



UPDATE FROM WASHINGTON

AS OF: 3/31/2010

Hello Legislative Liaisons and Chapter Presidents,

This is your sixth official *Update from Washington*! The *Updates* are intended to give a simpler picture of what has been happening on a national level with regard to policy surrounding the employment of individuals with disabilities.

As always, if you have comments on the issues addressed or have questions, would like more information or would like assistance in your state, do not hesitate to contact me at Stephanie@apse.org or (920) 495-9688. Thank you and remember, “*A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history*” (Gandhi).

Happy Spring,

Public Policy Associate
APSE

EMPLOYMENT/TRANSITION:

APSE has been working to promote the phase-out of 14 (c) certificates and subminimum wage. Through discussions with key Hill staff there is continued dialogue as to what is the best approach at ensuring increased integrated employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, there is increasing dialogue surrounding customized employment.

- APSE has received word that KS APSE has been instrumental in helping pass an Employment First bill in the KS House. It currently awaits KS Senate passage.

- NASDDDS (Nat'l Assoc. of State Directors of DD Services) and SELN (State Employment Leadership Network) are proposing recommendations to CMS regarding Medicaid Waiver definitions. APSE is will address this at its next Public Policy Committee mtg.

- APSE submitted its legislative recommendations to Senate HELP Committee staffers re: Workforce Investment Act reauthorization and the Rehabilitation Act reauthorization. It is expected that WIA reauthorization will occur in the near future, with Rehab Act reauthorization to occur within the context of WIA.

* Key Points:

Rehab Act: tightened language that doesn't allow sheltered workshops to be funded; removed enclaves and mobile work crews from the SE definition; defined 'integrated setting'; included 'employment first' and recommended improved data collection.

Workforce Investment Act: tightened language saying that no funds shall be used for sheltered workshops and included language to strengthen accountability system – weighted performance measures.

Visit APSE's Public Policy webpage to view the recommendations.

HEALTHCARE:

UPDATE: President Obama signed the Senate health reform package, "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act" on Tuesday, March 23rd. A week later, he signed the reconciliation health care bill into law at Northern Virginia Community College.

ASSET DEVELOPMENT:

- There is continued support for the ABLE Act and future meetings with key Hill staff will be arranged through CPSD. The ABLE Act would allow individuals with disabilities or their family, to create an "Able Account" where they would be able to save money to pay for disability related expenses such as personal care, education, etc. This money would not be counted towards asset limits, jeopardizing an individual's ability to keep Medicaid, SSI, etc.

- Exciting news – Representative Niki Tsongas (D-MA) introduced the "SSI Savers Act of 2010" on Wednesday, March 24th, 2010. H.R. 4937 will increase the SSI asset limits. Currently, the asset limit for singles is \$2,000 and \$3,000 for couples. H.R. 4937 proposes to raise limits to \$5,000 for singles and \$7,500 for couples. Additionally, for individuals 65 and older, retirement savings will be excluded from the asset limit test. Note: Representative Tom Petri (R-WI) is a co-sponsor of the bill.

CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDANCE:

APSE signed-on to the following:

* CCD's letter re: President Obama's budget proposal and the consolidation of Title VI-B funds into Title I funds (VR funding).