



Published by the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services  
 Governor M. Jodi Rell / Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara / Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree

## Governor Rell Celebrates Legislation Changing Name of DMR to Department of Developmental Services

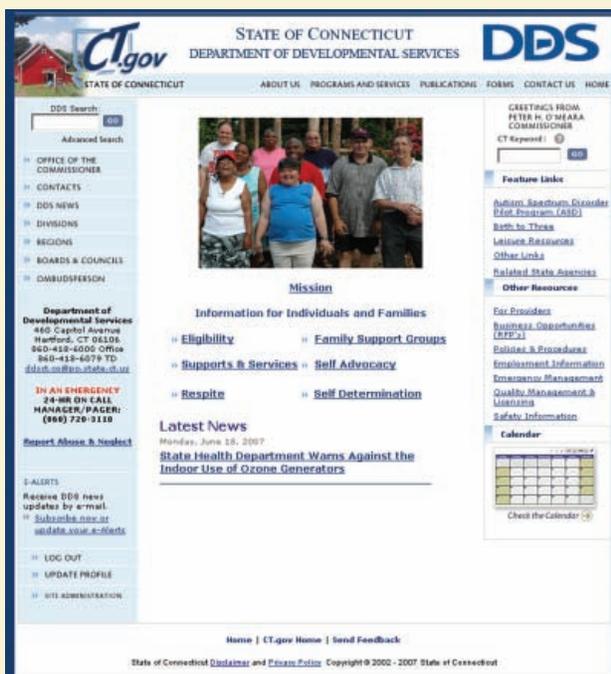
During a ceremonial bill signing in August, Governor M. Jodi Rell celebrated the department's new name with Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara, families, consumers and advocates.

"Changing the name of the Department of Mental Retardation is a step that the agency, consumers, families and private providers have been urging Connecticut to take for some time now," Governor Rell said. "Our language changes and evolves, and as it does we recognize that some words or phrases, never meant to be anything other than helpful or descriptive, have come to be perceived another way. 'Mental retardation' is one such phrase. As Commissioner O'Meara has said, an agency must begin by making sure its consumers feel respected – and that begins with the name of the agency."

*continued on page 2*



(left to right) Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara, Thomas McCann, Advocate, Governor M. Jodi Rell, Carol Grabbe, Advocate and State Representative Anne Ruwet



## Welcome to Our New Website

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) recently unveiled its new website. After a year-long process of development, the new website provides a more organized process for finding information about the department.

Developed and maintained by the DDS Office of Communications and Division of Information Technology, the website is part of a statewide portal software program managed by the Department of Information Technology (DOIT).

Please visit us at: [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) to tour our new site.



# Department of Developmental Services

Central Office  
460 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106 (860) 418-6000



**Joan C. Barnish, Director of Communications**  
(860) 418-6044  
joan.barnish@po.state.ct.us

**Lori A. Conchado, Administrative Assistant**  
(860) 418-6042  
lori.conchado@po.state.ct.us

*Governor Rell Celebrated Legislation Changing Name of DMR to Department of Developmental Services* ..... 1  
*Welcome to Our New Website* ..... 1  
*Name Change, continued* ..... 2  
*A Message from Commissioner O'Meara* ..... 3  
*Commissioner O'Meara Sworn in for Fourth Term*..... 3  
*West Region Update* ..... 4  
*South Region Update* ..... 5  
*North Region Update* ..... 6  
*DDS Educational Unit Goes High Tech* ..... 7  
*DDS Division of Autism* ..... 8  
*What is Autism* ..... 9

*What are Some Common Signs of Autism* .... 9  
*DDS Works to Streamline Waiver Process* .... 10  
*Regional Advisory and Planning Councils*... 10  
*Council on Mental Retardation Update*..... 11  
*New Family Support Services Offered by DDS* ..... 11  
*Independent Ombudsperson for Developmental Services* ..... 12  
*Camp Harkness* ..... 13  
*Autism, continued* ..... 13  
*Special Olympics* ..... 14  
*Best Buddies* ..... 15  
*Commissioner, continued* ..... 15  
*DDS Nurse of the Year* ..... 16

### North Region

155 Founders Plaza  
255 Pitkin Street  
East Hartford, CT 06108-3223  
(860) 263-2500

### South Region

104 South Turnpike Road  
Wallingford, CT 06490  
(203) 294-5121

### West Region

250 Freight Street  
Waterbury, CT 06702  
(203) 805-7400

### Southbury Training School

P.O. Box 872  
Southbury, CT 06488  
(203) 586-2000

## DDS Bill Signing

*continued from page 1*

The change follows the passage last year of a bill calling for the department to study the idea and recommend a new name. The name, Department of Developmental Services, was selected to reflect the agency's mission – including the planned expansion of an ongoing pilot program to serve individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders – without suggesting its mission was changing or the services it provided would be altered.

Governor Rell congratulated the self-advocate groups such as People First of Connecticut, who have been calling for the name change since 1990.

"I hope that this change will set a model for our state – that it will remind us of the importance of language and the importance of the way we treat the people we serve," the Governor said. "That's a message for both state government and all the people of our state. Even more importantly, I hope this change will provide you, your families and your loved ones an additional measure of dignity and respect. It is exactly what you deserve, and it is our intention to make sure you never receive anything less."

## A Message From Commissioner O'Meara

This has been an important year for our agency. First and foremost, we changed our name to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This was a collaborative effort with consumers, families, advocates, private providers and staff. The Name Change Bill was unanimously passed by the General Assembly and Governor M. Jodi Rell signed it into law. I feel our new name goes to the heart of our mission, to serve individuals with the respect and dignity they deserve. In addition, this change will more accurately reflect the population receiving services and support from the department, including some individuals with autism and children in Birth to Three.

During this year, the State Legislature officially established a Division of Autism and the Autism Pilot Program began its second year providing services to over 25 adults. Once again, our very successful Birth to Three program has served a record number of children and infants. We provided services to 8,500 eligible children and their families over the past year. Birth to Three helps strengthen Connecticut's families so they can meet the developmental and health-related needs of their infants and toddlers.

I want to thank those families who advocated to adequately fund our High School Graduate programs. Your voices were heard and I am pleased to say that our 2007 graduates are thriving in their new programs.

DDS has unveiled a new website that will better serve our families and consumers. In addition, we have embarked on a new e-Learning training initiative that will enable DDS employees and provider staff to be consistently trained using the same curriculum. DDS is one of only a few state agencies in the country that will combine e-Learning technology with classroom training.

Finally, I want to thank our staff and private provider partners, as well as the other state agencies that we work with throughout the year. The services we offer are a shared endeavor and we appreciate all those who contribute to making better lives for the people we support and their families.

## Commissioner O'Meara Sworn in for Fourth Term



*(left to right) Mrs. Susan O'Meara, Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara and Governor M. Jodi Rell*

Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara was reappointed by Governor M. Jodi Rell and unanimously approved by the Connecticut State Legislature's Executive Nominations Committee and the State House of Representatives.

Commissioner O'Meara, who was sworn in for this fourth term on March 27, 2007, took the Oath of Office before his wife, Susan O'Meara, family and the DDS Executive Management Team.

"It is a great honor to be sworn in by Governor Rell to serve as Commissioner of the department," said Commissioner O'Meara. "I am privileged to have the opportunity to continue working with the entire DDS community of consumers, families, staff and providers." *continued on page 15*

# West Region Update

## Individual & Family Forums

### “Preparing for Employment & Portability”

Date: October 24, 2007  
Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
Location: 25 Creamery Road,  
Cheshire, CT

Date: October 29, 2007  
Time: 3:00-5:00 p.m.  
Location: Training Room  
300 Armory Road,  
Stratford. CT

### “Self Advocacy: Speaking Up and Speaking Out”

Date: November 1, 2007  
Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
Location: 195 Alvord Park Road,  
Torrington, CT

Date: November 5, 2007  
Time: 3:00-5:00 p.m.  
Location: 400 Main Street  
Danbury, CT

To register for the above forums or to receive information on the future family training on Community Training Centers (CTH), which will be held in October in the Greater Bridgeport area, please contact Joan Fortin, Administrative Assistant: joan.fortin@po.state.ct.us or 203-805-7420.

## Successful Eighth Season of Gate House Concerts

At the close of summer 2007, the Gate House Café concert series completed its eighth season of providing musical entertainment to an integrated audience. With a yearly schedule of eight concerts on Tuesday evenings during the summer months, the concerts regularly attract more than 250 visitors for each event. Free of charge, individuals from the Southbury Training School joined their neighbors from the greater Southbury area to enjoy an evening of music. The Gate House Café remained open to serve a quick and delicious dinner for attendees. It is clearly a fun way to enjoy an evening and meet others within the community. To be placed on the mailing list for next year's schedule, call 203-586-2144.

## Self Advocate Coordinators

The West Region is pleased to welcome two new Self Advocate Coordinators - Ivan Villa and Dawn Veretto. They will join Jossie Torres who is a Self Advocate Coordinator in the Private Division. Ivan will be a member of the Individual and Family Support Division and will have a statewide focus of being a liaison to parent groups. Ivan will be working out of our Cheshire Office and can be contacted at 203-806-8736. Dawn will be joining the Public Division and will have a statewide focus on Healthy Living Issues. Dawn will be working out of our Torrington Office and can be reached at 860-496-3067.

The Self Advocate Coordinators assist consumers in learning more about self advocacy, how to speak up for themselves and how to have greater control of their lives. Individuals and their family members are encouraged to contact the Self Advocate Coordinators to learn more about how to get involved in self advocacy groups and other DDS self advocacy leadership activities.

We are pleased to have Jossie, Ivan and Dawn advocating and representing our West Region consumers.

## A Message from the Regional Director

The South Region continues to support individuals and families across New Haven, Middlesex and New London counties through our network of Department of Developmental Services (DDS) programs and private provider agencies. Over the past year, we have planned and developed services for many children and adults through the department's waiting list initiative, voluntary services program, high school graduate funding, and other available resources and programs. During FY07, the region enrolled 120 new individuals in the DDS Home & Community-Based Services Waivers bringing federal revenue back to Connecticut, which in turn helps gain more resources for others in need. Despite these efforts, many individuals experience waiting time for residential services or day programs, and for this reason we are taking steps to enhance our services to those living at home. The region operates three respite centers in Hamden, Meriden and Waterford every weekend, and for eight continuous summer weeks, serving over 350 families annually. Plans are underway to open two additional respite centers, one in East Haven and one in Norwich, in the next two years. We have increased our number of transition coordinators available to assist upcoming high school graduates in planning their transition from school to employment to three full-time staff (all certified state school teachers). We have added a new Family Support program that is detailed further in this edition of *Direct To Families*, increased case management ranks by four during FY07, and will be adding more case managers this year as a result of legislative appropriations.

## Quality Council

The South Region continues to seek consumers, parents, guardians, family members, representatives of provider agencies, or interested citizens to serve on the *Quality Council*. Formed last year, this small but enthusiastic group fills an important role in assisting the region to review the quality of services provided by DDS and our many partner agencies. The Quality Council helps to ensure that important information is available to consumers and families who are making choices about service providers. To find out more about the Quality Council and/or attend a meeting, please contact Jadwiga Gocłowski at: [jadwiga.gocłowski@po.state.ct.us](mailto:jadwiga.gocłowski@po.state.ct.us) or call 203-294-5048.

## Human Rights Committee

Each region in DDS has a *Human Rights Committee* whose job is to review program plans for individuals supported by DDS that restrict personal freedoms or abridge individual rights and to respond to complaints or concerns brought to the committee's attention. The committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Regional Director and makes recommendations to the director regarding the programs and issues it reviews. Made up of at least five people appointed by the Regional Director, the Human Rights Committee includes parents, professionals and consumers, and meets monthly. The South Region of DDS is seeking interested persons to be appointed to serve on the Human Rights Committee. Anyone who has an interest is invited to contact the DDS staff liaison at 203-294-5077 or Joann Bilotta at: [Joann.Bilotta@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Joann.Bilotta@po.state.ct.us) for more information. No experience or training is necessary, just a keen interest in the rights and well-being of the people we support and a willingness to volunteer your time to this important cause.

# North Region Update

## DDS North Region Fall Family Forums

The DDS North Region plans to schedule five separate Family Forums this fall. The Regional Planning & Advisory Council will be sponsoring three of these Family Forums on the evenings of October 18, October 25 and November 1, 2007. In addition, the North Region will sponsor two more Family Forums scheduled during the daytime. Please reserve the following dates:

- October 18, 2007  
(Thursday) Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.,  
Location: Cheney Hall, Manchester, CT.  
This evening will be targeted to those families whose children are between the ages of 14-21. It will be presented by Executive Management Team staff and Transitional Coordinators. The focus will be clarification of what the role of DDS is as it relates to services and supports that the department may provide while children are in school and after graduation.
- October 25, 2007  
(Thursday) Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.  
Location: Newington High School, Willard Ave., Newington, CT.  
*The evenings schedule is the same as above*
- November 1, 2007  
(Thursday) Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.  
Location: East Hartford Community Cultural Center, 50 Chapman Place, East Hartford, CT (Auditorium)  
A presentation by the Honorable Brian T. Griffin, Windsor Probate Court, will include a discussion on various types of guardianship, roles and responsibilities of a guardian as well as the role of Probate Courts. There will be an opportunity for questions and answers following the presentation.

The North Region Executive Management Team will sponsor two additional Family Forums that will focus on regional updates.

- October 24, 2007  
(Wednesday) Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
Location: Putnam Satellite Office, 376 Pomfret, St., Putnam, CT
- October 29, 2007  
(Monday) Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
Location: East Hartford Regional Office, 255 Pitkin St., East Hartford, CT  
(3rd Floor Training Room)

As always, there will be a Noche Latina Family Night held in the fall. Date and time to be determined and families will be notified.

### Come and Join Us For Lots of Fun and Advocacy

My name is Chavis R. Chappell, I'm a self advocate coordinator for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) in the North Region. I started a **NEW** self advocacy group in the East Hartford Office. We plan to meet once a month during the evenings. We will meet to advocate for people's wants and needs, to make new friends and of course to socialize over some refreshments. So, if you are interested in learning more about self advocacy and meeting new people, please feel free to contact me at (860) 263-2529 or via e-mail at: [Chavis.Chappell@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Chavis.Chappell@po.state.ct.us) to request meeting dates and times.

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME.**



## DDS Educational Unit Goes High Tech

In September, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Educational Support Unit unveiled *The College of Direct Support*, an internet based learning program.

This exciting advancement in technology is one of the first of its kind in the state. This new e-Learning program will be used to train DDS employees, private provider employees and employees hired directly by individuals and families who self-direct their services and supports. DDS is establishing itself as a leader in the training field with this initiative.

After two years of research and development, the agency contracted with *The College of Direct Support*, a company associated with the University of Minnesota. The CDS program is competency-based and consists of 15 courses and over 73 lessons specifically designed for direct support professionals.

"The on-line training program will now enable the department to have consistent training throughout our service delivery system," said John Tierney, DDS Educational Support Unit Manager. "State employees and private providers will have the opportunity to use the curriculum available through the college."

E-Learning is fast becoming a high-quality and cost effective way of training employees. DDS is in the process of reviewing the curriculum developed by national experts in the field of developmental disabilities and will tailor the curriculum to meet the agency's specific needs.

According to Mr. Tierney, DDS' current ten-day new employee classroom training will be restructured to include the on-line courses.

"We will incorporate both on-line and classroom education in our training processes. This will enable us to cut down on classroom hours and use time in the classroom to provide employees with more opportunities for discussion and interaction," said Mr. Tierney. "We feel this is the best way to offer consistent training techniques and to monitor and update employee training."

At the same time as the September roll-out to new DDS employees, the Educational Unit will expand e-Learning to private providers who choose to administer the curriculum within their agencies. The CDS courses will also be available to individuals and families who self-direct through their fiscal intermediaries. In addition, all other DDS employees will begin to use the e-Learning courses to stay current with their ongoing training requirements.

## DDS Division of Autism

The Connecticut General Assembly took a big step during the 2007 legislative session toward establishing a service system for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who do not have mental retardation. Sections 109-114 of Public Act 07-4 of the June Special Session establishes a Division of Autism Spectrum Services within the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This act requires DDS to make recommendations to the Governor and the Public Health Committee concerning legislation and funding required to provide necessary services to persons with autism spectrum disorders on or before February 1, 2009 and annually thereafter.

In addition to this legislation, funding was provided in the 2006 legislative session to start a pilot program for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who do not have mental retardation. The Autism Pilot Program is well underway with 26 individuals participating and six providers approved. The Commissioner of DDS, in consultation with the Commissioners of Social Services and Mental Health and Addiction Services, will issue a final report on the results of the pilot program by January 2009. The final analysis will help to structure any future service system for individuals with autism in Connecticut.

"It appears that the features of autism affect some of the participants' abilities to access services," said Ms. Kathy Reddington, DDS Autism Coordinator. "It was discovered that the entry into a service delivery system, especially for individuals who have not had services in quite a while, is something that must be handled carefully and slowly. Several individuals have indicated a preference to 'ease into services' rather than start all services at once."

Individuals have begun to receive services," said Alison Hummel, Service Coordinator for the pilot program. "Some of the services individuals have requested help with securing and maintaining employment, daily living skills such as healthy food preparation, home organization, travel training, social skills development and accessing community activities or special events. These services are extremely important. Autism Spectrum Disorders do not end at age 21, they remain throughout one's life."

Recent studies conducted by the U.S. Center for Disease Control estimate that 1 in 150 people have Autism Spectrum Disorders. In Connecticut, estimates range from 10,000 to 14,000 adults with ASD and from 5,000 to 7,000 adults with ASD without mental retardation.

DDS is proud to have a significant role in this important autism initiative for Connecticut.

---

### ***Helpful Links***

**Association for Science in Autism Treatment (ASAT):** [www.asatonline.org](http://www.asatonline.org)

**Cure Autism Now Foundation (CAN):** [www.cureautismnow.org](http://www.cureautismnow.org)

**Organization for Autism Research (OAR):** [www.researchautism.org](http://www.researchautism.org)

**Global and Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership:** [www.grasp.org](http://www.grasp.org)

**Autism Speaks:** [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)

**Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support:** [www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/frame1.html](http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/frame1.html)

# What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are a group of developmental disabilities caused by unusual brain development. People with ASDs tend to have problems with social and communication skills. Many people with ASDs also have unusual ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to different sensations. ASDs begin during childhood and last throughout a person's life. Some of the symptoms include difficulty with social skills, speech, language and communication skills, repeated behaviors and a need for routines.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are several conditions included in ASDs. ASDs include autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise

specified (PDD-NOS, including atypical autism), and Asperger Syndrome.

These conditions all have some of the same symptoms, but they differ in terms of when the symptoms start, how severe they are, and their exact nature. The three conditions, along with Rett Syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder, make up the broad diagnosis category of pervasive developmental disorders.

---

## What are Some Common Signs of Autism?

There are three distinctive behaviors that characterize autism. Autistic children have difficulties with social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors or narrow, obsessive interests. These behaviors can range in impact from mild to disabling.

The hallmark feature of autism is impaired social interaction. Parents are usually the first to notice symptoms of autism in their child. As early as infancy, a baby with autism may be unresponsive to people or focus intently on one item to the exclusion of others for long periods of time. A child with autism may appear to develop normally and then withdraw and become indifferent to social engagement.

Children with autism may fail to respond to their name and often avoid eye contact with other people. They have difficulty interpreting what others are thinking or feeling because they can't understand social cues, such as tone of voice or facial expressions, and don't watch other people's faces for clues about appropriate behavior.

*continued on page 13*

**"What are common signs of autism?"** was originally published by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). All NINDS health-related material is provided for information purposes only and does not necessarily represent endorsement by or an official position of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke or any other Federal agency.

## DDS Works to Streamline Waiver Process

Over the past two and half years, individuals and their families served by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) have experienced some changes in the types of services available to them, and how they choose and receive the services they want and need. Access to these services is through Home and Community Based Waivers administered by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services waivers (CMS). These waivers allow people to select a variety of community-based supports and provide federal reimbursement to the state for 50% of the cost of these services.

The department is currently in the process of renewing its Individual and Family Support waiver (IFS), which expires on January 31, 2008. The renewal application is due this year on October 31, 2007.

Working with the waivers has given DDS and our providers more experience in what is needed to help our families. It is important to the department that this evolving system meets the needs of as many people as possible and at the same time is efficient and effective. Our waivers allow us to maximize resources in order to provide additional individual and family support services, and continue to give individuals more control over their supports.

Over the past couple of months, the Waiver Unit has been gathering input from consumers, families, providers and staff on how to improve services provided under the waivers while still following federal requirements. Various workgroups have contributed their suggestions on aspects of the waivers and are helping us refine and streamline the process wherever possible.

DDS is committed to making sure that people served by the department are in control of their own lives, help make their own decisions, are a part of their communities and most importantly, are making gains in reaching their own goals and dreams.

Please visit our new website: [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) for updates on the waiver progress and always feel free to contact your case manager or regional offices for additional information.

---

## Regional Advisory and Planning Councils

Regional Advisory and Planning Councils are established under CT General Statute Sec. 17a-273, which calls for a council in each region of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to be appointed by the Commissioner. The role of the Council is "consulting with and advising the director of the region on the needs of mentally retarded persons in the region, the annual plan and budget of the region, and other matters deemed appropriate by the council." The Council meets six times per year with the Regional Director and generally the meetings are held in the early evening. All meetings are open to the public and participation is welcomed. Members are appointed for three-year terms and include parents, individuals supported by DDS, representatives of local chapters of the ARC and an attorney. To learn more about the Regional Councils please contact the following people:

South Region: Jolie Crescimano-Goss at: [jolie.crescimano-goss@po.state.ct.us](mailto:jolie.crescimano-goss@po.state.ct.us)

North Region: Linda Schaefer at: [linda.schaefer@po.state.ct.us](mailto:linda.schaefer@po.state.ct.us)

West Region: Eunice Rivera at: [eunice.rivera@po.state.ct.us](mailto:eunice.rivera@po.state.ct.us)

## **Council on Mental Retardation Update**

### ***A Message from Chairman Stuart Brown***

The Council on Mental Retardation earmarked most of its energies during the spring months by successfully helping to lobby the Connecticut State Legislature on a number of important initiatives. Along with many other advocacy groups in the state, the Council worked to convince legislators of the need to increase the cost of living allowance (COLA) to workers in the private sector. In the recently passed budget, a 3% increase was included for the first year of the two-year budget cycle. While there was no increase for the second year, we are hopeful some increase can be implemented during the biennial budget review.

A second area that galvanized the Council was the reinstatement of full funding for programs for high school graduates and "age outs," (individuals who at age 21 transition out of their local school systems or residential school DCF/DSS). The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) assists with their transition needs. Again, the State Legislature restored full funding (with only a minor adjustment) for these programs.

After summer recess, Council members began formulating agenda items for the coming year. Its goal is to develop three or four primary issues to address during this fall and in the spring. Some ideas we will probably examine are the continuation of work on the COLA inequity issue and planning for the aging population. If you have thoughts on what the Council should consider, please contact Council on Mental Retardation Chairman, Stuart Brown at: [Broadway99@comcast.net](mailto:Broadway99@comcast.net).

*The Council on Mental Retardation was established to advise and consult over issues affecting the DDS and its programs that serve Connecticut citizens with mental retardation. In consultation with the DDS Commissioner, the Council recommends to the Governor and State General Assembly any legislation that would enhance and improve the care and quality provided by the agency.*

---

## **New Family Support Services Offered by DDS**

In 2007, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) began offering a new in-home support service to families of children and adults in need of and not receiving other DDS supports. A core of Family Support Workers is available to help develop learning programs for specific Activities of Daily Living (ADL) skills, develop community access and relationships, or implement behavior programs in the family home.

The purpose of the program is to assist families on a time-limited basis who are caring for an individual at home, while seeking to develop community-based resources that can provide long-term supports to the family if needed. Family Support Workers are paraprofessional direct support staff with extensive experience and training. Their services are available Monday through Saturday from morning to early evening hours, and on Sundays if needed. The average family support plan includes up to eight hours of service per month for three months. In addition to being Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Psychological and Physical Management Training (PMT) certified, the Family Support Workers are experienced with individuals who have mental retardation and associated physical, behavioral and mental health issues, and they work under the direction of an experienced supervisor.

Please contact your case manager for more information.

# Independent Ombudsperson for Developmental Services



*Ombudsman  
Edward Mambruno*

The Independent Office of the Ombudsperson for Developmental Services works on behalf of consumers and their families. The office addresses complaints or problems regarding access to services or equity in treatment. Contact the office for information regarding rights and methods of dispute resolution concerning consumers and/or their families. The results and nature of complaints and concerns are communicated to the Governor's Council on Developmental Services, the State Legislature, and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Commissioner in order to better direct the resources of the department and to improve service to DDS consumers and/or their families.

The Ombudsperson is impartial, meaning that he does not favor any particular side, position, or person in a dispute or misunderstanding. The Ombudsperson does not represent or advocate for anyone who contacts his office as they are not his clients. An Ombudsperson is an advocate for fair process.

In addition, your problems, issues or concerns will be discussed in an informal manner or "off the record" and not through official or formal channels. This permits you to explore your concerns and options in privacy. For many problems, this informal approach is highly effective and leads to satisfying results for all concerned. However, if you decide that you prefer to use a different approach, all formal complaint or grievance procedures are still available to you. Contacting the Ombudsperson is an informal process and does not constitute formal legal notice to the department.

One of the important functions of the Ombudsperson's Office is to assist individuals and their families in seeking information that leads them to the resolution of their particular problem. Often consumers or their families are unclear about DDS policies and procedures including appeals and the Ombudsperson can help individuals become familiar with such policies and procedures.

**Edward Mambruno**  
**Independent Office of the**  
**Ombudsperson for Developmental Services**  
**460 Capitol Avenue**  
**Hartford, CT 06106**  
**[Ed.Mambruno@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Ed.Mambruno@po.state.ct.us)**  
**Tel: (860) 418-6047**  
**Toll Free: (866) 737-0331**  
**Fax: (860) 418-8707**

## Camp Harkness, A Gem Along the Shore



Over the summer season, hundreds of campers enjoyed another wonderful season at Camp Harkness. The vacationers, along with tent site campers and day visitors, accounted for over 10,000 visitors per month to the 102-acre shoreline park in Waterford.

The summer programs are offered by United Cerebral Palsy (860-236-6201), ARC of New London County (860-889-4435), CIB/Oakhill (860-242-2274), and Southbury Training School. Amenities at the park include beachfront staffed by lifeguards during summer,

bathhouse, picnic pavilions, accessible playground for children, nature paths, tent sites, winterized and seasonal cabins, dining hall and barnyard animals. The recently constructed Grace Curtis Memorial Pavilion is also now available for park visitors to enjoy. The pavilion, which offers a large covered gas grilling area adjacent to the waterfront picnic tables, is the product of private donations and many volunteer efforts.

Any Connecticut citizen with a disability may obtain a free lifetime pass to Camp Harkness by calling 860-859-5428. At this time, fall and winter reservations for family or individual camping in cabins may be made by calling Camp Harkness at 860-443-7818. Reservations for spring cabins and tent sites will begin after January 1<sup>st</sup>. There is no charge for day visits or camping by pass holders and their families. The organizations noted above that operate summer residential camps should be contacted directly for information about their registration and tuition for 2008.



---

## Autism, *continued from page 9*

Many children with autism engage in repetitive movements such as rocking and twirling, or in self-abusive behavior such as biting or head-banging. They also tend to start speaking later than other children and may refer to themselves by name instead of "I" or "me."

Some children with autism may have difficulty playing interactively with other children. Children with autism appear to have a higher than normal risk for certain co-existing conditions, including Fragile X Syndrome (which causes mental retardation), Tuberous Sclerosis (in which tumors grow on the brain), epileptic seizures, Tourette Syndrome, learning disabilities, and Attention Deficit Disorder. For reasons that are still unclear, about 20 to 30 percent of children with autism develop epilepsy by the time they reach adulthood. While people with schizophrenia may show some autistic-like behavior, their symptoms usually do not appear until the late teens or early adulthood. Most people with schizophrenia also have hallucinations and delusions, which are not found in autism.

## Special Olympics

For Bella Silva of Wethersfield, it was a big day as she participated in her first Special Olympics Connecticut (SOCT) event, which was held at Weaver High School in Hartford. The eight-year-old second grader is a member of Team Wethersfield and competes in Track and Field events.



"We are newcomers to the Special Olympic family and weren't entirely sure what to expect," said Bella's mother, Patti Silva. "The experience was so exhilarating, I can't say who was more excited, Bella or us."

Along with her mother, Bella was cheered on by her Dad, sister Liliana and brother Manny, not to mention the hundreds of SOCT volunteers.

After winning bronze medals in the softball throw and 100 meter run at the Regional Tournament, Bella and her family headed to Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) for the state games. Her winning ways continued with a silver medal in the 100-meter run, a bronze in the 4x100 meter relay and a participation award in the softball throw.

"I'm amazed at the courage, determination, fair competition, compassion, dignity and pride I saw in the faces of the athletes," said Patti Silva. "Bella ended the games with a new sense of accomplishment and so did we, not just for Bella's achievements but for all the athletes, their families and the volunteers."

According to Bella's mother, winning the medals wasn't even the best part of the experience for Bella. It was when she brought her medals and photo album to school. She loved sharing them with her classmates, who were very impressed with her accomplishments. Bella's teacher, Bobbie Granato, incorporated Bella's experience into the curriculum. She brought the class outside and had the students measure out the distance Bella ran in her events. It was an excellent example of how lessons can be broadened to teach and include children of all abilities.

**Visit us at our new website at:  
[www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds)**

## Best Buddies

There is no better way to spend a Saturday than with your Best Buddy peddling up and down the coast of Cape Cod. At least that's what Troy England and Troy Stover think. The pair road the 20-mile course in the Best Buddies Volvo Hyannis Port Challenge on a tandem bicycle last May.



*(back row, left to right) Duane England, Joanne Enlgand, a guest, Representative Jack Malone and Commissioner O'Meara. (front row, left to right) Troy England and Troy Stover*

Best Buddies is a national organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities for one-to-one friendships and integrated employment opportunities.

This year, the Best Buddies CT Program had a 20-member team participate in the Volvo Challenge. Along with Mr. England and Mr. Stover, DDS Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara and Birth to Three's Eileen McMurrer rode the course. Team Connecticut raised over \$51,000 and placed fourth overall in fundraising for Best Buddies.

"Troy England and Troy Stover are what Best Buddies is all about," said Commissioner O'Meara. "They are not just friends in a bike-a-thon, but they are friends throughout the year."

Mr. Stover volunteered to become a Buddy in 2006 and the Citizen's Program matched him with Mr. England. They have been friends ever since and meet each Friday for lunch while Mr. England is volunteering at the Best Buddies CT Office in New Haven.

"The list of ways this friendship has changed my life for the better is endless. Let me just say, when I need someone to put things back into perspective, without all the sugar coating, Troy is now the one I turn to," said Troy Stover. "I call him and by the end of our conversation I am at peace again. He makes me laugh and cry and feel the full range of human emotion. He is my friend."

For both Mr. England and Mr. Stover, like thousands of others who participate in Best Buddies Programs across the country, being friends is one of the many benefits of the program. For more information please visit the Best Buddies CT website at: [www.bestbuddiesct.org](http://www.bestbuddiesct.org)

---

## Commissioner's Swearing In

*continued from page 2*

"I am looking forward to the next four years to continue the many initiatives we have started that will make a real difference in so many people's lives. I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to our employees, our partners and other state agencies who contributed to the success of serving over 19,000 consumers and their families statewide."

---

*Department of Developmental Services  
460 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106*

Presorted  
Standard  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit #7  
East Hampton, CT

## **We Walk Together *Over the Span of a Lifetime...***

### **DDS Nurse of the Year Named**

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) honored the 2007 Nurses of the Year from the public and private sectors. Brenda Chyra, RN, a Clinical Nurse Coordinator from the North Region, was chosen as DDS Nurse of the Year. Kim Kotzan, LPN, and Karen Littlejohn, LPN, shared the DDS LPN Recognition Award. Five nurses from the private sector were recognized for their contributions to persons served by the department. They are: Karen Perry, APRN, REM Connecticut Community Services; Barbara Lane, RN, The Caring Community; Lisa Paulsen, RN, The Kennedy Center; Rosa Maurizio, RN, Marrakech; and Valerie Pavano, LPN, Community Residences Incorporated.

The awards were presented at NEAT Marketplace in Hartford during the DDS Health Services Directors Annual Conference.



*(left to right) DDS Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara, Brenda Chyra, RN, and DDS Director of Health and Clinical Services David Carlow*