

PADDC Outlooks

SPRING 2016

Cultural Competence and the Council

— by Graham Mulholland, *Executive Director*
Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council

Over the years the Council has tried to devote a lot of energy to the subject of cultural competence.

We have had a Work Group of Council – albeit one that has had many names as our understanding has changed – and we have founded bridge builders to “minority” communities; multi-cultural outreach grants; funded the development of a tool for assessing all of our grantees’ cultural competence and paid at least lip service to the importance of “including” and “reaching out.”

The bottom line however is that no matter how much we have done, no matter how we have tried to build a Council that looks like Pennsylvania, and no matter how much we have tried to open our doors, we have been, in terms of our enthusiasm and embrace of the exercise, ultimately less than successful.

Our problem is that we have adopted an attitude of bringing people into our world, with an explicit understanding that we, the disability community, are the way it is meant to be; that we are part of the dominant culture, magnanimously sharing our goodies with other groups, but neither learning from their cultures or partnering with them in ours.

The breakthrough which has occurred to us in recent months, is that we, as a disability community, are in almost exactly the same situation as members of other groups who are oppressed, not because of disability, but in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality or economic status. We are not part of the dominant culture dragging people into the rescue boat of a dominant culture approach to inclusion. We too, are the inhabitants of the raft.

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in this country. We have been subject to institutionalization, eugenics, experimental surgery, oppression, exclusion, devaluation, electric shock therapy, sterilization, selective

abortion and stigmatization. The most salient commonality between people with disabilities is not physical or mental, but the attitude of rejection by the dominant culture. Our partners, from whom we must learn to share history and strategies and friendships, are other groups similarly rejected by mainstream society.

In term of the Council’s future this must mean an attitude of partnership with other groups, rather than efforts to “include” them as if we are part of the dominant mainstream.

We are looking at continuing our partnerships with multiple diverse groups in the Community Alliance Summits, and work, such as that with the School to Prison Pipeline, where the dynamic imposed on children with disabilities and the dynamic imposed on children of color and members of the LGBT community are exactly parallel. We must reject the idea that difference is a deficit, on all levels.

This is the future of our work.

Draft 2017-2021 Five Year State Plan Available for 90-day Public Comment Period

Every five years, the PA Developmental Disabilities Council adopts a State Plan. Under the State Plan, funds are made available in a variety of areas for efforts to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities in Pennsylvania. Grants are awarded through Requests for Proposals (RFPs) in a competitive bidding process.

To review the draft of the 2017-2021 State Plan and/or provide feedback, visit: www.paddc.org/stateplan. A link to a brief survey will be available online until July 18, 2016.



**PENNSYLVANIA
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES
COUNCIL**

A woman with a prosthetic arm is sitting at a table in a meeting, looking towards the camera. She is wearing a yellow shirt. Other people are partially visible in the background.

Your Voice Matters!

Cross-Disability Efforts Continue

Your Voice Matters!, a cross-disability grant project led by Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL), continues to explore ways to expand the disability community across Pennsylvania and to bring diverse communities into the conversation on topics such as stigma, inclusion and other issues of cultural importance.

Initially, LVCIL began by surveying the disability community in Pennsylvania. The Disability Experience Survey targeted three types of respondents: people with disabilities, family/caregivers of individuals with disabilities and disability service providers. The survey was designed to ascertain information about strengths and weaknesses of services, as well as the hopes and dreams of consumers.

In addition, research efforts were undertaken into state plans for disability-related agencies (DPW, PDA, PEMA, PDE, etc.). Through these activities, a foundation was laid for the structure of a town hall series—Your Voice Matters!

A website was developed in conjunction with LVCIL's Strategic Community Building project (OVR funded). This website (<http://yourvoicematterspa.org>) is a clearinghouse for disability agenda news, discussion areas and promotion of upcoming town hall events.

The LVCIL's Cross-Disability Efforts project is currently working on a lead-in for the next PADDC grant period. It is the Your Voice Matters! Summit, which will be held in Harrisburg in June. Previous participants will come together to move the

conversation forward and discuss current event topics, such as ableism, special needs proms and acting roles for people with disabilities. A culminating video will be produced, which will be available on the website and Facebook page of the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL).

Rural Outreach Forums Held

Last Fall, four Rural Outreach Forums were held at the direction of the Rural Outreach Workgroup, which was formed to follow up on feedback received during the Listening Tours to better inform the 2017-2022 State Plan.

The Listening Tours were held in Camp Hill, Erie, King of Prussia, Lancaster, Meadville, Pittsburgh, Scranton, State College, Stroudsburg, Washington, Williamsport and Windber. Attendees in the rural areas in particular thanked presenters for coming to their communities and requesting their input.

Subsequent Rural Outreach Forums occurred in St. Marys, Dunshore, Biglerville and Carbondale, and the feedback received was similar to the Listening Tour themes for rural areas. Specifically, there is a lack of:

- Services • Providers • Transportation
- Internet, including Facebook, webcasts, webinars, emails, websites, blogs, etc.

The forums encouraged open discussion, and raised a crucial point – what works in one rural area doesn't necessarily work in another. As a result of these discussions, objectives are being considered to address transportation and access to information and resources for new RFPs in 2017.

Voices from the First Community Alliance Summit



The Community Alliance Summit provided a springboard for new collaborations and for brainstorming ways of supporting one another in our efforts to improve the lives of people and the communities that surround us.

More than 60 people, representing 41 agencies and organizations attended the Summit last September. Through a series of roundtable discussions, the attendees let their voices be heard loud and clear.

Topics of discussion included:

- *Is there value in holding summit events?*
- *Who are the voices that should be heard around the table?*

- *How can we reach youth through education?*
- *How can we share our message with the dominant culture?*
- *How can we affect change in research and product development for people with disabilities?*
- *What organizational strategies are you using successfully to implement change?*
- *What strategies have you used to change employment practices?*
- *How can PADDCC change it's RFP process to improve collaboration and diversity?*

A full summary of the responses to these discussion topics is available. **The next Community Alliance Summit is scheduled to be held on September 26, 2016, in Harrisburg.** If you would like to know more about the 2015 Summit, or if you would like to participate in the 2016 Summit, please contact Dana Thompson at 717-214-8103 or danathomps@pa.gov.

THE STIGMA AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IS UGLY, HURTFUL AND MANY TIMES, UNNOTICED.

It's time to stare stigma in the face and start talking about it. We all want love, happiness and acceptance. We can achieve this regardless of how we look, move, think, hear and communicate.

Is your organization or company interested in helping to fight stigma?

GIVE US A CALL TO SEE HOW YOU CAN JOIN THE MOVEMENT. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GET INVOLVED.

CONTACT US ABOUT THE STIGMA PROJECT : 717.432.2468 OR INFO@LETSTHINKAGAIN.ORG

LetsThinkAgain.org

**STIGMA
PROJECT**



PADDC

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Disability is a
Natural Part of the
Human Condition

