**GCDD's First Two Advocacy Days a Success!**

**Insider Highlights**

Last week the General Assembly was in recess all week following the MLK holiday but committees met to discuss the FY2015 Amended Budget. As of publication time for this newsletter, the House was set to vote on the FY2015 Amended Budget.

During the past two weeks, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities held its first two Advocacy Days: **We Need More (NOW/COMP) Waivers** and **Raise the ICWP Rate**. These days were a great success with participants reporting feeling greater confidence in their ability to speak with legislators. Many meetings with legislators were held in which advocates got to tell their stories and why these issues are important to them. If you haven't already done so, please go to the **Dates to Remember** section to register for our upcoming **Advocacy Days and Disability Day at the Capitol**.

Also this week: Furthermore, Senate Bill 1, the autism insurance bill, passed unanimously out of the Senate. It will now go on to the House of Representatives.

**Advocacy of the Week**

We need YOU to get involved TODAY. Here are some things that you can do this week:

1. Forward this newsletter to a friend and invite them to register for one of our Advocacy Days and Disability Day at the Capitol.
2. If you haven't already, check your calendar and register for at least one of the Advocacy Days you want to attend as well as Disability Day at the Capitol. Remember, your voice counts! To register, click the following link: http://www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E_ID=500061&RegType=ATT
3. Mark your calendar to join us for the weekly GCDD Public Policy calls every Monday at 9:30 a.m. during the session. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter 232357 at the prompt.

**Advocacy Corner**
The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is hosting several advocacy days during the legislative session leading up to Disability Day at the Capitol. For a list of the remaining advocacy days, including our annual Disability Day at the Capitol, and a link to register, please see the **Dates to Remember** section.

See the picture below from one of our Advocacy Days along with what one attendee had to say about her experience.

"After I had my traumatic brain injury I lost control over so many things. Advocacy gives me some power and control. That's what today meant for me. I'm hooked!"

- Yvette Pegues, Canton GA resident, reining Mrs. Wheelchair USA, on what Advocacy Day meant to her

**Question of the Week**

Q: Do you know what it means to call your Representative or Senator to the ropes and how to do that?

A: The best thing to do if you would like to visit your legislator is to call their office at the Capitol to request an appointment in advance. However, if you are unable to get an appointment,
there may still be hope that you can meet with your legislator in person. When the Georgia General Assembly is officially in session (times may vary but it is often between 10am and noon), you can go to the third floor of the Capitol and "call your legislator to the ropes." There is a simple form that you must fill out that says who you are, who your legislator is, and why you want to meet with them.

Here is the form to call your Representative to the ropes:

![Representative Message Form]

Here is the form to call your Senator to the ropes:

![Senator Message Form]

Someone will take the note into the chamber and give it to your legislator. If they have time (and they often do, especially for their constituents), they will come out and meet you in the hallway where you are standing behind the ropes. If they cannot meet with you, you can still have the opportunity to send in a note with your contact information and any document on an issue you may wish for them to review. Please visit our Resources/Quick Links section to see several one page documents for advocates on our issues that you may wish to share with your legislators when you visit.

Do you have a question that you would like answered about advocacy or public policy? Submit your question to GCDD.PublicPolicy@gmail.com with the subject line, "Question for Newsletter." If we pick your question, you may see the answer featured in an upcoming issue.
Budget 101

In this section of the newsletter, we will highlight the activities and information regarding the Amended FY2015 and 2016 Budgets.

During the week of January 19, the House Appropriations met all week to discuss the FY2015 Amended budget. This week the FY2015 Amended Budget (HB75) was approved by the House Appropriations committee, and as of Wednesday 1/28/15, was scheduled to go to the full House for a vote. Details of the final House Appropriations Budget were not available at the time of this publication. The next step after a full House vote is for it to go to the Senate where it will be reviewed and modified.

Check out the Unlock website for the most current information.
http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com

To see the key sections of the FY2015 Amended budget most relevant to disability issues, see the following sections and click on the link below:

Section 15: Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
Section 17: Department of Community Health
Section 27: Department of Human Services

HB 75 House Appropriations Tracking Document for DBHDD, DCH, and DHS

For those who want to review the entire budget recommendations from the Governor, see below:
Governor's FY2015 Amended Budget
Amended FY2015 Highlights
Governor's 2016 Budget

Bills

2015 Legislative Bills

This section will present a list of bills that GCDD is tracking by clicking on the link to the GCDD Legislative Report below. Please note the information within this section is current as of Wednesday, January 28 (cutoff for publishing).

GCDD Legislative Report

Both the House and Senate bills will be listed by Bill Number, Sponsor, Title Summary, and the most current activity followed by Comments and Summary of the Bill. Please note that the second line of each bill will reflect the date of the most recent action and what action was taken. You can also click on the bill number within the report to link to the actual bill language itself and get even more detailed information.

Here is an example:
To learn more about how a bill becomes law in Georgia, click below:

To learn more about how a bill becomes law in Georgia, click below:

Tracking a Bill through the General Assembly

**Dates to Remember**

*GCDD Advocacy Days and Disability Day at the Capitol*

Kids Need Real Homes, Not Nursing Homes Day: Wednesday, February 4, 9-12 noon
Employment First Day: Wednesday, February 11, 9-12 noon
Youth Day: Thursday, February 19, 9-12 noon

To register for any of the Advocacy Days or Disability Day, click below:


**Weekly GCDD legislative call:** Every Monday at 9:30 a.m. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter passcode 232357 at the prompt.

Also:
The entire month of February is Self-Advocates Month at the Capitol
Be There 4 Seniors Rally at the Capitol: February 5
Alzheimer's Awareness Day at the Capitol: February 12

**Resources / Quick Links**

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities 2015 Legislative Agenda

For More One Pagers for Advocates, click below:
http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/actionsalerts.html

For Tips on How to Talk to Your Legislator
Accessibility on Capitol Hill

House committee meeting calendar

Senate committee meeting calendar

Watch the Session Live!

Find Your Senator and Representative

Thank you from the GCDD Public Policy Team

Dawn Alford: Acting Public Policy Director

D'Arcy Robb: Public Policy Consultant - Employment First

Dave Zilles: Public Policy Consultant - Unlock the Waiting Lists - Parent Advocate

Join our Advocacy Network Today!