



STEP's FOCUS Conference on Parent Minority Leadership Families of Color United for Special Education

by Jenness Roth, Acting Executive Director

Collaboration and partnership were the words of the day on September 23, 2006, as STEP hosted the first annual Families of Color United for Special Education (FOCUS) conference at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Memphis. Hispanic and African American families from across Tennessee received training and support from STEP and many STEP partners as they joined together in this unique event. Planning for this conference began last year, as STEP staff discussed our need to increase outreach to minority populations. In talking to other agencies, we realized that this was a priority for all of us—an acknowledged need that all providers felt unsure about how to meet. A stakeholder's conference call was held in the Spring to brainstorm strategies. That meeting indicated to us that this would be a tough conference to hold, for many reasons. We wanted to make the conference financially feasible for attendees from all parts of the State; we wanted to ensure that lack of transportation wouldn't prevent families from coming; and we were absolutely committed to providing all materials and sessions in both English and Spanish. We sought input from people from these communities regarding cultural sensitivity and appropriate service delivery options. We also began investigating potential partnerships among other disability service organizations—like the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Down Syndrome Association of Memphis, University of Tennessee's Boling Center, the Tennessee State Department of Education, and the Student Council for Exceptional Children at the University of Memphis. To our great delight, all of these organizations contributed to the conference either financially or through in-kind support.

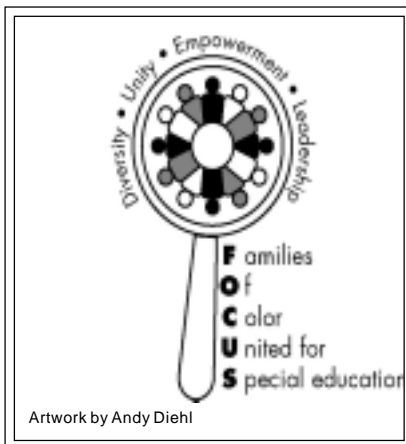
Because of the generous support of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, we were able to bring in Glenda Horton-Manning as a keynote speaker—a dynamic motivational African-American presenter. The Council also provided much needed support to families who required financial help to travel in and stay at the conference hotel. The Down Syndrome Association of Memphis contributed to the travel needs of families as well, and the Student Council for Exceptional Children organized and provided childcare for families. Elizabeth Bishop from UT's Boling Center helped us identify and work with the confer

ence hotel. Since literacy for children with disabilities was a topic of the conference, funds were provided through STEP's participation in the Tennessee State Improvement Grant (SIG). Other partners participating in the conference included Family Voices, The Arc of Tennessee, The Mid-South Arc, Tennessee Voices for Children, the Disability Law and Advocacy Center and Memphis City Schools.

Families received information, both in Spanish and English, about special education laws, special education services, and the importance of minority advocacy. STEP understands that families who experience challenges because of minority status, poverty, language barriers, or rural isolation do not typically turn out for this kind of an event. Fortunately, over 100 parents attended this conference—bringing nearly 30 children with them. Many professionals attended and 15 agencies set up information booths and contributed to a panel session.

Because about 30% of the attendees spoke only Spanish, all sessions were simultaneously translated. This took some getting used to by the speakers—but everyone pitched in and were very flexible about their speaking styles. Brenda Hilger, who serves on STEP's governing board, noted that "there were such unity in advocacy and knowledge that minority polarization was essentially non-existent." Families of different backgrounds supported each other in every way throughout the day. One dad spoke passionately about how he now had renewed hope for his young child with Down syndrome, because he had learned about special education rights and had met a self-advocate with Down syndrome at the conference who could speak French. On the evaluation forms, many parents mentioned that, after having attended, they no longer felt alone in their situation. One parent said that she had learned "not to settle--to always serve as your child's greatest advocate." Ninety-nine percent of the returned evaluations rated the conference at the highest possible level.

Mr. Joseph Fisher, assistant commissioner with the Dept. of Education, addressed the whole group in a session and spoke individually with many family members during the day. He indicated that it would be a great idea to continue this type of conference every year--and to have similar conferences in all parts of the State. STEP would very much like to do just that--and will, with a "little help from our friends."



¡Marquen sus Calendarios!

El sábado 2 de June del 2007 presentaremos una conferencia en Nashville, Tennessee diseñado especialmente para las familias que pertenecen a las diferentes minorías del estado de Tennessee.
1/ 800 - 975 2919

Mark Your Calendars!

STEP's Minority Parent Leadership Conference will be held in Nashville on June 2, 2007. This conference is designed specifically to empower and inform families from minority populations in TN
1/ 800 - 280-7837

STEP WORKSHOPS ACROSS TENNESSEE Workshop Schedule

If you want to attend a workshop in your area, would you help us by letting us know so we can schedule one for you? Call **(800) 280-STEP** or e-mail us at **information@tnstep.org** -- Preregistration is requested for all workshops.
(E=East TN, M=Middle TN, W=West TN)

Date	Time	Workshop	TN	Location	Contact
03/06/07	5:00 pm	Basic	M	Nashville/Davidson Co.	(615) 936-5209
03/13/07	6:00 pm	IEP	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 867-2946
03/14/07	9:00 am	Early Childhood	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton co.	(423) 867-2946
03/20/07	9:30 am	Basic	M	Nashville/Davidson Co.	(615)322-8200
03/28/07	2:00 pm	Basic	W	Jackson/Madison Co.	(731) 688-3888
03/28/07	8:30 am	Basic	W	Centerville/Hickman Co.	(931) 698-1720
03/29/07	6:00 pm	IEP	W	Memphis/Shelby Co.	(901) 547-7588
04/03/07	7:00 pm	Basic	W	Bolivar/Hardeman Co.	(731) 376-1788
04/10/07	5:30 am	Basic	M	Clarksville / Montgomery Co.	(931) 358-0117
04/10/07	6:00 pm	Evaluation	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 867-2946
04/16/07	9:00 am	Basic	M	Springfield/Robertson Co.	(615) 382-3609
04/17/07	6:00 pm	Section 504	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 867-2946
04/18/07	1:00 pm	Basic	M	Gallatin/Sumner Co.	(615) 452-1054
04/19/07	9:00 am	HS Transition	W	Jackson/Madison Co.	(731) 668-3688
05/03/07	5:00 pm	Basic	M	Waverly/Humphreys Co.	(615) 296-5020
05/10/07	9:15 am	Basic	W	Memphis/Shelby Co.	(901) 683-2911
05/15/07	9:00 am	Basic	M	Lebanon/Wilson Co.	(615) 444-0597
06/02/07	9:00 am	Basic	E	Knoxville/Knox Co.	(865) 579-2507
06/02/07	9:00 am	HS Transition	E	Knoxville/Knox Co.	(865) 579-2507
08/03/07	9:00 am	Basic	M	Murfreesboro/Rutherford Co	(615) 898-2458
08/22/07	1:00 pm	Basic	M	Gallatin/Sumner Co.	(615) 452-1054
09/15/07	8:00 am	Transition Institute All Day Event	E	Knoxville/Knox Co.	1 (800)280-7837

This list is as of 2/23/07, more workshops are being added daily! Please call us or go to our Website (www.tnstep.org) to learn of the newest schedule of workshops! These trainings are **free** to parents or other family members! Professionals are welcome to attend. There may be a nominal charge for some materials

Additional Ways to Benefit from STEP Training

STEP now has 3 workshops available through our video lending library. These can be checked out by an individual or by a support group that would like to watch the training together. This has proven to be an effective way to get the information if there is not a workshop scheduled in your area or if you would like to view it in parts at regularly scheduled meetings.

Current available DVD's:

Call 1 (800) 280-7837

- ~ Communication, Negotiation and Conflict Resolution ~
- ~ Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: Anti-Discrimination ~
- ~ BASIC Rights: A Parent's Introduction to Special Education ~



Goal Bank: IEP goals Website

STEP receives many calls requesting assistance with writing goals and objectives. This website is a tool to use to assist in how to word goals in measureable terms and also breaks goals down into measurable steps. This is so critical in ensuring that the IEP is written in a way that will assist the IEP team in monitoring student progress and identifying when new goals are needed and what is working well.

<http://www.bridges4kids.org/IEP/iep.goal.bank.pdf>



STEP AHEAD is published by STEP, Support and Training for Exceptional Parents, Inc. To comply with Section 507 of the HHS Appropriation Act of 1997, STEP discloses that this publication was printed entirely with federal money through grants from the U.S. Department of Education. Additionally, the US DOE does not make any endorsement regarding the content or quality of STEP's programs. Permission is granted to photocopy this publication for distribution. Any reprinting of articles is permitted only after permission is obtained and STEP is given proper credit. Comments or inquiries are welcome and should be directed to:
Jenness Roth, Acting Executive Director, 712 Professional Plaza, Greeneville, TN 37745.
Telephone: (423) 639-0125 or (800) 280-STEP. Text: (423) 639-8802 E-mail: information@tnstep.org



STEP is a partner with the TN Dept. of Education State Improvement Grant

Love To Eat?

Night Of 100 Dinners!

Love STEP?

These two loves combine in a fun filled event that will raise funds to help STEP, Inc. in our mission to reach more families who have children with disabilities in TN with information, support and training



It Is Easy To Make A Difference!

"Night Of 100 Dinners" will take place the first two weeks of April. The goal of "Night of 100 Dinners" is to recruit 100 caring individuals to host dinners that will raise \$50 to \$100 each. Each host should establish a minimum guest donation, i.e. 5 guests at \$20 or 4 guests at \$25

First ~ Decide to host a dinner ~ Call 1 (800) 280- 7837 (STEP) to say "YES" I will serve as a host/hostess for a dinner

Second ~ Be Creative. You could: contact a restaurant in your area and ask them to donate 4, 6, or 8 meals or get pizza donated, host a cook-out, or have a theme dinner



Third ~ Invite your friends and family to dinner and let them know that instead of paying for dinner, they will be making a contribution equal to or above the cost of the dinner to STEP, Inc. Explain how STEP has helped you, your child or someone you know.



Fourth ~ Set the date during the first 2 weeks of April. Enjoy your dinner!

***Fifth ~ Collect the donations and mail them to: STEP, Inc. 712 Professional Plaza
Greeneville, TN 37745***

It's exciting to think you can join 100 hosts at the same time and make a gallant effort to help STEP get the information to families that will empower them to have high expectations that will lead to improved educational outcomes for their children with disabilities!

Don't Wait...Call Now

1 (800) 280 -7837

Some Of STEP's Parent Training Grant Accomplishments in 2006

PTI staff: Full time: Jenness Roth, Alena Sampson, Karen Harrison, Donna Jennings, Sally Ottinger

Half time: Kimberly Trent and Steven Glowicki

★ Met 1 on 1 with 177 families to provide individual assistance

★ Attended 55 IEP meetings

★ Provided Alternative Dispute Resolution assistance that helped resolve 40 situations where a due process was likely

★ Reached nearly 11,000 people with our Newsletter

★ Mailed 941 Information Packets to families

★ Presented 100 workshops reaching 1,819 participants

★ Had contact w/ 17,271 parents & 9,764 professionals through calls/letters

★ Reached 3,408 families from culturally and racially diverse populations

★ Had 16,629 website hits

Q

We're Glad You Asked

Estamos Contentos Que Pregunte

A

Q: We just moved from one district to another in our state. My six year old daughter has a current evaluation and IEP which I gave to the school psychologist. She told me it could take weeks to get my child reevaluated and into a program. My other children were registered and went right into classes. This doesn't seem fair to me. What can I do to speed up this process?

A: The law is very clear for children who transfer within the same state. Your school district must provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to your child, including services comparable to those described in the IEP from the previous district. These services will continue to be provided until the district adopts the IEP from your previous district, or they develop a new IEP that meets all the requirements. You may wish to call the special education director in your district and request a meeting that addresses this issue. Make sure the meeting is soon!

P: Nosotros nos hemos mudado de un distrito a otro en el mismo estado. Mi hija de seis años tiene su evaluación y su PEI vigentes, los cuales se los de a la psicóloga de la escuela. Ella me dijo que tomaría semanas para que mi hija fuera reevaluada y puesta en un programa especial. Mis otros hijos se matricularon y ya están dando clases. Esto no parece ser justo par mi. ¿Que puedo hacer para agilizar este proceso?

R: La ley es muy clara para los niños que se transfieren dentro del mismo estado. Su distrito escolar debe darle una educación pública gratuita y apropiada (FAPE) a su hija, incluyendo los servicios comparados a los que se definen en el Programa de Educación Individual (IEP) del distrito anterior. Estos servicios continuaran siendo proveidos hasta que el distrito adopte el IEP del distrito anterior, o hasta que ellos desarrollen un nuevo IEP que reúnan todos los requisitos. Llame al director de Educación Especial de su distrito y pida que se conduzca una reunión que resuelva este problema. Asegúrese que la reunión se haga pronto.

Thanks to PAVE Pipeline for allowing us to reprint this Q & A

Understanding IDEA 2004 Regulations

The Office of Special Education Programs is committed to providing information about the IDEA Regulations that went into effect October 13th, 2006. This site was created to provide a "one-stop shop" for resources related to IDEA and its implementing regulations. It is a "living" website and will change and grow as resources and information become available. When fully implemented, the site will provide searchable versions of IDEA and the regulations, access to cross-referenced content from other laws (e.g., the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), etc.), video clips on selected topics, topic briefs on selected regulations, links to OSEP's Technical Assistance and Dissemination (TA&D) Network and a Q&A Corner where you can submit questions, and a variety of other information sources. As items are completed and added to this site, we invite you to grow and learn with us as we implement these regulations. Go to <http://idea.ed.gov> to see curriculums, model forms, video clips, webcast presentations, Q & A's, and much more!

Q: My son is in the second grade, and is failing reading. He didn't do well in first grade either, but his teacher said he was immature and would catch up in second grade. He is still way behind, and I am worried that he may have a learning disability or an attention problem and I want him to be tested for these. When I asked his teacher about that process, she said I needed to wait to let them work with him for awhile longer to see if he responds to some different teaching methods they are trying. I'm glad they are trying new things with him, but I am worried about more delays before he gets the help he might need. What do I need to do? Is there anything I can do to speed up this process and get him evaluated?

A: It sounds like your son's school might be making sure that he receives appropriate, research-based instruction in reading before referring him for further evaluation. Because lack of appropriate instruction in reading must be ruled out before determining the presence of a learning disability, schools have to demonstrate the provision of quality instruction by qualified personnel; this demonstration can be part of a complete evaluation for a learning disability.

Many states are using an process called "response to intervention" RTI, as an approach to evaluation; this means that a child will be given specific reading instruction using research-based, measurable instructional methodologies to see if he/she has simply not had quality systematic teaching in a way that met their learning style. This is usually implemented if a student has failed to respond to the typical instruction given in the general education classroom. RTI is a good idea because it means that kids don't need to "wait to fail" before they begin an evaluative process.

You should be informed by the school about his progress and his ability to benefit from the new levels of instruction. What you should keep in mind is that at any point in this process, you have a right to ask for evaluation for special education eligibility. Systems must be responsive within the state's timeframe for special education evaluation. Remember that a written request is best. So make sure the school keeps you informed about your child's progress, and at any point if things don't seem to be helping, request further evaluation!

Don't Miss This Years Disability MegaConference



March 31 - June 2

- Great speakers
- Childcare
- Networking
- Information booths
- Meet other families
- Become empowered
- Leave renewed!

www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org/

Or Call: Steve Jacobs (615)248-5878

A Word From STEP's Outreach Director

Greetings,

As in all of our programs, we serve children with a wide range of disabilities from age's birth-22. Our mission is to equip families with information regarding special education rights, both on the federal and state level. We assist them through the process of how to navigate the special education system. As research shows, many families who are part of diverse cultures, economically disadvantaged, have literacy challenges, or English is not their primary language, find the process of receiving appropriate services for their children with disabilities particularly difficult to navigate. In our Outreach program, we try to meet these needs by providing intensive one on one service to families who may need this additional assistance.

Communication between the sender and receiver can often times be misinterpreted due to cultural differences. A family's communication norms, attitude, beliefs, or behaviors may be culturally based and therefore misconstrued to mean something different. We try to understand the unique perspectives and experiences of all families representing a wide spectrum of cultural differences. STEP's Outreach program can assist those families in breaking down the communication barriers with educators in order to ultimately serve the best interest of their child. All children are entitled to the same level of education; therefore we don't want communication breakdowns to be the cause of a child not receiving services.

If you want to learn more about your rights or have an interest in sponsoring a workshop, please feel free to contact us. Best wishes,

Alena Sampson

Outreach Director

What STEP is About

A	I	D	E	A	W	O	R	P	K	N	T	S	Y	S
W	E	T	L	T	J	A	Q	A	J	E	R	C	T	D
T	O	D	Q	O	E	L	Q	R	S	R	A	H	I	H
M	R	M	I	V	L	G	Q	E	V	D	N	O	L	K
X	J	T	R	A	I	N	I	N	G	L	S	O	I	B
Y	E	D	I	W	E	T	A	T	S	I	I	L	B	L
L	I	B	R	A	R	Y	S	S	V	H	T	S	A	A
A	B	I	L	I	T	I	E	S	D	C	I	K	S	R
C	O	M	M	U	N	I	C	A	T	I	O	N	I	R
N	O	I	T	A	M	R	O	F	N	I	N	L	D	E
H	S	I	N	A	P	S	K	M	O	T	O	V	F	F
U	O	V	S	R	E	E	T	N	U	L	O	V	I	E
P	V	Z	S	P	O	H	S	K	R	O	W	W	E	R
M	T	R	O	P	P	U	S	L	W	J	T	T	P	A
J	I	D	M	I	K	G	J	C	I	C	E	A	T	K
ABILITIES							CHILDREN							
COMMUNICATION							DISABILITY							
IDEA							IEP							
INFORMATION							LIBRARY							
PARENTS							REFERRAL							
SCHOOLS							SPANISH							
STATEWIDE							SUPPORT							
TRAINING							TRANSITION							
VOLUNTEERS							WORKSHOPS							

After all the words are found the unused letters reveal a hidden message! Have Fun!

Created by [Puzzlemaker](http://www.puzzlemaker.com) at DiscoverySchool.com

Meet Our Newest Staff Members



I am Kimberly Trent and I am the new Outreach Coordinator in the Memphis office. I am married to Mark Trent and the mother of two sons; Jordan, who is 6 yrs.old and Xavier who is 5 yrs. old and autistic.

Recently,my family was featured on the TODAY show series on Autism. You can view that clip at: <http://www.autismspeaks.org/index2.php> If you click on "Be informed" and then on "what it is" and then click on the Video series library. Once there, click on "What causes Autism?" and the clip featuring my family will play. My son is also the face you see on the front of the current pamphlets for TRIAD (The Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders) at Vanderbilt.

I am honored to be a part of STEP and look forward to serving West Tennessee!

Hey friends and parents across Tennessee! I am Steven Glowicki, and am so excited about being surrounded by all my Stepsisters! I am 24 years old, and came to STEP in April after having worked with individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities for over 6 years. But I became interested initially because of my wonderful relationship with my 16 year old cousin, Sarah, who has various disabilities. It is so great to work for this organization that cares so much for kids and families.

I work out of the Greeneville office and am actively working as Project Assistant on the Parent Training grant, as well as working on the Transition and Rehabilitation Program and the State Improvement Grant.



Winners In Summer Reading Contest

Many people accepted the challenge to check out books from our STEP library this summer. This is a great way to become informed on topics that will assist you in being a prepared participant at your child's IEP meetings.

Rachel Freeman from Memphis checked out and returned the most number of books...way to go Rachel! In addition, Brandi Fair of Greeneville was drawn from all those who participated. Both of these ladies will receive a STEP diversity pin and a book entitled: "Reach for the Moon", Poems and Stories by 13 year old Samantha Abee who is learning disabled. Email or call to find out what we have in your area of interest. information@tnstep.org

Learn It...Live It...

E-Learning class to promote disability rights



The Partners in Policymaking program introduces an e-learning site to give participants the opportunity to supplement their learning. It was created to help people with developmental disabilities, their parents, family members and friends, educators and service providers. Partners graduates can refresh their skills and stay current on best practices; and others can increase their knowledge and understanding of best practices in the disability field, and learn how to communicate effectively with their elected officials.

Five online courses are now available to anyone who would like to increase their knowledge and skills:

"Partners in Time" - a tutorial on the history of people with disabilities from ancient times until today;

"Partners in Education" - a discussion on special education options to help parents get the most out of the school system for their kids;

"Making Your Case" - education on the legislative process and how to effectively communicate with public officials;

"Partners in Employment" - a career planning class for persons with disabilities, including assistance with resume and portfolio development; and

"Partners in Living" - to learn and understand the important concepts of self-determination, family support, community living and assistive technology to create a meaningful life that is independent, inclusive, productive, self-determined and integrated.

Go to <http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com> to start!

The goal of *Partners in Policymaking* is to educate participants to be active partners with those who make policy.

For information about Partners in policy making in Tennessee visit <http://state.tn.us/cdd/partners.html>

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)

NSTACC objectives are to Assist State Education Agencies with collecting data on IDEA (2004) Part B State Performance Plan Indicator 13 and using these data to improve transition services; to generate knowledge that provides a foundation for states to improve transition services that enhance post-school outcomes; to **build capacity** of states and local educational agencies to implement effective transition education and services that improve post-school outcomes; and to disseminate information to state personnel, practitioners, researchers, parents, and students regarding effective transition education and services that improve post-school outcomes.

NSTTAC found curriculum that has shown to be effective in teaching students functional life skills no matter what type of classroom they are in, or what their disability is. They have 9 sample lesson plans that a parent or student can use to help the IEP team identify specific researched based practices that will help a student learn important life skills.

SAMPLE LESSON PLANS: Teaching Functional Life Skills

- "One More Than" technique for purchasing items
- Savings account, bill paying, and money order skills
- Housekeeping and janitorial skills
- Meal planning and nutrition
- Purchasing skills (stores with aisles)
- Cleaning appliances and doing laundry
- Grocery aisle signs and locating items
- Bowling and pinball
- Orienting to the environment to reduce stereotypic behavior



To find these lessons plans, go to the main website <http://www.nsttac.org>

Click **RESEARCH TO PRACTICE LESSON PLANS**

Transportation is a key element for young people striving for happy, productive adulthood. They need to get to the classroom, the work place and other destinations of community life. Adults who do not own a car and drive are still able to find the "route to freedom" through the use of public transportation.

Easter Seals Project ACTION is pleased to present a new curriculum of essential lessons for students with disabilities in grades 8-12: "Public Transportation: A Route to Freedom" That's what this curriculum is all about, it is designed for use by educators, rehabilitation specialists, counselors and other professionals who work with young people.



It is a great follow-up to **Buses and Trains for Everyone**, a curriculum targeted to children in grades K - 8, which teaches concepts and skills needed to use public transportation. Its Web page provides numerous resources for teachers and students, including an online game, and the print and CD-ROM package can be ordered through the Clearinghouse or contacting them below.

Visit <http://projectaction.easterseals.com> or mail to:

1425 K Stree, NW, Sutie 200, Washington, DC 20005

Phone: (202) 347 - 3066 Toll-free: (800) 659-6428

Fax: (202) 737-7914 TDD: (202) 347-7385

WORK INCENTIVES PLANNING AND ASSISTANCE (WIPA) PROGRAM

In October 2006, the Social Security Administration (SSA) replaced the Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach Program with the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program. The Program was renamed because of an increased emphasis on work incentives, return to work supports and jobs for beneficiaries. SSA, as authorized by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, awarded cooperative agreements to a variety of community organizations to serve as WIPA projects. Two organizations operate the Benefits To Work (WIPA) project in Tennessee, The Center for Independent Living of Middle Tennessee and the Tennessee Disability Coalition. Benefits To Work provides SSA disability beneficiaries in the state access to work incentive planning and assistance services.

The goal of the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Program is to better enable SSA's beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work. Each WIPA Project has Community Work Incentive coordinators (CWICs) who will:

- Provide work incentives planning and assistance directly to SSA's beneficiaries with disabilities to assist them in their employment efforts;
- Conduct outreach efforts in collaboration with SSA's Program Manager for Recruitment and Outreach contractor to beneficiaries with disabilities (and their families), who are potentially eligible to participate in Federal or State work incentives programs;
- Work in cooperation with Federal, State, and private agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve beneficiaries with disabilities;
- Refer beneficiaries with disabilities to appropriate Employment Networks based on the beneficiary's expressed needs and types of impairments;
- Provide general information on the adequacy of health benefits coverage that may be offered by an employer of a beneficiary with a disability and the extent to which other health benefits coverage may be available to that beneficiary in coordination with Medicare and/or Medicaid; and
- Provide information on the availability of protection and advocacy services for beneficiaries with disabilities and how to access such services.

For additional information call the Benefits To Work toll free number: 1-888-839-5333

STEP's On TRAC project (RSA, Parent Information and Training Grant) Accomplishments in 2006

Covering the 34 counties of East Tennessee are full time staff: Jennifer Berven – Program Coordinator, Donna Brogden – Transition Facilitator Staff who dedicate a part of their time to On TRAC are Jim Diehl, Steven Glowicki, Sally Ottinger, Donna Jennings



- 2,271 phone calls provided support directly to consumers or parents
- 223 letters and 440 emails contacts were made with consumers and parents
- 358 individuals were reached through 8 formal workshops on Transition
- 337 consumers and parents were reached through 80 Informal or Brief Presentations.
- 86 consumers learned Self Advocacy / Self Determination through training or 1-on-1 assistance
- 178 consumers or their family received one-on-one, intensive assistance
- 133 Information Packets were provided
- 19 IEP or other meetings were attended

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS and make plans to attend the 2007 Institute in Knoxville.
The TENTATIVE date is September 15, 2007**

Important Tips for Transition By Jennifer Berven

• *TRANSITION AT AGE 16:*

The IEP in place the year a student turns 16 must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and independent living skills, where appropriate. Goals should be both academic and functional with the post-school outcomes in mind. The law change to remove age 14 does not prevent an IEP team from addressing transition issues at an earlier age if necessary. If you are not sure where to start, STEP has a packet with some basic planning ideas and tools.

• *PRESENT LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE:*

When planning for transition, be sure that all areas of the student's life have been considered, and present levels of performance recorded. Often the area of the IEP where levels are reported only lists standardized scores. Usually the assessments listed are related to achievement or academic related scores with no qualitative narrative. Remind the IEP team that assessment and present levels of performance are necessary to develop goals in the required areas. The goals should focus on achievement in the 4 areas of Post School Outcomes: Employment, Independent / Supported Living, Post Secondary Education / Training, Community Involvement. Assessing transition related areas does not always mean a standardized test. Informal evaluations such as skill checklists along with parent input and student self-report will provide valuable information about their NEEDS, and PREFERENCES.

• *FUNCTIONAL VOCATIONAL EVALUATION:*

This assessment that provides information about job/ career interests, aptitudes and skills. It may be gathered through situational (hands-on) assessments, observations, or formal measures and should be practical. This does not always have to be done by Vocational Rehabilitation or the vocational assessments taken by typical students. Even if a student has not chosen a specific profession, basic functional work skills can be evaluated and goals identified that will assist the student in developing an interest or preference for certain activities that might lead to an interest in a certain job or field.

• *GOALS FOR ACADEMIC vs FUNCTIONAL SKILLS:*

Transition services now include activities that focus on improving the ACADEMIC and FUNCTIONAL achievement of the child to facilitate movement from school to post-school activities. The law states there must be measurable goals related to education, employment, AND training no matter what the student's skill levels is. Goals based upon a student's independent living or community involvement needs should be included as appropriate. One does not have to forfeit functional goals in order to focus on the academic goals necessary to achieve a regular high school diploma. All goals both functional and academic should focus on a student's ability to achieve the skills necessary for independent living in the community, maintaining significant friendships and accessing post secondary education if that is his/her choice.

• *ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICES:*

More than half the students receiving special education services in Tennessee in 2004 exited services from ages 17 – 19, and approximately 80% of those students those ages, left without a regular diploma. Students are eligible until the year they turn 22 OR until they receive a REGULAR diploma. Students, with the support of their full IEP team, who decide to exit with a SPECIAL ED diploma need to be reminded that they are eligible to return to receive services through the school year they turn 22. Often students get frustrated about their current placement or program because it does not meet their needs as a maturing young adult, and often decide to exit, or stop cooperating with their program at age 18. In *Letter to Borucki (16 IDLER 884)*, OSEP staff stated that a student's failure to cooperate with school staff may be an indication of the need to reevaluate, revise the IEP or change the educational placement... and "does not relieve the school officials of the responsibility of a FAPE. Students and families should understand the impact a special education diploma or certificate of attendance might have on their plans for the future. A student can still walk the stage and "graduate" with same-age peers, and continue to receive services supported by the school system that will continue to develop skills. Continuing to receive services also does not have to interfere with them pursuing, vocational or independent living goals. Many parents and students hear "we don't have anything for you" as students get older and feel that they do not have the right to explore other options. They should not be denied FAPE because their needs do not fit existing programs.

• *GATEWAYS and GRADUATION:*

A student with an IEP who has passed all 3 Gateway exams, may be eligible for a Regular Diploma. Unknown numbers of students are exiting with a Special Education Diploma and 4- 5 years of eligibility in which they could continue to work on those skills. If you or a student you know falls into this category, encourage them to discuss with their IEP team options that exist, or that could be developed for them to continue to develop their Gateway Skills in a setting that meets their needs, and still walk the stage with same-age peers

• *SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE:*

Any student who graduates with a regular diploma OR is no longer eligible under IDEA due to age must be provided with a Summary of Performance including academic, and functional performance and include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the post-secondary goals. Ask staff early how that summary will be developed and what it will contain. Students who exit high school or graduate with any other diploma are not entitled to a Summary of Performance.





Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage

PAID

GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE 37743
PERMIT 24

Support & Training for Exceptional Parents, Inc.
712 Professional Plaza
Greeneville, TN 37745

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

STEP AHEAD

Inclusion Is...

If you search in the law for the word "inclusion" it is not there...but the concept is woven throughout the entire IDEA. Students with disabilities being educated with their non-disabled peers is called Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Here are a few ideas that showcase what inclusion is about.



All children learning together in the same schools and the same classrooms (regardless of degree of educational challenge) with the services and supports necessary for success.



All children participating in all aspects of school life. Involvement in academic classes as well as non-academic activities, including clubs, proms, graduation, field trips, assemblies and other activities.

All children having their unique needs met in the same setting they would attend if not educationally challenged.



Giving children with and without disabilities opportunities (and support) to interact and develop friendships with each other.

Education which emphasizes collaboration between what was once referred to as "special" and "regular".

Children learning side by side regardless of the differences in their individual educational goals or functional levels in classrooms with their age and grade peers.

Educating all children (and adults) to understand and accept diversity. Recognizing each child's unique needs, gifts, and talents.

Having students with challenges follow the same schedule as their peers without disabilities.

Providing access to all school facilities for ALL children. (cafeteria, library, playground)