration, exclusion, and isolation. A total of 22 evaluations were turned in:

Excellent - 9

Very Good - 8

Good - 4

Fair - 1

Poor - 0

### **Technical Assistance**

Regular monthly conference calls are held with Jay Klein from ILRU (Independent Living Research Utilization). Mr. Klein is part of the grant with CMS for the Community Living Exchange Collaborative meant to provide technical assistance to other System Change grantees in the states. He has forwarded materials on model community projects from other states for us to review, as well as regularly providing information on nation-wide activities. At the Assessment Workgroup meeting of December 13, 2002 Jay Klein assisted in a conference call with Celia Feinstein from Temple University. Ms. Feinstein provided technical assistance via telephone with the development of the questionnaire, and contracted for ten (10) hours of assistance on this project through the ILRU.

Two conference calls with Jay Klein in April and May of 2003 were held in order to participate in the planning of a meeting of Real Choice grantees working on the development of Model Communities. The meeting was planned for July 2003 and was held in Denver, Colorado. States besides Connecticut that attended were Texas, New Hampshire, Colorado, Florida, Idaho and Utah. Participants for this discussion were asked to share their unique approaches, struggles, successes, and emerging questions as their initiatives begin to focus on creating inclusive "Model Communities." The meeting was also attended by Steve Lutsky from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, and moderated by both Jay Klein and David Hasbury. Three individuals attended from the Connecticut Real Choice grant: Christine Gaynor, project coordinator, Susan Zimmerman, model communities' facilitator, and Stan Kosloski, Steering Committee consumer member. All participated in giving an overview of CT activities and in discussions of Community Mapping, project evaluation, participatory action research,

and barriers experienced by other states. A record of the proceedings may be obtained by contacting Jay Klein at the ILRU: Jay.Klein@unh.edu .

A follow-up pre-conference meeting was planned for the Annual CMS conference in Baltimore in March 2004. This was a day-long meeting attended by thirteen states either implementing model community projects of some kind, or interested in doing so. The meeting was facilitated by David Hasbury and Jay Klein. A record of this meeting is forthcoming from the facilitators. In addition to the grant facilitator, Christine Gaynor, consumers Stan Kosloski and Jessica Dybdahl from the Connecticut Real Choice steering committee also attended the pre-conference meeting and the CMS conference.

### **Inter-agency Developmental Disabilities Workgroup**

Following a comprehensive report and recommendations from the Advisory Commission on Services and Supports for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Who Do Not Have Mental Retardation, the Inter-agency Developmental Disabilities Workgroup (IDDW) was formed. This group is composed of representatives a wide variety of Connecticut State Agencies, including Education, Public Health, Department of Mental Retardation, Department of Children and Families, Department of Mental Health, and others. One of the recommendations of the Commission's report was the development of a model community to serve the population of persons with Developmental Disabilities who do not have Mental Retardation. It was agreed that representatives from the Real Choice grant would attend the IDDW meetings.

Christine Gaynor and Molly Cole attended the IDDW meeting on December 12, 2002; Christine Gaynor also attended meetings on January 14, 2003 and March 12, 2003 (see Appendix O for minutes and membership roster). The decision was made by the group not to create a fourth model community, but rather for the membership of the IDDW to add technical assistance and support to the three Real Choice model communities, with special focus on persons with Developmental Disabilities who do not have Mental Retardation who live in the selected communities. The topic of training has been discussed at several of the meetings, as that is one of the most defined areas where collaboration between the two projects will be feasible.

Four meetings were held: December 16, 2002, January 14, March 12, and May 2, 2003. (See minutes of these meetings in Appendix O). During the May 2 meeting, the Real Choice grant coordinator reported out on the current status of the Model Communities, the statewide Community Inclusion Assessment, and the Workforce Development Workgroup. Because of the recent budget crisis in the State of Connecticut there has been significant turnover in agency staff. Diana LaRocco, who was spearheading the IDDW, has left her position with the Department of Mental Retardation. A new chair has not yet been appointed; therefore meetings have been suspended until further notice

**Staff Meetings:**

Regular monthly staff meetings are held to ensure coordination of grant activities and provide guidance and oversight to project staff.