

**Newsletter #61 BCW Advocacy, NOW/COMP Training, etc.**

Dearest Advocates:

I know that many of you have been very concerned about Georgia's Babies Can't Wait Program. Here is your time to get involved and advocate for change. On Thursday, **November 20<sup>th</sup>**, a public hearing will be held on the topic of DHR restructuring and the Babies Can't Wait program. See below additional information and how you can get involved to help our children (birth to 3 yrs).

**IMPORTANT:** Below is information for an upcoming **NOW/COMP disability waiver training session December 8 and 15th**. This is a very important meeting that all of us need be there to hear what is going on during this transition and help the Office of DD understand the needs of the families they service during this time. Hope to see you there.

Also below is a recent article in the Gainesville Times Newspaper regarding a new baseball field adaptive to those with disabilities and their friends. Great article.

Hope you find this information helpful.

*United... We Will Make A Difference!*

Sincerely,

*Heidi*

**(Proud Mother to Jacob - 8 yrs old with Down syndrome and Jared - 7 yrs old)**

*“Help the Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!”*

[www.heidijmoore.com](http://www.heidijmoore.com)

###

**From Parent to Parent of Georgia: Important Babies Can't Wait Program Advocacy Info:**

P2P is willing to hand-deliver any comments we receive by Wednesday (whether you agree with our position or not). If you know parents that might like to attend, we can help with arrangements if needed (but please let us know this asap.) This is a chance to do SOMETHING to help BCW, whether you think issues are long-standing or new. We believe the best place for BCW is with the Dept of Early Care and Learning. We've included our official position in this email.

**HEARING INFORMATION**

Gov Perdue appointed a task force to look at the restructuring of DHR, the Department of Human Resources. Their recommendations include the creation of two new departments (or government agencies) and then restructuring the remaining parts of the Department of Human Resources (DHR). The plan will create a Department of Health and a Department of Behavioral Health, and DHR will then consist of Developmental Disabilities (DD), Aging, Family & Children Services (DFCS), and Child Support only.

Behavioral Health will consist of Mental Health and Addictive Diseases. The Department of Health will consist of the current Department of Community Health, Public Health (which is currently located in DHR and is where Babies Can't Wait currently is housed), Planning and Regulation, and Health Care Finance and Management. In this proposal Babies Can't Wait would move to the new Department of Health.

There has been some discussion of Babies Can't Wait instead possibly remaining under DHR (with Developmental Disabilities) or moving to the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).

**On Thursday November 20<sup>th</sup>, a public hearing will be held on the topic of DHR restructuring, from 9 to 5:30 pm at the Capitol.**

Here are the details of that hearing:

9-12:30

Overview of the proposal

Governor's task force rep

Agency Impacts on DHR and DCH

1:30-5:30

Implications for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities

Implications for Public Health

Sign up sheet for public comments

To make public comment, individuals need to sign up in Room 245 of the Capitol, or call House appropriations, 404-463-2245 to sign up. We've been told that if there is a high volume of speakers, they may not let multiple speakers address the same issue. But presence in the room is important. Let's fill the room with families of children with disabilities who feel strongly about the future of the Babies Can't Wait program in Georgia.

As the PTI, our position is that families and children in Babies Can't Wait will be best served if it becomes a part of DECAL. We have attached our position paper that explains and supports our decision. It is very important that families' voices are heard at this public hearing! You may have a different opinion about where Babies Can't Wait is best located, and that's okay too, but if you agree with our position, please feel free to use our position statement to develop your own talking points and/or written comments if you choose to speak out about this matter. Staff from the PTI will be attending the hearing and can hand-deliver any written comments that we receive by the close of business Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. Please feel free to send any comments to us if you would like for them to be delivered Thursday.

Let me know if you have any questions or need any explanation about our position and/or the hearing and public comment processes. Hope to see you there!

**Debra S. Tucker**

Executive Director

Parent to Parent of Georgia, Inc.

3805 Presidential Parkway, Suite 207

Atlanta, GA 30340

770-451-5484 or 800-229-2038

[www.parenttoparentofga.org](http://www.parenttoparentofga.org)

###

**From MHDDAD: Training on the new COMP and NOW WAIVERS:**

PLEASE FORWARD THIS EMAIL TO FAMILIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN DD SERVICES.

**Waiver participants, families, representatives, support networks, and advocacy groups are invited to attend an informational session about Georgia's "New" DD Waivers.**

Two sessions will be held, one in the Metro Atlanta area on the evening of **Monday, December 8, 2008** and the other in Macon on the evening of **Monday, December 15, 2008**.

Please help us to reach families throughout Georgia by distributing the two announcements that are attached to this email. The announcements will also be

posted on the Division of MHDDAD training website at <http://mhddad.dhr.georgia.gov/training> where they can be printed or downloaded.

Registration online is quick and easy at [www.cviog.uga.edu/training/dhr](http://www.cviog.uga.edu/training/dhr) and the announcement includes details about how to do this. Because refreshments will be provided, please register so that we will know how many people to expect.

Information about how to request special accommodations is included in the announcement. Questions can be emailed to: [RegistrationMHDDAD@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:RegistrationMHDDAD@dhr.state.ga.us)

Note to Regional Offices: Please forward to DD providers and ask them to share with families of consumers they serve. Also, please forward to Support Coordination agencies and Regional Office Staff. Regional Planning Board members are also invited to attend.

Note to Support Coordination Agencies: Please forward to families you serve.

Thank you!  
Joetta Prost, Ph.D.  
Director, Policy & Training  
DHR Division of MHDDAD

###

**From the Gainesville Times Newspaper: New Field Designed to Fulfill Dreams:**

<http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/news/article/11127>