

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

New Resource and Guidelines on Health & Wellness of Persons with Disabilities



This past July, on the 15th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Office of the Surgeon General issued the first-ever *Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities*. "As

with the ADA, this Call to Action is a reminder that people with disabilities are important members of our society, and that including them in all aspects of American life is not only required by our nation's law, but also by our nation's conscience," said Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services. "Individuals with disabilities are newborn infants, children, teens, working-age adults and older adults of all races and ethnicities. They live in towns, cities and rural areas. They attend schools and places of worship, vote, marry, have children, work and play. They also need health care and health promotion programs for the same reasons we all do: to stay well, to be active and to participate in community life," said Leavitt.

In his introduction to the *Call to Action*, Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona, M.D says that with the recognition that disability is not an illness, the emphasis increasingly is on continuity of care and the relationship between a person with a disability and the environment at the physical, emotional and environmental levels.

(More on Health & Wellness page 2)

Righting a Wrong— One Person's Story



Sometimes it seems like the world is crumbling around us and we just can't go on. But those are the times when we most need to look into the future to hold on to our faith

and hope, and to each other. After logging over 25 years of engineering and managerial experience, I experienced an illness that left me with a disability and using a wheelchair. While my disability left me unable to walk, it gave me strength in other areas of my life. My hope is that you will gain some insight by reading my story about righting a wrong. All the characters and names in this story are fictitious, in order to give all parties their privacy.

After working several years in the engineering department of a major multinational corporation, I had one technician and four engineers reporting to me. Gradually I noticed a problem with my walking. Eventually my doctors diagnosed me with a hereditary disorder that would eventually take away my ability to walk and lift heavy objects. After telling the Company about my medical complications, they granted me the reasonable accommodation of assigning me a technician. Joe directly reported to me -- he was my arms and legs -- he did all the lifting and climbing that I was unable to do.

This accommodation was working just fine, when unfortunately my Company decided to restructure and downsize its operations. The boss of my Company

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Health & Wellness (cont'd)

Today, 54 million Americans—more than one fifth of us — are living with at least one disability. Since the incidence of disability tends to increase with age, this number is likely to grow as the “baby boom” generation reaches its 70’s and 80’s. The sheer numbers of people with disabilities today and tomorrow mean that disability is an issue for the nation as a whole, not just professionals working in the public health field or individuals and families that live with disability. People with disabilities need to know how to protect, preserve and improve their health in the same ways as everyone else.

As Margaret J. Giannini, MD, Director, HHS Office on Disability said in thanking Secretary Leavitt and Surgeon General Carmona for their leadership on this project,

“...health is for all of us – whether we have a disability or not.”

This *Call to Action* encourages health care providers to see and treat the whole person, not just the disability; educators to teach about disability; a public to see an individual’s abilities, not just his or her disability; and a community to ensure accessible health care and wellness services for persons with disabilities. This approach is based on the knowledge that good health means the same thing for everyone, and that the best possible health status and quality of years of life should be a goal for everyone, whether experiencing a disability or not.

The four goals included in *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities* are:

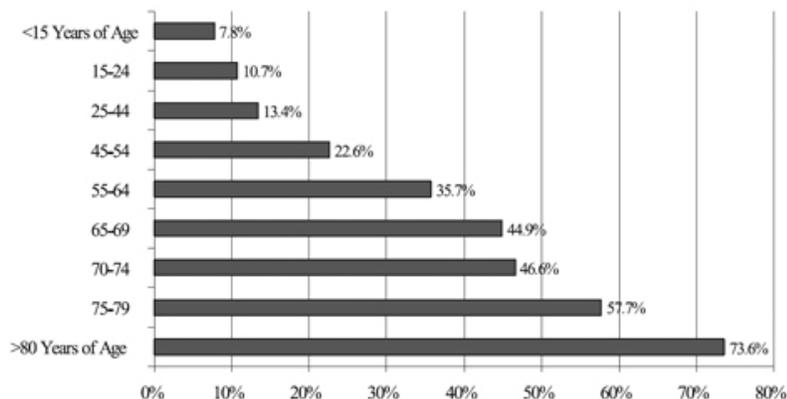
GOAL 1: Increase understanding nationwide that people with disabilities can lead long, healthy, and productive lives.

GOAL 2: Increase knowledge among health care professionals and provide them with tools to screen, diagnose, and treat the whole person with a disability with dignity.

GOAL 3: Increase awareness among people with disabilities of the steps they can take to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

GOAL 4: Increase accessible health care and support services to promote independence for people with disabilities.

Prevalence of Disability by Age Group, 1997



Disability was defined as anyone who: (a) used a wheelchair, cane, crutches or walker; (b) had difficulty with one or more functional limitations; (c) had difficulty with one or more activities of daily living; (d) had one or more specified conditions; (e) had any other mental or emotional condition that seriously interfered with everyday activities; (f) had a condition that limited the ability to work around the house; (g) if 16–67 years of age, had a condition that made it difficult to work at a job or business; or (h) received federal benefits based on an inability to work. (Surgeon General report)

The Commission for Persons with Disabilities is pleased to bring this new *Call to Action* by the Office of the Surgeon General to the attention of the wider community. People with disabilities were involved in producing the report as well as numerous disability related agencies. It is an excellent resource that can be useful to many outside the field of healthcare, as well as those involved in medicine and community health. The document contains

very useable information in an easy to access format. Several tables provide a good summary of basic statistics about the range, type, and prevalence of disability in this country. A helpful Glossary of Terms, an extensive list of References and other Resources are included at the end.

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Health & Wellness (cont'd)

We encourage you to get a copy and read it. The complete report is available online at: <www.surgeongeneral.gov/reportspublications.html> and <www.hhs.gov/od>. Remember, if you do not have a computer, you can use the ones in the public libraries. The Office of the Surgeon General is part of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services · 200 Independence Avenue, S.W. · Washington, D.C. 20201; 1-877-696-6775

by Carolyn Thompson

Righting a Wrong (cont'd)

came up to me and said, "Well Jack, I think we're going to have to downsize a bit, and we have to get rid of your right hand man, Joe." At the same time he told me maybe I might want to go out on disability benefits if I had any financial concerns.

A few weeks later I received a call from the Company personnel representative telling me she was faxing me a new job description. The job description said I should be able to lift 20 to 50 pounds independently -- this was something the Company knew I was unable to do! As the weeks went on, I was pressured to do more and more physical activities without any accommodation to my disability. At this point, I felt I had no choice but to file an internal grievance with the Company. Unfortunately, my grievance didn't seem to get me anywhere.

So, again I felt I had no choice -- I had to file an employment discrimination complaint with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD). MCAD told me that the Company could not assign me a job that they knew I could not perform physically.

After I filed my discrimination complaint with MCAD, the Company threatened to fire me. When this happened, I called MCAD back and spoke to the investigator handling my case-- she told me the Company cannot willfully hurt or threaten you when you file a complaint with the MCAD--this is called retaliation. So I ended up having to file a second complaint with MCAD because the Company

retaliated against me in reaction to my original complaint.

Two weeks later I had a call from the personnel representative asking me if I had made a decision whether to go out on disability benefits. Knowing that this could be my only opportunity to secure something financially better than short-term unemployment compensation, I said yes. The personnel representative said she would help me go through the process of filling out the paperwork to get me out of the Company on medical disability coverage.

Once I signed the papers to apply for medical disability benefits, the Company scheduled a very nice going-away dinner party for me. To me, the party felt more like it was for my colleagues to make them feel like the Company was doing well by me by putting me out on medical disability. In reality, I was being railroaded right out the front door.

Over the next few months, I ended up talking to people on the phone, consulting with advisers at bureaus throughout the state and accessing the Web to retrieve more information on disability discrimination. There's a vast wealth of information out there to help individuals with disabilities to fight discrimination. Before I knew it I had filled a three-inch binder full of documentation and legal strategy. I became a not-so-pretend paralegal through this process. In the end, through mediation, I was able to win a six-figure settlement. This enabled me to achieve a mid-career change by going back to college and learning a new profession. While it took a great deal of effort to win, winning is certainly better than losing.

Righting this wrong was perhaps the most difficult thing I have ever done but I found enough strength to believe in myself. I have been blessed with so many gifts and, most important, the courage to continue doing whatever I believe in.

I urge people with disabilities encountering discrimination (or anyone witnessing discrimination) to take action. No matter how large or how small the company, employment discrimination against people with disabilities is wrong. Lastly, be kind to yourself, and ask for what you need.

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- Jan. 4 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7-9 pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture, 7-8 pm, on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- Jan. 4 **RSI (repetitive strain injury) Monthly Drop-in Support & Information Meeting** (no registration is necessary) on first Wednesday of each month, 6-8 p.m. at 650 Beacon Street in Boston, 4th floor Conference Room, just steps from the MBTA station in Kenmore Square. Be sure to arrive before 7 p.m. when the lobby door is locked. RSI Action volunteers will answer questions and provide resources and support, including the opportunity to view our provider evaluation book. For more information, call 617-247-6827, check web at <www.rsiaction.org> or email <cnot@rsiaction.org>.
- Jan. 7 **Murderball – special 3 p.m. screening at the MFA** (Museum of Fine Arts) in the Remis Auditorium. From gyms of middle America to the Olympic arena in Athens, Greece, *Murderball* tells the story of a group of world-class athletes unlike any ever shown on screen. Featuring fierce rivalry, stopwatch suspense, and larger-than-life personalities, *Murderball*, is a film about tough, highly competitive rugby players who happen to be quadriplegics. In their own version of the full-contact sport, they careen around the court and smash into each other in custom-made gladiator-like wheelchairs. In their documentary (2005; 88 min.) Henry Alex Rubin and Dana Adam Shapiro have shown that their energy for life in general is just as compelling as that exhibited during a match. Following the film viewers are invited to a discussion led by Joe Bellil, Director of Public Affairs for Easter Seals Massachusetts and someone who has a strong background in disability sports, advocacy and awareness. Tickets are \$8 for MFA members, seniors, and students; \$9 for general admission. To order in advance, call the Box Office at 617-369-3306. The West Wing entrance on Museum Road is barrier free.
- Jan. 10 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. They meet 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm. 142. Go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.com> to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- Jan. 12 **Un IEP para mi niño** (An IEP for My Child) is a workshop in **Spanish** that takes parents step-by-step through the development of the Individual Education Program (IEP) for their child who receives special education services because of his/her disability. Parents learn how to articulate a Vision for their child, how to use the results of evaluations to set goals and how to measure their child's progress. The workshop, presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), will be held at the Martha Eliot Health Center in Jamaica Plain, 10 am – 12 noon. Workshop materials are available in Spanish. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- Jan. 12 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 – 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment
- Jan. 13 **Application DEADLINE EXTENSION for summer Internships in Washington, D.C.** for college students with disabilities. Sponsored by Microsoft and the American Association of Persons with Disabilities (AAPD) the internships run 8-11 weeks and include transportation to DC, housing, and a stipend. For more information go to <www.aapd.com> or call 800-840-8844 (voice/TTY). Deadline is Friday, 5 p.m. EST.
- Jan. 17 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) monthly meeting** on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.
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- Jan. 18 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT)**, 1-3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 4. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings
- Jan. 18 **Basic Rights** is a workshop that provides families with an introduction to their rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Massachusetts Special Education Law and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It is designed to help parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, to decide the child's eligibility for special education, to plan, make decisions and to monitor the educational progress of their child. Workshop materials are also available in Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered at two locations on this evening: from 7-9 pm at the Minuteman ARC for Human Services, 130 Beaker Ave. in Concord, and at Chenery Middle School, 95 Washington St. in Belmont from 7:30-9:30 pm. The snow date is Jan. 27. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- Jan. 19 New monthly **Support Group for Men with Disabilities** sponsored by the Multi-Cultural Independent Living Center of Boston, Inc. meets at 22 Beechwood Street, Dorchester, MA at 1 p.m. Trying to find someone who understands your issues? Come join the conversations that will touch on a variety of topics: advocacy, empowerment, employment, families/friends, anger, loss/anger/grief, relationships, parenthood, sexuality and dating. For more information contact Tony Williams at 617-288-9431, x206.
- Jan. 26 **LD/ADHD Task Force** for persons with Learning Disabilities / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC State headquarters, 27-48 Wormwood Street in Boston (south of Fort Point Channel) in the 6th floor large conference room. Business meeting from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information contact Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117 voice, 617-497-5257 fax.
- Jan. 26 **Transition: Planning the Next Steps for Youths 14-22** is a workshop in Winchester for students and their parents about designing the right curriculum and supports throughout high school so that the student will be on the right track for becoming self-sufficient after graduation. Information and strategies to help translate individual preferences and dreams into meaningful goals in the IEP. The workshop, presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), will be at Department of Public Health, 10 Malcolm X Blvd. in Roxbury from 9:30 to 12 noon. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- Jan. 29 **Cross-country Skiing in Weston** sponsored by Venture Into Well-Being and the Universal Access Program of the Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will provide safe and enjoyable experience for young and old. The site is the Weston Ski Track at the Leo J. Martin Golf Course, the only cross-country ski site in Mass. that makes snow. The multiuse 2-kilometer trail on moderate terrain allows everyone to enjoy cross-country skiing, kicksledding and snowshoeing. The hours are 11 am to 3 pm on consecutive Sundays, Jan. 29 and Feb. 5, 12 and 19. Skis, poles and boots may be rented for nominal fees (\$5-14). Call 413-259-0009 to make reservations. Call 617-626-1294 for a recorded message to confirm program status in the event of inclement weather.
- Feb. 1 **RSI Monthly Drop-in Group** – first Wednesday of the month; see Jan 4. listing for details.
- Feb. 2 **An IEP for My Child** is a workshop that takes parents step-by-step through the development of the Individual Education Program (IEP) for their child who receives special education services because of his/her disability. Parents learn how to articulate a Vision for their child, how to use the results of evaluations to set goals and how to measure their child's progress. The workshop, presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), will be held at 555 Armory Street in Jamaica Plain, 5-7 p.m. Workshop materials are

available in Spanish. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fcsn.org>. (Workshop will be repeated in Medford on Feb. 16 and Arlington on March 2.)

- Feb. 3-4 **Planning a Life: Making the Most out of High School** is a two-day conference for on the transition process for students, ages 15-22 who are in special education. At the critical juncture between high school and the rest of life, students and parents must be informed, proactive, and involved. Learn how to work with your school to develop individualized Transition goals in your student's IEP (Individualized Educational Program). Space is limited to 35 participants. Registration DEADLINE is Jan. 23. Fee is \$100. The conference is sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) and will be at their offices, 1135 Tremont Street in Boston. For more information go to their website at < www.fcsn.org> or contact Terri McLaughlin at 617-399-8336.
- Feb. 9 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30– 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment
- Feb. 14 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. second Tuesday of the month (See Jan. 10 listing for details.)
- Feb. 16 **An IEP for My Child** workshop (see Feb. 2 for description) will be held at Grace Episcopal Church, 160 High Street, 7-9 p.m.
- Feb. 22 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1-3:30 p.m. (on the 3rd Wednesday this month.) at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information, to request Interpreters, or confirm date and time of meeting. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings
- Feb. 26 **Accessible Ice Skating** program offered by DCR Universal Access Program at the Flynn Memorial Rink, Woodland Road in Medford, 12 – 1:50 pm, and again on March 12, same time. There are minimal fees for admission and conventional skates. One end of the rink will be coned off for sled skating. Call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980 to register.
- March 2 **An IEP for My Child** workshop (see Feb. 2 for description) will be held at Grace Episcopal Church, 160 High Street, in Winchester, 7-9 p.m.
- March 4 **Visions of Community, Annual Statewide Conference of the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN)** will be at the World Trade Center in Boston. Susan Senator, author of *Making Peace with Autism*, will be the keynote speaker. There will be workshops, some in Spanish and Portuguese, for parents and professionals with lots of resources, vendors, and organizations represented. Check the FCSN website for more information at <www.fcsn.org/conference/conference06.html>
- March 5 **Accessible Ice Skating** program offered by DCR Universal Access Program at Shea Memorial Rink, 351 Willard St. in Quincy, 2-3:50 pm and again on March 19, same time. There are minimal fees for admission and conventional skates. One end of the rink will be coned off for sled skating. Call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980 to register.
- March 9 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 – 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment
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Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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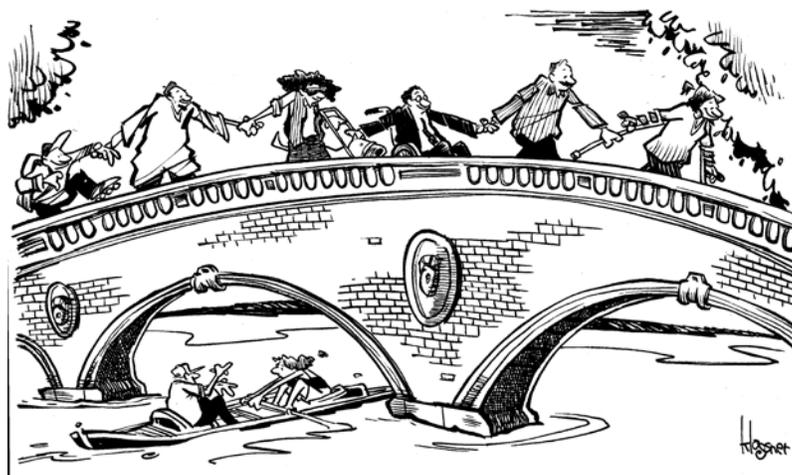
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We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

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