

Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) Report to the National Council on Disability (NCD)

Quarterly Meeting Report – Crown Plaza Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia April 16-17, 2007

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Since the January 2007 quarterly meeting, the YAC took inventory of processes that worked; made appropriate input for edits to posted information; conducted the February 16, 2007 public meeting; developed an outreach/networking workgroup plan for contacting a broad, diverse and inclusive national pool of youth with disabilities; and completed the draft of recommendations to NCD supported by a benefits planning policy paper, *A Perspective from Youth with Disabilities: Benefits in a World of Employment*. The document provides youth perspectives about increased attention to issues and outcomes of federal programs and service systems affecting the employment status of young people with disabilities. This background data for the YAC recommendations incorporate some personal stories from other youth with disabilities and needs of people from ages 16 (the legal age for employment) through the age of 29—in essence, people under age 30) the YAC made seven key recommendations to NCD. The YAC advice to NCD incorporated recommendations at the federal level that involve a number of actions by federal agencies and Congress as follows:

1. Federal data collection needs to include more specific information about young people with disabilities. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics should track and report the employment rate of youth with disabilities. DOL also needs to track information that starts at a younger age than the agency now uses.
2. Congress should: (a) authorize the Small Business Administration to promote cultural and language appropriate trainings geared toward hiring and working with youth with disabilities; and (b) authorize the Internal Revenue Service to provide tax incentives to employers that hire youth with disabilities.
3. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, should ensure that guidance to education agencies receiving funding assistance to provide special education and related services will include benefits planning as a key component of the Individual Education Program and school transition process for each eligible student with a disability.
4. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission should expand its aggressive efforts to address the falling numbers of people with disabilities in the federal workforce. It is recommended further that NCD should call for an Executive Order that federal agencies target youth with disabilities in their annual hiring procedures to not only increase the number of people with disabilities in the federal workforce but to address the rising age of the federal workforce.
5. The Social Security Administration (SSA) should raise the earnings limit on Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance to bring those limits in line with inflation. The YAC further recommends that the U.S. Congress should authorize SSA to raise the limit of annual earnings based on the Cost of Living Adjustment.

6. SSA should produce youth-friendly versions of publications so that youth with disabilities have clearer and uncomplicated descriptions to assist their understanding of the benefits available to them.

7. Congress should involve members of the disability community in drafting a uniform standard of defining disability. This definition should be used for tracking people with disabilities in the decennial census, the labor market, and in other areas where federal data on people with disabilities is not standard.

While the YAC's development of its supporting information through the benefits planning paper began prior to presentation of the 2007 plan of action, the work and recommendations pertain to NCD's priorities. Specifically, the YAC recommendations are linked to NCD's series of 2006 funded studies—Social Security, Employment, and Financial Incentives—and the advice to NCD provides youth perspectives on some of the issues affecting the employment and full integration of people with disabilities in their communities.

Finally, the YAC also recommends that the supporting benefits paper for the YAC recommendations will be considered for posting on the agency website to serve as an awareness-raising tool for other youth with disabilities, families, and other members of the public. For the convenience of NCD members, a separate file provided the full YAC document (Please see the *Benefits Planning Perspectives* file).

Council members you have a standing invitation to participate in upcoming YAC public meetings via a dedicated telephone line. Please contact NCD staff before the meeting date to assure that one of the limited lines is available. The next date is April 24, 2007. Thank you.