

CTD Annual Report Fall 2007 - Summer 2008

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I. Advocacy: Preparation for 2009 Texas Legislative Session and More

Major Advocacy Project: Texas Legislature Interim

Though the Legislature was not in session this year, there has been plenty of activity. For CTD, it's all about community services and preparing for the 2009 Legislature.

- The 2007 Legislature funded a 10% reduction in the wait lists, or so it seemed...so many people were newly added to the lists that no real reduction has been achieved. CTD is working with partner organizations and key legislative offices to **elevate the issue of community services waiting lists**.
- **Testimony** at the House Human Services Committee, advocating to reduce wait lists for community services, increase community attendant care wages and rates, consolidate the State School system and more.
- Invited **testimony**, House Elections Committee, focusing on ensuring that Texas does not backslide on accessible voting and polling places.
- MCAC/DADS Council **testimony**—CTD and others came out strongly against institutions that sought to divert community services funds.
- Supporting Community Now and ADAPT through **promotion of community forums** with screenings of the documentary “Forgotten Lives”. Participated in press conference and demonstration at the Austin State School.
- Successfully advocated for including **funding** of three new centers for independent living in DARS budget and testified at two public hearings.
- **Testimony**, HHSC Council, on budget items and real wait list reduction.
- **Testimony** at the Narrow Therapeutics Index hearing on ensuring there is no unauthorized generic drug substitution for epilepsy drugs which require precise prescriptions.
- Fair Housing: investigating **possible legislation** to require plan reviews and inspections of multi-family rental complexes.
- Mental health issues: CTD engaged in planning with MH groups to better **support their lead efforts on MH advocacy**.

Major Advocacy Project: Protecting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott continues to fight for the State's immunity from the civil rights protections of the ADA. His position: Texas has sovereign immunity from the ADA and may discriminate based on a person's disability without recourse. CTD is at the forefront of this battle. CTD was **interviewed and quoted in New Mobility, a national magazine**, in an article about Mr. Abbott, criticizing his position. CTD also identified that AG Abbott has invoked sovereign immunity in cases of disability **discrimination under the Rehab Act**; CTD is looking to address these violations as well. CTD provided **testimony** at

the House Human Services Committee on the ADA issue and frequently calls attention to this issue, such as at the Health & Human Services Commission budget hearings and the Promoting Independence Advisory Council. CTD also spoke with the **University of Texas ADA Committee**—where UT representatives seemed shocked that, as a state agency, the AG would defend the university with a sovereign immunity defense in ADA cases brought by students, faculty and staff.

We believe that **Texas state legislation is needed to definitively resolve this critical issue.** In the meantime, the ADA information on the CTD home page at www.cotwd.org elicits more comments than anything else on the site.

Major Advocacy Project: State Services Privatization

Medicaid managed care is expanding to multiple locations throughout Texas. Known as ICM (Integrated Care Management) in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and as STAR Plus in the other areas, CTD believes that managed care merits close attention.

Activities:

- CTD actively participates on the advisory councils of 3 of the HMOs—Superior, Amerigroup, Evercare—for direct dialogue.
- CTD has trained new staff for Evercare and Superior on effective interactions with people with disabilities.
- CTD participates in the State’s managed care stakeholders meetings.

Private Sector Advocacy Project: Cell Phone Accessibility

The private sector can yield very good advocacy opportunities, as was the case with AT&T. CTD figured prominently in a **round table with key executives** of the telecommunications giant, focusing on universal design for cell phones. AT&T is the largest provider of cell telecommunications and a major marketer of cell phones. AT&T subsequently announced a national policy requiring that all cell phones marketed would be required to **meet universal design standards** for users with disabilities.

Local Advocacy, Austin: Proposed Visitability Ordinance

CTD **backed ADAPT and Austin** groups in advocating to the City Council for an ordinance to require visitability of all new homes built in Austin, not just homes built with public funds. CTD participated in a **press conference and gave public testimony**. A very weak version of the ordinance was passed.

II. Strengthening the Foundation of CTD Public Policy Work

CTD worked on strategies to strengthen the framework of disability advocacy. The strategies were not issue-specific, but rather designed to improve resources for any ongoing policy issues.

Political Leaders to CTD: CTD’s 2008 convention drew U. S. Senate candidate Rep. Rick Noriega, Senator Judith Zaffirini, and Barbara Ann Radnofsky, running for Texas Attorney General in 2010. Representatives from the Obama and McCain presidential campaigns spoke on the nominees’ respective disability platforms.

Raise Your Voice! Web Communications: CTD's on-line communications system to policy makers has proved successful in linking members with their decision makers in Austin.

Brain Injury Association of Texas: BIATX continues to be co-located at CTD.

Texas Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America: PVA and CTD partnered on the 2008 convention and the Austin chapter of the PVA is now co-located at CTD.

The CTD Messenger e-newsletter: Distributed most months, the electronic newsletter continues to expand its reach, adding over 800 subscribers in the last year. There is no cost to subscribe. Anyone interested can email wgreer@cotwd.org to be added to our mail list.

VISTA Focal Point: CTD's four-person VISTA program provides CTD with capacity building, education, outreach, convention planning and more.

IV. CTD Appointments/Affiliations

CTD works to place its staff and individual members on a variety of committees, workgroups, task forces and boards that have influence over issues of importance to Texans with disabilities. Once at the table, CTD staff and members are active participants.

Staff placements:

Gubernatorial appointee, The State Independent Living Council (SILC)

CTD is working to increase SILC involvement in policy education and advocacy and take a proactive stance in planning the long term future of independent living services in Texas.

HHSC Executive Commissioner Appointee, Promoting Independence Advisory Council

CTD is using this policy forum to ensure that Texas' promoting independence initiative continues to move forward.

Appointee, Consumer Directed Services Workgroup

CTD promotes that people with disabilities control the recruitment, hiring, management, and firing of their personal assistants, which results in lower attendant turnover rates. The committee makes recommendation directly to the Legislature.

Appointee, HR 3295 Help America Vote Act Advisory Committee, Office of the Secretary of State. CTD is working with the Office of the Secretary of State, helping to ensure smooth implementation of this federal legislation and CTD continues to conduct outreach to thousands across the state.

Appointee, Direct Services Workforce Workgroup, DADS. This workgroup is charged with coming up with ways to recruit and retain community direct care providers without a wage increase. CTD promotes the position that wage increases are an absolute necessity.

Invitee, MFP Advisory Group. CTD pushes for rebalancing the long term services and supports system and money-follows-the-person for the ICF/MR population.

Board Member, CORE Foundation. Start-up non-profit whose first project is an accessible fishing pier on Lake Lady Bird in Austin.

Participant, DARS Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Advisory Group. CTD promotes outreach on the Medicaid Buy-In program.

Waiting List Stakeholders

CTD is regularly attending these meetings to ensure that reduction of community services waiting lists is progressing.

Member, Goodwill Central Texas Community Advisory Council

CTD advises on state advocacy issues related to employment of people with disabilities.

Selected CTD Member placements:

Appointee, Architectural Barriers Advisory Committee, Texas Dept. of Licensing and Registration

Appointee, Consumer Directed Services Workgroup

Gubernatorial Appointee, Rehab Council of Texas, DARS

Appointee, Board of Directors, Advocacy, Inc.

Appointee, Austin Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities

Appointee, Relay Texas Advisory Board

IV. Public Awareness, Other Projects, Programs and Awards

Raising the Vote of the Community of People with Disabilities

CTD aggressively worked to **promote voting** by people with disabilities and to spread the word about new accessible voting machines and requirements for accessible polling places.

- Worked with the Texas Secretary of State and ThinkStreet PR agency to conduct a **focus group** of voters with disabilities, conduct a **survey of voters with mobility impairments** and extensively reviewed the new **VOTEXAS website** for accessibility and usability.
- Facilitated **trainings on Help America Vote Act (HAVA)** throughout Texas
- CTD's **video training** on how poll workers should interact with voters with disabilities is featured on national websites.

CTD Consumer Directed Services Agency (CDSA): Consumers in Travis and the surrounding counties can now obtain CDSA services from CTD, providing them more choice and control over their community services. As of August 2008, 34 consumers receive CDS services through CTD. Jodi Park conducted a CDS workshop at the Texas Conference on Aging.

Speaker, State Bar Disability Issues Committee: Subjects: Fair Housing, ADA

CTD organized a national policy luncheon hosted by the **National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF)** in Austin. CTD's Dennis Borel conducted a workshop at the NMQF's national conference in Washington.

Chase wins national championship! CTD's Chase Bearden is a member of the national champion quad rugby team Texas Stampede. Chase was further honored with an invitation to try out for the U. S. Paralympics team. He was also a Finalist for the Austin Under 40 Award in the community volunteer category. You might say he had a good year.

Round Table on Relocation from institutions to community: CTD provided planning, outreach and logistical support for this well-attended training event in August 2007.

Website accessibility: CTD conducted an extensive hands-on product test of a state health and human services agency's new website, making design recommendations to improve accessibility to people with disabilities.

Help obtaining prescriptions: CTD participates in the Partnership for Prescription Access. Instead of each drug company having a separate program to help consumers get free prescriptions, the Partnership combines over 150 patient assistance programs into a single system. Consumers who need help should contact 1-888-477-2669 or go to www.pparx.org

Cinema Touching Disability Film Festival: Using the media of film, CTD showed how cinema has reflected the changing societal role of people with disabilities. The fourth year of what is believed to be the first Texas film festival focusing on people with disabilities took place in October 2007. CTD introduced a Student Film Competition with great results, including **standing room only** crowds. The Grand Prize winner in the college division was *Forgotten Lives*, which has gone on to numerous screenings. The film festival received substantial coverage in newspapers, internet, radio and TV. The 5th Annual Cinema Touching Film Festival will be held in Austin in October 2008.

CTD's Team Everest: National Awareness of the Potential of People with Disabilities: The full-length documentary, "Team Everest, A Himalayan Adventure" continued to be a selection at film festivals worldwide. The film has been **broadcast nationally by the Documentary Channel**. The DVD is available for purchase at www.cotwd.org CTD also spoke at a screening in Waco organized by the Waco Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities.

Advocacy presentations were delivered at the State Independent Living Conference and the statewide meeting of the Texas Registered Accessibility Specialists Association.

Training for Apartment Owners: CTD provided *Fair Housing and Effective Interactions with People with Disabilities* training at the annual conference of the Texas Apartment Association and co-sponsored Accessibility First HUD training in Dallas.

Breaking Boundaries on the radio: CTD staff was featured guests numerous times on this disability issues talk show on Austin's KOOP.

Are you ready? Or not? CTD organized a **focus group** of people with disabilities for input into the State's **emergency preparedness** project and conducted accessibility and usability tests of the website.

Employment Education and Outreach: CTD works with DARS to **promote awareness** of this undersubscribed **Medicaid Buy-In** program that allows people with disabilities to work and have Medicaid coverage.

Information and Referral: Each year CTD provides hundreds of Texans with disabilities information and referral services relating to financial, legal, housing, transportation, accessibility and employment issues.

Awards!

- The **Legless Lizard Tour de Tejas** won the **Austin Mayor's Media Award** in fall 2007. Without the use of his legs, CTD uber-member Mikail Davenport hand cycled 950 miles, from El Paso to Beaumont to raise awareness of CTD's priority legislative issues. This journey, widely covered by media all across the country, culminated on day 25, resulting in a large celebration in Beaumont.
- CTD's Dennis Borel won the 2007 **Healthy Hero Award** from the Amerigroup Foundation for "commitment and dedication to the health education and welfare of your community". The award was accompanied by a cash contribution to CTD.