

**OUTREACH FOR ALL
FORUM SUMMARY PAPER:**

*Paths to Support Individual
Empowerment of People with Disabilities
from Diverse Cultures*

Forum Sponsored by the:
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

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Department of Labor

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Outreach for All Forum Summary: Paths To Support Individual Empowerment Of People With Disabilities From Diverse Cultures

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“I have learned a great deal about the challenges federal agencies face as they reach out to diverse groups with disabilities.” Cultural Representative at the Forum

The National Council on Disability (NCD) is a small federal agency with a large responsibility—that of bringing disability-related issues to the attention of the President, Congress, and other government leaders. Among NCD’s objectives is to connect with grassroots organizations and to incorporate diverse perspectives in recommendations to government. This is particularly important because people with disabilities from diverse cultures sometimes find themselves outside the mainstream of American social and economic life not just because of disabilities but also because of barriers that may be related to language, cultural heritage and/or economic status.

On July 28, 2003, the NCD hosted a working meeting in Washington, DC, that brought youth and adults from multiple cultures across the country together with senior officials from nine federal agencies and one White House initiative. Sixty people spent a full day in work sessions that focused on finding ways to create a two-way street for people with disabilities who come from diverse communities

and government agencies that have a responsibility for providing appropriate services and for supporting empowerment and movement toward full participation in society.

A rich mix of people came to this working meeting. Using its connections with grassroots communities, NCD invited to Washington people who are African Americans, Native Americans--Navajo, Arapaho, Apache, and Inter-Tribal representatives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders--Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Filipinos, and Hispanic/Latinos--Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican Americans, as well as people of other backgrounds. The participants represented a broad array of people with and without identified disabilities, including youth. Using its political and governmental connections, NCD also brought to the table government officials from the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and Transportation, the Social Security Administration, Federal Communications Commission, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the White House Initiative on Asian and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities. The forum was enriched further by diverse heritages among many of the federal agency representatives who were also people with disabilities.

For the first time, “cultural brokers” sat down equally at the table with federal government policymakers and program leaders. The goal was to listen to and learn from each other about how to communicate in meaningful ways about community level needs, access federal appropriate resources, and to connect the two. During the forum, distinguishing the federal officials from the cultural “experts” was hard. They shared disabilities. They shared a broad array of ethnic heritages. They shared interest in the notion of meaningful outreach. As federal officials and cultural representatives worked side-by-side all day, the atmosphere of candor and collegiality was remarkable—bringing to life the statement: “We’re all in this together.”

Prior to the forum, federal officials had also provided NCD information about the extent each agency already addressed disability and diversity issues internally and with the general public. The valued agency responses will set the background for NCD’s potential

follow-up activities and next steps with individual agencies. During the forum work sessions, participants developed recommendations for a cultural diversity resource toolkit and for an outreach roadmap of suggested actions beyond the forum. Among the actions were calls for (1) a Presidential order clarifying the need and role for federal agencies around outreach as national demographics shift, and (2) interagency efforts to address ways the federal government can provide more accessible programs and services through seamless, culturally sensitive, and simplified processes.

Participant evaluations of the forum show that the learning went both ways. The day of dialogue offered a look behind the scenes both into cultural differences and into government functioning. Certain officials offered to host future meetings of this nature so that the dialogue initiated during the forum could continue. A non-government participant said “it was good to have federal officials to talk directly with,” and went on to acknowledge the challenge federal agencies face in disseminating information about rights and programs to people in the expanding array of diverse cultural communities.

Collegiality evident during the day translated into commitments at day’s end. Several federal agency representatives and one Congresswoman offered assistance—i.e., meeting space, disability-support technology, willingness to disseminate information, and a readiness to share forum recommendations with the Congressional Black Caucus—that can keep the field-federal dialogue going. “Cultural experts” from the field offered themselves as consultants to federal agencies. Both government and grassroots participants asked for connection and follow-up information. NCD, delivering on its mandate to support collaboration among federal agencies and links to communities, said that it stands ready to host ongoing discussions of this nature via teleconference calls. NCD also committed to completing and disseminating a resource “toolkit” aimed at making available to federal agencies cultural information, outreach approaches and materials, and models of communication skills that can enhance the ways agencies connect with people with disabilities from cultural communities.

NCD's "Outreach for All" forum was a partnership among government officials, people with disabilities, disability advocates, and advisory groups that are knowledgeable about disability needs and attitudes within the various cultures. This forum was a first phase in what NCD and the participants intend as ongoing dialogue between government and citizens with disabilities from diverse cultural heritages.

"There is a wealth of talent and [there are many] ideas here that we 'feds' can tap into."

Federal Agency Forum Participant

Outreach for All Forum Summary: Paths To Support Individual Empowerment Of People With Disabilities From Diverse Cultures

HISTORY OF NCD'S WORK WITH DISABILITIES AND CULTURE

People with disabilities from diverse cultures have not been full participants in the country's efforts to eliminate disparities, remove barriers, and protect civil and human rights through the enactment of federal laws and initiatives. The representation of African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders among 54 million Americans with disabilities is startlingly high in comparison to their representation in the overall national census. For example, notwithstanding the census data collection issues particularly for people from diverse cultures, Native Americans ages 16-64 years report 27 percent disability—far higher than the incidence rate in the general population of the U.S. and the very highest among all cultural groups.

Within its overall purpose as a federal agency, NCD is responsible for working towards the empowerment of individuals with disabilities so that they can achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and both inclusion and integration into all aspects of society. In order to carry out this purpose for *all* Americans, over the years NCD has given special attention to people with disabilities from cultural groups since data show that they can be the hardest to reach and yet they are among those people most in need of improved and appropriate services.

For more than ten years and in a variety of formats—public hearings, regional and/or community-level focus groups, symposia; work sessions, and national meetings—NCD has put a spotlight on the unmet needs, barriers, and special problems people with disabilities from diverse cultures face as they seek services that could support their desires and efforts to be recognized as resourceful, contributing members of social and economic life. NCD has generated multiple reports to the Administration and Congress that include recommendations pertaining to equal protections of the civil and human rights of people with disabilities from diverse

cultures. A recurring theme across recommendations made in the NCD reports is that outreach efforts to people with disabilities from diverse cultural origins need to be improved and that families, practitioners, community-based organizations, and government agencies should work together to find ways to bring about this improvement.

In the spirit of serving people with the greatest need as described in the reports, NCD created a Cultural Diversity Initiative (CDI) in FY 2003. This initiative puts into action several recommendations spawned by the earlier meetings on diversity and disability. CDI consists of three related projects designed to promote within federal agencies public awareness, advocacy, networking, policy-making and research about people with disabilities from diverse cultures. The primary goal of CDI is to provide definitive information about promising practices for successful outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultures in relation to their rights and opportunities under various civil rights laws. A secondary goal of CDI is to promote capacity- building among federal agencies for integrating issues that affect people with disabilities from diverse cultures into the federal agenda. Immediate benefits include contributing to the knowledge base and understanding among federal agencies about how to meaningfully include people with disabilities from diverse cultures in agency activities.

The three separate but inter-related projects of NCD's Cultural Diversity Initiative are research, development of a "toolkit," and hosting a national forum.

1. The research aspect of CDI involved reviewing existing literature on outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultures, including social marketing and outreach efforts by federal agencies and non-profit organizations. Products of this research include a cataloguing of promising factors common to successful outreach efforts as well as of "gaps" in diversity outreach.

2. The toolkit project aims to develop specific resources for use by federal agencies to enhance their outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. This toolkit, which is to be ready in the fall of 2003, will include fact sheets on federal disability policies, information on designing and managing strategic outreach initiatives, and models of promising outreach policies, programs, and products.
3. The “Outreach for All Forum” was designed to bring about face-to-face dialogue among grassroots people with disabilities, their advocates, and federal officials. Its purpose was to give life to the idea of grassroots-government collaboration and to prompt communication about outreach approaches and practices. The forum also served as a point of connection for CDI’s three aspects: research, toolkit, and face-to-face dialogue.

DESCRIPTION OF THE “OUTREACH FOR ALL” FORUM

The July 28, 2003 forum held in Washington, DC, was an invitational working meeting of 60 people. One third of the people at the forum were “experts” from diverse cultures (Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and African American people). NCD brought the participants together to work shoulder-to-shoulder with 20 officials from nine federal agencies along with a representative from the White House Initiative on Asian and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities.

The forum was a daylong working meeting. After greetings from NCD leaders and messages from members of Congress and five federal agencies (Education, Health, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), the bulk of the day was spent in workgroup sessions. Work group participants were charged with developing recommendations to federal agencies about ways to enhance federal outreach efforts to cultural communities. The day’s agenda can be found in the appendix of this document. The way the day unfolded is described below.

Role of National Council on Disability Members

In addition to carrying out their regular duties as Council members, six of the fifteen members appointed by the Bush Administration were requested to share leadership roles in preparation for and/or during the forum. Prior to the forum, Council 2nd Vice Chairperson, Dr. Glenn B. Anderson and Council members Marco Rodriguez, Milton Aponte, Esq., and Kathy Martinez assisted with the design and planning. At the forum, Lex Frieden, NCD Chairperson, welcomed participants and set the tone for the day of collaborative work. Milton Aponte, Esq., who is also parent of a child with a disability, served as forum facilitator throughout the day. Dr. Young Woo Kang, Council Member, shared information about the recognition of and respect for cultural differences, the impact of attitudes toward the concept of disability, and his personal experiences as a Korean-born professional who is blind and who immigrated to the United States as a young adult. Council member Kathy Martinez facilitated the large group forum sessions where the three workgroups assembled to report their findings and recommendations. Council members also participated in forum work groups.

Messages from the House of Representatives

Two members of Congress addressed the opening session of the forum:

- **Congresswoman Donna Christian-Christensen**, Representative from the U.S. Virgin Islands, applauded the purpose of the meeting and expressed her interest in improving the federal government's outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. She also offered to present recommendations resulting from the forum to the Congressional Black Caucus and to ask for its backing of action steps.
- **Congressman Major Owens**, Representative from Brooklyn, NY, addressed the forum by telephone and expressed his solidarity with its goals. He stated that it is critical to outreach to—and to organize—people with disabilities from diverse cultures so that they can compete successfully for the resources that are available from federal agencies. By obtaining the

supports that are theirs by right, Congressman Owens emphasized that people with disabilities can become strong contributors to the American social and economic experience.

Messages from the Leaders of U.S. Federal Agencies and Initiatives

The leaders of five federal agencies sent greetings to forum participants through senior agency officials as follows:

U.S. Department of Education (DOED):

- Loretta Petty Chittum, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)
- Joanne Wilson, Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

Current Department of Education Outreach Initiatives: Both Department of Education representatives catalogued some of their agency's current outreach programs to people from diverse cultures. These included: grants to institutions of higher education to prepare students from diverse cultures for careers in rehabilitation; a regular head-count of the number of people from diverse cultures who are served in each state's rehabilitation system; leadership programs for people with disabilities from cultural communities; specific programs focused on Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and migrant families; and grant-writing workshops offered to cultural organizations to help them compete successfully for federal dollars.

DOED Commitments to Outreach: Both federal education representatives voiced their personal commitments and that of their organizations to working with NCD to improve outreach initiatives to cultural communities and to support follow-up actions on the forum:

“We look forward to working with NCD on this outreach effort.” Loretta Chittum

“Let RSA know if there is any way we can help support your work to change people’s attitudes so that we can all live the American dream.” Joanne Wilson.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):

- Dr. Margaret Giannini, Director of the Office of Disabilities, Office of the Secretary of HHS.

Current HHS Outreach Initiatives: Dr. Giannini pointed out that the creation in 2002 of the Office of Disabilities within the Office of the Secretary shows the commitment of the leadership of HHS to disability issues. This commitment can also be seen in the work of HHS’ Office of Minority Health, which focuses on improving services to ethnic and linguistic minorities, and in the work of HHS’ Office of Indian Health, which has a steering committee specifically responsible for addressing the needs of people with disabilities from those cultures.

HHS Commitments to Outreach: Dr. Giannini went on to say: “I think that if we all partner, we can make this effort grow, expand, and be replicated throughout our nation. I applaud the National Council on Disability for convening this meeting because it’s important for us to spark a dialogue and to identify concrete actions that we can take together to meet the needs of persons with disabilities from diverse cultures.”

U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ):

- Loretta King, Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Division.

Current DOJ Outreach Initiatives: The Department of Justice is one of the few federal agencies that has a specific task force set up to work on outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. As evidence of the importance of the NCD forum, several members of this task force (John Wodatch, Head of Disability Rights at DOJ, Maurice Champagne, and Felicia Sadler) attended the “Outreach for All” forum and worked shoulder-to-shoulder with other participants throughout the day.

DOJ Commitment to Outreach: Mrs. Loretta King said: “It is incumbent upon us in the government to reach out to all ethnic groups, cultures, and races in order to make sure that whatever rights people are entitled to are made known to them so that they can live to their fullest potential in this country.” She went on to say: “We need to realize that abilities come in all colors.” Later in the forum, Felicia Sadler, DOJ Outreach Task Force member, suggested that federal agencies share their relevant databases about people with disabilities from diverse cultures involved in outreach efforts.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

- Carolyn Peoples, Assistant Secretary of HUD’s Office of Fair Housing:

Current HUD Outreach Initiatives: The Office of Fair Housing is HUD’s enforcement arm, responsible for providing equal housing opportunities for all, including people with disabilities from every culture.

HUD’s Commitment to Outreach: Ms. Peoples said: “The ‘minority’ and disability agenda can only move forward with an active and passionately involved leadership. The top three priorities [for HUD and for all of us involved in disability issues] are leadership, leadership, and leadership.”

Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC):

- Naomi Earp, Vice Chair, EEOC:

Current EEOC Outreach Initiatives: The very mandate of the EEOC requires outreach to *all* in order to assure equal access to opportunities.

EEOC's Commitment to Outreach: Ms. Earp described the challenge that faces federal agencies, organizations at all levels, and individuals: "The odds are very, very heavily stacked against young 'minority' Americans with a disability. [We need] a generation of professionals from minority communities with disabilities *and* with positions of influence and power who find it in their own self-interest to change things." She, too, picked up the leadership theme stated by Ms. Peoples of HUD: "We need to recruit and mentor researchers, administrators, and professional leaders who are personally invested in and have the wherewithal to advance a diversity agenda."

Additional Federal Agencies Present at the Forum

Four additional federal agencies and a White House Initiative sent representatives to take part in the outreach forum. In several cases, more than one office from these agencies was represented. The additional federal agencies and initiative were: the Federal Communications Commission, the U.S. Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Labor and the White House's Initiative on Asian and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities. A large majority of these federal officials stayed for the full day and worked alongside "cultural brokers" and disability and cultural advocates.

Presentations from Experts

Experts on disability and culture then addressed the morning session of the forum to provide a context for the workgroup tasks that were to follow.

- Claudia Gordon, Esq., consultant to NCD, a young adult who is deaf, and the lead worker on the literature review of outreach practices to people with disabilities from diverse cultures, looked at “New Generations” of advocates. She spoke about current young adults with disabilities who want not just to be included but also to be leaders in decision-making about policies, programs, accessibility, and outreach to people of culture. Ms. Gordon described NCD’s Youth Advisory Committee and the guidance it is providing to NCD on a broad range of issues that affect young people with disabilities. In closing, Ms. Gordon said: “[All of us] have an obligation to help develop the leadership capabilities and to encourage the passion and drive of young people, to give credit to their voices and perspectives, and to offer them a place at the table.”
- Milton Aponte, Esq., National Council Member who facilitated the full-group sessions of this forum, spoke about the “Foundations for Building a New Framework.” He revisited NCD’s history—as portrayed in its publications—of advocating for the needs of people with disabilities from diverse cultures. He pointed out the agency’s unique role as broker between the federal government and consumers from all walks of life and all heritages, and he cited the “Outreach for All” forum as an example of NCD’s continuing responsibility as funder and convener of dialogues around disability issues.
- Dr. Glenn Fujiura, Director of the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago, spoke about the demographic realities of culture and disability, using his own experience growing up in one of Chicago’s many ethnic neighborhoods as a starting point. Dr. Fujiura recommended five action steps for a “National Outreach Agenda.”

1. *Outreach must move beyond race-based distinctions.* It should be less about color and more about the un-served and under-served.
2. *Outreach must transcend disability.* A great effort has already been invested in coalition building around human rights issues. Dr. Fujiura feels that disability gains by being part of a shared advocacy effort focused on rights. “Common causes *can* be found.”
3. *Outreach must go beyond cultural competency.* It must challenge not just the systems, but also the *source* of inequities in those systems such as bias, lack of access to services, and poverty itself that put children and adults of all races at risk.
4. *Outreach must understand its history.* An outreach agenda must learn from the rich history of literature and of reports focused on poverty, it must understand why minorities have been slow to reach leadership ranks, and it should take into consideration prior recommendations related to diversity and disability in order to build on what others who came before have learned.
5. *Outreach must have three core priorities:* Leadership, leadership, and leadership.
“The odds are very, very heavily stacked against young ‘minority’ Americans with a disability. There’s a desperate need to nurture [them] so that there can be more than token representation on committees, advisory panels, and the like. The ‘minority’ and disability agenda will not move forward without an active and passionately involved leadership. This requires a generation of professionals from minority communities with disabilities and with positions of influence and power who find it in their own self-interest to change things,” according to Dr. Fujiura.

Preparation for Workgroup Sessions

Ethel D. Briggs, Executive Director of NCD, then charged participants to “dig deep” into their personal histories and experiences and to use these perceptions during the workgroup sessions. She then instructed participants to divide into three workgroups and to tackle

two issues important to putting action behind ideas that empower people with disabilities from diverse cultures to become part of the mainstream of America's social and economic life.

Both at mid-day and at the end of the day, NCD Council Member, Kathy Martinez moderated full-group sessions where each of the three work groups presented its findings and recommendations for action to be taken to enhance federal outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. The next section of this paper lays out the recommendations made by forum participants.

FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The heart of NCD's "Outreach for All" forum was the workgroup sessions held for one and a half hours in the morning and for an additional hour in the afternoon of the all-day meeting. Each workgroup of 15-20 members included a mix of "experts" from diverse cultures, representatives from at least six federal agencies, NCD Council members, and other disability advocates. Two "discussion movers" guided each group's discussion period. The discussion movers are leaders in the disability movement and most have diverse heritages, including two former NCD Council members.

Workgroups focused on two topics: 1) improving a draft toolkit for federal agencies to use in outreaching to people with disabilities from diverse cultures, and 2) establishing a roadmap for future federal outreach efforts.

Toolkit Improvement

Morning workgroup participants were asked: *What are the key components that should be contained in a "toolkit" NCD is developing for use by federal agencies to inform people with disabilities from diverse cultures of their rights under law and of the services available to them?* Workgroup discussions began with a review of the draft components proposed by NCD for a federal toolkit. Workgroup participants were charged to improve and/or augment the starter-set of ideas.

Establishing an Outreach Roadmap

Afternoon workgroups were asked: *What specific steps should be taken in the near future to put muscle into and action behind the outreach recommendations made by grassroots and federal participants in the July 28, 2003 forum?*

Note that in both action areas (“toolkit”-related next steps and “roadmap”-related next steps) the National Council on Disability was seen by forum participants as the key follow-up agent. However, in some cases participants' suggestions were outside NCD's authority to implement under the agency's Congressional mandate and other suggestions would require a much larger staff and budget than has been appropriated to NCD. Nonetheless, NCD indicated its willingness to engage in supportive follow-up actions as far as possible.

Workgroup participants also saw NCD as the refiner and disseminator of the toolkit, as nurturer of improved inter- and intra-agency dialogue focused on culturally sensitive and effective outreach approaches, and as the on-going connector of grassroots community-level advocates and government officials interested in issues that affect culture and disability. In addition, a number of Presidential, Congressional, inter-agency/across and intra-agency/within actions were suggested.

Forum participants developed a number of recommendations for completion of the outreach resource toolkit and for developing a roadmap of actions.

1. RECOMMENDED TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE FEDERAL AGENCY “TOOLKIT”

Question Posed to Workgroups: *What should be included in NCD’s “toolkit” to enhance federal agencies’ outreach efforts to people with disabilities from diverse cultures?*

What follows are the combined recommendations from the three workgroups. Suggestions that affect the table of contents of the “toolkit” are mentioned in conjunction with the chapters set up in the draft document.

a. Strengthen the “Overview” section of the toolkit

Do this by building on the federal agency involvement with the Outreach Forum itself by including letters from federal agencies that show their goal of providing a high level of services to *all* people, including those with disabilities, with a special focus on those from diverse cultures.

b. Enrich the “Glossary of Terms” chapter in the toolkit

Assure that the toolkit contains a strong section on cultural competence. This section should:

- Define what is “cultural competence.”
- Show how various ethnic groups may define cultural competence differently and explain that even within major ethnic/racial groups there can be significant differences. For example, there are over 550 federally recognized Native American/Alaska Native tribes in the U.S. with dissimilar attitudes about disabilities, about human rights, and about federal and state government services.
- Give examples of ways agencies can be respectful of cultural vocabulary such as making efforts to use language of the target population and demonstrating respect for their traditions.
- Work towards finding a common language across agencies related to disabilities, culture, and outreach.

c. Create a section in the toolkit on skill building

- **Grant-writing skills**—Develop a chapter on grant writing (how to identify grant opportunities, how to respond to Requests for Proposals [RFPs], ways to develop proposal-writing skills, and mechanisms for involving families in grant design) in order to

strengthen cultural groups' chances of getting federal funds. (Note that some grants have been written specifically to support outreach activities to cultural communities.)

- **Complaint-filing skills**—Inform toolkit users of ways to file complaints about discrimination (disability, cultural, etc.). Advise both grassroots people and federal officials about filing processes: what to say, how to file, how to bring complaints to the attention of senior policymakers, how to monitor responses, and how to track data about complaints.

d. Enrich the chapter of the toolkit that showcases effective community-level outreach opportunities

Ensure that the chapter in the toolkit on “Diversity Paths to Support Empowerment” identifies specific grassroots avenues for reaching out to ethnic communities. Examples are:

- Use ethnic-oriented TV, radio, and newspapers. (Develop a master list of media outlets that serve diverse cultures, and recommend ways to connect to and collaborate with them.)
- Connect with grassroots neighborhood groups, community centers, and churches.
- Work with opinion leaders in cultural communities such as religious leaders.
- Make sure that business owners are part of outreach efforts since employment of persons with disabilities is such a critical issue. (Examples: Target Asian Chambers of Commerce and Hispanic/Latino Business Associations.)
- Target small enterprises that reflect cultural flavors—beauty and barbershops, nail salons, ethnic groceries—as being places to learn from as well as being community-based localities where messages can be conveyed.
- Reach out to often-forgotten areas of the country, such as rural areas. Showcase a public service announcement that targets a cultural community in a very rural area.

e. Somewhere in the toolkit identify opportunities that help grassroots and government work together

Include in the toolkit a chapter that explores new (or showcases existing) ways federal agencies and grassroots cultural organizations can connect. Examples are:

- Co-sponsor conferences and programs (as in NCD’s “Outreach for All” forum).
- Use information technology (share agency and cultural information via the Internet).
- Work through regional centers and programs to link federal agencies and ethnic communities.

f. In the toolkit, identify cultural voices and expertise that already exists in federal agencies

Showcase federal agencies that have PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES in leadership positions so that:

- People in grassroots cultures can see that individuals from their backgrounds are valued.
- These “insiders” can be put to work to improve outreach from federal agencies to local communities.
- Points of contact with both individuals and with relevant offices such as EEO offices, and Offices of Civil Rights within federal agencies can be clearly identified and then used as entry zones for queries and/or ideas related to cultural issues.

g. Develop a toolkit chapter specifically on health and mental health issues

Remembering that in many cases disability has large health components and that mental health is an important aspect of well being in all cultures, make sure that the toolkit has a strong section on both health and mental health, especially as these arenas are perceived by and acted out within diverse cultures.

h. In the toolkit’s section on “Federal Disability and Civil Rights Laws” include

- The fact that ADA does not apply to tribal all governments based on the sovereignty factor. Refer to examples of tribes that have developed laws addressing protections for people with disabilities on tribal lands.

- A clear description of Section 504 in Title 5 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended—a non-discriminatory provision for any entity receiving federal dollars. Forum participants felt that ADA seems to be spoken to in the draft toolkit, but that additional serious attention needs to be paid to Section 504.

i. Give examples of promising programs/practices

Identify the outreach strategies and practices that already exist within federal agencies or at the local level. Examples mentioned at the forum:

- The Dept. of Justice’s private/civic program in cities. Have NCD recommend that promising programs such as this one is beefed up, improved, then spread to other cities.
- Broward County’s Family Care Council that used Administration on Developmental Disabilities/HHS federal fund to bring together families and consumers for empowerment training, problem solving, and the development of a plan of action.

2. RECOMMENDED “ROADMAP” FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS TO THE FORUM

Question Posed to Workgroups: What next steps should be taken to develop a roadmap, including a timetable for implementing the recommendations made at NCD’s “Outreach for All” forum?

For purposes of action-oriented follow-up, the recommendations made by forum workgroups have been clustered in categories related to which bodies—the Administration, Congress, federal agencies, outreach activists—might take the lead in carrying out next steps.

Forum participants made recommendations as follows:

a. The President should:

- Issue an Executive Order that mandates government agencies give priority to outreach to people with disabilities in diverse communities. Within the order:

- Require each agency to appoint a disability outreach coordinator.
- Name a specific federal agency to direct an inter-agency steering group that is responsible for identifying and sharing stellar federal government outreach approaches and expertise.
- Mandate that each agency—through the inter-agency steering group—report back to the White House within “x” timeframe—maybe 6 months to one year—on outreach activities. (Consider using the New Freedom Initiative’s multi-agency reporting system—“Delivering on the Promise/” with HHS as the coordinating agency—as the example for implementing this Executive Order.)
- Alternately, consider using the ADA Coordinating Committee as the communication and coordination mechanism among federal agencies for outreach to cultural communities.
- Hold federal agencies accountable (through GPRA) for doing a better job of outreach to people with disabilities in diverse cultures.
- Use Executive Order 13166 as a model for the new one on outreach.

b. Congress should:

- **Establish a National Commission on Outreach** responsible for holding hearings both on the need to and ways of connecting with people with disabilities from diverse cultures. Legislation that creates this commission should specify its composition, its funding authority, the entity to which it will report, and timeframes for action.
- **Pass legislation that mandates federal agencies give priority to outreach as they carry out their agencies’ missions.** The provisions outlined in the next section (“Federal Agencies Should”) could be contained in that legislation.

c. Federal Agencies should:

In order to enhance the federal government's outreach efforts to people with disabilities from diverse cultures, each of the nine federal agencies that have partnered with NCD in its Cultural Diversity Initiative should agree at the highest level (level of the secretary) to commit them to giving priority to outreach efforts to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. This commitment would take the form of an agency-wide Executive Order or formal decree. Specific provisions of this decree would include a commitment to:

- **Create/identify a disability office(s) within each agency**, and define a regular way for them to communicate both among the different branches within that agency as well as each other (across agencies). The offices could serve as disability resource centers to each agency. Note: An alternative approach could be to start with agencies that already have advisory bodies on outreach to cultural communities (the FCC does and the DOL has one on Native Americans). Bring the existing bodies together, then ask the remaining federal agencies to create similar bodies and fashion a coordinating mechanism among them.

- **Identify or hire “outreach champions.”**
 - Identify people with disabilities already operating within each agency whose experience can inform agency outreach efforts.
 - Hire additional PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES from diverse cultures and use these people's experience and sensitivities to guide outreach efforts.

- **Make sure that complaints about failed outreach are heard at the highest levels of the agency.**
 - The Congressional and/or agency mandates that raise the profile of outreach issues within the federal government should create a specific grievance mechanism that makes sure that complaints about misconnections or lack of connections with cultural groups reach the highest decision-making levels of agencies so that lessons are learned and improvements can be made.

- **Allocate specific resources** (funds in each agency’s budgets) to improve outreach activities.
- **Use federal agency leadership retreats and training to promote improved outreach.** (Identify the leadership retreats and/or leadership training some federal agencies sponsor, and promote the importance of outreach at those retreats.)

d. Outreach Activists should:

The suggestions that follow were not assigned to any single action group, but were compiled from recommendations by forum organizers, federal agency officials, and other forum participants.

- **Enlist the support of churches** such as the Congress of National Black Churches as well as other religious organizations of all types in outreach efforts to people with disabilities from diverse cultures: (Note: These organizations would need to be helped to see that it is in *their* interests to become disability and cultural advocates.)
- **Find ways to enlist existing civil rights groups** to help with outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. Help them understand that disability and cultural issues are part of their core human rights agendas.

NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE FOR ACTION

The stated goals of NCD’s “Outreach for All” forum—and the ways it accomplished them—were as follows:

- **Call attention to existing federal agency efforts in disability and diversity outreach.** The forum accomplished this by providing opportunities for federal agency leaders to give examples of their current outreach efforts and the strategies they are using to reach un-served and under-served people with disabilities from diverse cultures.

- **Infuse the *New Freedom Initiative* with a cultural focus:** As one example, the White House Initiative on Asian and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities was represented at the forum. In addition, NCD’s Chairperson, Lex Frieden highlighted in his forum remarks the Administration’s support through the *New Freedom Initiative’s (NFI)* goals of inclusion for all Americans in the country’s social and economic life and NFI’s congruence with NCD’s mission, as well as and the goals of the Outreach Forum.
- **Initiate dialogue about coordination of outreach practices:** The recommendations made by forum participants related to the “roadmap” of follow-up activities repeatedly emphasized the importance of both inter- and intra-agency coordination and collaboration so that successful outreach methods and approaches to people from diverse cultures can be shared within and across the federal government.
- **Identify a common core of resources:** Forum participants came up with a series of specific recommendations aimed at improving/enriching the “toolkit” that will be used by federal and other agencies serving people from diverse cultures to inform them of their rights and of the services and programs available to them at federal, regional, and local levels.

NCD’s Role in Next Steps and Timetable

At the very end of the “Outreach for All” forum, Milton Aponte, Council Member and facilitator for the working meeting, said that NCD stands ready to support the following actions as next steps with estimated timelines:

- **Early fall**—Make sure that the report on the forum, including workgroup recommendations for next steps, is posted on NCD’s website.

- **By the end of the 2003 calendar year**—Incorporate into the “toolkit” the ideas from the forum that can enhance outreach activities by federal agencies. Post the toolkit on NCD’s website so that there is widespread access for grassroots people and their organizations to the information contained therein.
- **Early in 2004**—Disseminate the toolkit to NCD’s federal partners and as requested, provide guidance regarding use within the agencies to enhance their outreach efforts to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. Also solicit feedback from the agencies about toolkit use.
- **Within six months of the forum**—Adopt specific ways to continue the grassroots-government dialogue on outreach issues such as: 1) host NCD-facilitated teleconference calls among federal and cultural participants at the forum, 2) investigate the possibility of establishing and monitoring a listserv focused on outreach, or 3) pursue as many forum recommendations as possible so that the federal/local dialogue that has begun can continue.

EVALUATION OF FORUM BY PARTICIPANTS

While the rate of evaluation forms returned at NCD’s “Outreach for All” forum was only 21percent, the large majority of responders said that they relished being in a working session where both grassroots and government people could share perceptions about the cross point of disability and culture. There was also agreement that favored the opportunity the forum provided for working shoulder-to-shoulder on ways to enhance federal outreach efforts to cultural communities. “The open discussion [was valuable] because it gave everyone a chance to give opinions and [build] consensus towards the future.”

Grassroots participants' comments included:

- “I have learned a great deal more about federal agencies and the challenges they have in outreaching to diverse groups with disabilities.”
- “Contact with the federal representatives from the White House, the Department of Justice, and others was very informative.”
- “We can [now] establish a better working relationship with the federal agency representatives who were here today.”
- The most useful portion of the forum was “getting insights from Federal representatives.”

Government official's comments included:

- “[I value] the experience of being able to connect with people from different cultures.”
- “There is a wealth of talent and [there are many] ideas here that we can tap into.”

In terms of the leadership of the forum, over half of the comments mentioned Dr. Glen Fujiura's presentation (e.g., “It was succinct and superb”). Many respondents also commended NCD's Council member, Milton Aponte for his daylong facilitation with a “positive attitude.”

Finally, participants who submitted evaluation forms pressed NCD (1) to assure that follow-up activities occur, and (2) to complete the development of the outreach toolkit and disseminate it to federal agencies. The suggestions included reconnecting forum participants via teleconference calls, expanding the outreach network by augmenting the list of participants with the names of people who expressed interest but could not attend, working to establish a listserv focused on outreach issues, and, conceivably, hosting follow-up meetings of cultural representatives and government officials in the future. Forum participants also said that they are counting on NCD to serve as the key link for maintaining the dialogue initiated at the forum.

Appendix A: AGENDA

OUTREACH FOR ALL: PATHS TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FROM DIVERSE CULTURES

Monday, July 28, 2003 Wyndham Washington Hotel-1400 M St., NW, Washington, DC, 20005

08:30 am Registration (Monticello Foyer) Participant networking

09:00 am Introduction of Presiding Council Member Dr. Gerrie Hawkins, NCD Policy Team

Forum Opening Mr. Milton Aponte, Esq., NCD Council Member

09:05 am Official Welcome Mr. Lex Frieden, NCD Chairperson

09:15 am Greetings: Government Outreach on Diversity and Disability

Invited: Attorney General John Ashcroft and representatives of heads of the following agencies: The Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, the Social Security Administration, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Federal Communications Commission; Congresswoman Donna Christian-Christensen; Congressman Major R. Owens

09:35 am *New Ways of Thinking: New Generations* Ms. Claudia Gordon, Esq.

09:40 am *Foundations for Building a New Framework:*

Why We Are Here Mr. Milton Aponte

09:50 am *Demographic Realities* Dr. Glenn T. Fujiura, University of Illinois, Chicago

10:05 am *The Charge to Forum Workgroups* Ms. Ethel Briggs, Executive Director, NCD

10:15-10:30 am **Movement to Work Group Locations**

10:35 am -12:15 pm: Morning Work Group Session: Paths to Support Individual Empowerment I: Toolkit—Developing a Toolkit for Federal Agency Outreach

12:20 pm General Forum: WORKING LUNCH Work Groups Share Toolkit Ideas
NCD Council Member

Leader: Ms. Kathy Martinez,

1:30-2:30 pm Afternoon Work Group Session: Paths to Support Individual Empowerment II:
Roadmap—Developing an Outreach Roadmap for Multi-Agency Coordination and Collaboration

2:35-2:45pm **Transition back to full group session**

2:50 pm General Forum: Work Groups Share Roadmap Ideas Leader: Ms. Kathy Martinez

3:20 pm *Cultural Differences and Attitudes* Dr. Young Woo Kang, NCD Council Member

3:25 pm *Participant Perspectives: Visions of Success** Leader: Mr. Milton Aponte

4:05 pm Closing: Sur-prizes and Comments

4:30 pm Adjournment

**This closing session will ask federal and non-federal participants to respond to the following questions: A. How might federal agencies collaborate with each other in outreach work to diverse communities? B. What might be the result at the community-level of significantly broadened outreach efforts to people with disabilities from diverse cultures?*

APPENDIX B: Forum Fact Sheet

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

OUTREACH FOR ALL: PATHS TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FROM DIVERSE CULTURES

Wyndham Washington Hotel--Washington, DC

Monday, July 28, 2003

For over a decade, the National Council on Disability (NCD) has worked to make national disability policy, laws, programs, and services more responsive to people with disabilities from the broad array of cultures that enrich our country. The July forum will build on this prior work and incorporate the spirit and intent of the Administration's call within its *New Freedom Initiative* to address the needs of unserved and underserved people. The Forum's specific focus is on effective outreach mechanisms (practices, materials, approaches) that can be used by federal agencies to improve their ability to reach and meaningfully engage people with disabilities

from diverse cultures. The goal of this forum is to develop concrete actions the federal government can undertake. Specifically, the forum aims to:

- **Call Attention to Existing Federal Agency Efforts in Disability and Diversity Outreach:** Provide definitive information on comprehensive outreach efforts as well as the range of strategies used to reach unserved and underserved people with disabilities from diverse cultures.
- **Infuse the New Freedom Initiative with a Cultural Focus:** Provide opportunities for people with disabilities who represent diverse cultures and other people with exemplary outreach approaches to enrich with their experiences the Administration's comprehensive plan to tear down the barriers that face people with disabilities across our country.
- **Initiate dialogue about coordination of outreach practices:** Encourage the development of a roadmap for multi-agency coordination and collaboration so that successful outreach methods and approaches to people from diverse cultures can be shared.
- **Identify a Common Core of Resources:** Critique for improvement a draft toolkit that will include strategies and models of outreach already in use by federal and other agencies serving people from diverse cultures to inform them of their rights and of services and programs available to them.

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