

To: Ann Visalli, Director Office of Management and Budget

From: Diann Jones, Chair Developmental Disabilities Council

Date: November 1, 2010

RE: Budget Hearing
Department of Services for Children, Youth, & Families

Thank you for allowing me to address you this morning. My name is Diann Jones and I am the Chair of the Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council). The DD Council has been advocating for people of all ages with developmental disabilities in Delaware for over 30 years. We also have been represented on the Child Mental Health Advocacy and Advisory Committee for many years and we hope that our good relationship with the KIDS Department will continue into the future for the sake of our children.

In the past several years, the DD Council's Children & Families Committee has begun to work on the gaps in service for children with disabilities who must access the foster care system. Through interactions with the KIDS Dept., with service providers, and with DHSS, it was clear that steps must be taken to allow this system to broaden its expertise and depth to better serve these children.

The DD Council has dedicated this year \$18,000 for an educational opportunity to recruit and retain foster care providers who will be able to appropriately serve children with dual diagnoses. This project will include staff and providers from both the KIDS Dept. and the Department of Health & Social Services to cross the great divide between these two Departments.

Considering that effort and the other gaps for children and families we recommend the following for consideration for this year's annual budget.

1. Continued and expanded foster care training that includes exceptional training for those providers who are able to care for children with developmental disabilities. When a provider is not trained, they feel unqualified to take care of the children and the kids end up moving from home to home to home. We can do better than this.
2. We must provide Foster Care payment increases for all of the foster care providers. All of these children have experienced trauma and pain in their young lives. They deserve the undivided attention, care, and love of their providers. When providers must take in 4 or more children in order to make ends meet, children suffer.

3. All employees and volunteers must complete criminal background checks, sex offender registry checks, child protection registry checks, and adult abuse registry checks before they come in contact with children. The Delaware Code must be updated to reflect these requirements to protect our children in care.
4. If there is any way possible, families must stay together. A system of family support must be put in place to help give families gain the needed resources that will enable them to better care for children, especially if they have disabilities.
5. We need to support the Autism Insurance Bill.

The Developmental Disabilities Council thanks you for allowing us to address you today and for your continued support of children in our care.