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**"UniteOurVoices" Newsletter # 143**  
**February 4, 2015**

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Dearest Advocates:

The Georgia Participant Direction (GAPD) has prepared a list of potential questions for you to review and consider discussing at the upcoming DBHDD forums in your region about the new NOW/COMP home and community based waiver rewrites. This will help in your discussions and hopefully help families/caregivers understand some of the existing issues that may impact you that you maybe able to change in the future with the new waivers! (See Below for that list).

If you are unable to attend a forum in person, we encourage you to submit your comments online at <http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/nowcomp-community-forums>. For previous information regarding these forums, you may go to Newsletter #141: [http://uniteourvoices.com/wuovp/wp-content/uploads/issue\\_141.pdf](http://uniteourvoices.com/wuovp/wp-content/uploads/issue_141.pdf)

In addition in this issue is information that was distributed to families impacted next year by the de-centralization of the **Fulton County Schools (FCS) Community Based Instruction (CBI) program**. See below for those letters and Q & A dated 2/4/15 from FCS. For previous information regarding this new program for high school students, you may go to Newsletter # 140: [http://uniteourvoices.com/wuovp/wp-content/uploads/issue\\_140.pdf](http://uniteourvoices.com/wuovp/wp-content/uploads/issue_140.pdf)

I hope you find this information helpful. Have a great day!

Sincerely,

Heidi

***"United - We Will Make A Difference"***

Sincerely,  
***Heidi J. Moore***

**Parent Advocate for Children & Adults with Disabilities and Cancer**

For more information and to see previous newsletters and disability information, please go to [www.UniteOurVoices.com](http://www.UniteOurVoices.com).

Join Heidi on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/UniteOurVoices](http://www.twitter.com/UniteOurVoices) and Facebook Group at [https://www.facebook.com/groups/435101099921721/?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/groups/435101099921721/?ref=br_tf)

To follow Jacob's Journey with Leukemia, please go to: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/prayforjacobmoore> or [www.teamjacob.org](http://www.teamjacob.org) . To watch Jacob's Journey with Cancer video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GjPfmIZ76g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GjPfmIZ76g)

***"Help The Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!"***

The material contained in this e-mail is for general information only. It is not intended in any way to provide or offer legal advice. To obtain legal advice, please consult with your attorney or a qualified legal representative.

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**Questions and Concerns regarding the upcoming NOW/COMP waiver re-write forums:**

- 1) In the current waiver, PT, OT and Speech Therapy services are bundled together with an annual cap of \$1800. It is recommended that the waiver rewrite unbundled these services and place them as separate categories. In addition, the annual cap for each of these services needs to be raised so that individuals can get the full benefit of the therapies.
- 2) Specialized Medical Services (SMS) annual cap is 1868.00. This amount needs to be increased so that the needs of individuals requiring incontinent supplies, nutritional formula, etc are met. Additionally, this category should include annual cost of living to keep up with the inflationary costs of these products.
- 3) Currently there is no Dental category for adults in the waiver. Dental services for adults with realistic rates need to be included.
- 4) Financial Support Service agencies have not had a rate increase since they began. It is recommended that any rate study should include financial support services.
- 5) Individuals needing communication devices should be able to get any electronic equipment that is available for this use. Currently, ipads and other electronics are denied. Need clear language that allows them in the new waiver.
- 6) Individuals and families that participant direct their services should be able to apply for exceptional rates. Currently the family must switch to a providers in order to receive services beyond the annual cap.
- 7) Community guides are not being used. This service has value especially for families who are new to Participant Direction. A review of Community Guide policy is recommended so that it could be made to work.
- 8) Enhanced support coordination – what is it and who gets it? Is it applicable to participant direction? Is the family involved in the decision. Are there different levels of support coordination?
- 9) There is a lot of confusion during the different processes of the waiver. There should be clear responsibilities and accountability that states the roles of individuals and their families, planning list administrators, support coordinators, and regional staff.



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February 4, 2015

Dear Parents,

The Fulton County School System is excited to announce that we are developing a multi-year plan to expand our Community Based Instruction (CBI) program. This expansion will provide students the opportunity to receive CBI services at their home school instead of being bused to other schools that offer the program.

We continue to strive to put our children first and believe that this will positively impact our students as they develop the necessary skills to become career ready. As you know, "inclusion" extends beyond the school environment, and by offering programs in all of our high schools, where students also engage in CBI, we will be building relationships within the community that will help students transition into long-term employment.

We know this change may generate some questions so we've created a Q&A for your convenience. This information also is available through a "CBI Resource Center" located on our Services for Exceptional Children website. This shortened web address will help you find our site more easily: [www.tinyurl.com/SECdept](http://www.tinyurl.com/SECdept).

The Q&A provides contact information for the Services for Exceptional Children Department, should you wish to ask additional questions. You also can reach out to your child's teacher or your school's Instructional Support Teacher (IST).

The first phase of this expansion begins with the 2015-2016 school year. If your child will be affected, his or her teacher will be providing a flyer about a face-to-face parent information session that you can attend to receive further details and ask questions.

As always, we appreciate your support and thank you for being actively involved in your child's education. We are pleased to be partners with you to ensure their long-term success.

Sincerely,

Cristy S. Smith  
Executive Director  
Services for Exceptional Children



## Community Based Instruction (CBI) Program Expansion

*Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, "Community Based Instruction" services – called CBI, for short – will be expanded across the Fulton County School System so that all participating students are eventually able to receive services within their community at their home school, rather than travel to one of only a few select schools to receive services. Below is a Q&A regarding the program expansion to help answer some common questions you may have.*

### **Why is the CBI program expanding?**

We believe that students should, if possible, attend the same school as their neighborhood peers and siblings and have their community-based instructional needs met. We continue to strive to put our students' needs first so we are taking the necessary steps to make this happen.

Many years ago when CBI programs were opened, only a few locations were sufficient to meet students' needs. The number of students participating in CBI programs has grown, and last year we analyzed the home school location of our current students and learned that they are not concentrated to any one region of the county – rather, every high school attendance zone has students in need of these services. By expanding services to additional schools, many of our families will benefit from having all of their children attend the same schools in their community. Our CBI students who require bus transportation will likely benefit from shorter ride times and more reasonable pick-up and drop-off schedules.

### **How will these expansions be handled? Will they be phased in or will it happen all at once?**

The expansion will be handled in phases as determined by the high schools' readiness (*see the next question for more explanation*). As part of the first phase in 2015-2016, Cambridge High School, Chattahoochee High School, Tri-Cities High School will open new CBI programs, and the program already at Langston Hughes High School will expand to house additional CBI students.

### **How did Fulton County decide what schools would receive the new programs?**

The schools slated to have programs in the fall of 2015-2016 are those whose physical facilities are currently ready, or will soon be ready, to house students in the CBI program when our next school year begins. We are still accessing the physical facilities of the remaining high schools to determine a timeline for their expansion. We must make sure that all schools will have their classroom space ready for offering the program, which is why this expansion is occurring in several phases.

### **Which high schools already house a CBI program?**

Five schools currently have CBI programs: Alpharetta High School, Roswell High School, Centennial High School, Banneker High School, and Langston Hughes High School. Together, these schools serve approximately 300 students in need of Community Based Instruction.

### **Will students who are currently bused to the original five CBI locations above be moved to their neighborhood's zoned high school if a CBI program is available there next fall?**

Yes. Unless a student's IEP requires some other service or program (for instance, if the student requires a specialized service that is otherwise not available in the neighborhood school), students will be educated in their neighborhood's zoned school.

### **Who will teach my child? Will he or she have the same credentials as other CBI teachers in the previously established programs?**

Yes, your child will continue to be taught by a teacher who holds the same level of training and certification that we require of teachers in our already established programs. Many of our existing teachers are excited about this opportunity for their students and some of them will move to our new locations.

**Will my child have a new teacher?**

Since the program is expanding, some teachers will move from their current school to be part of opening a program in a different school. We are still working on the staffing plans for the schools opening programs in 2015-2016, so we don't yet know which teachers will be affected. Please know that we recognize that the possibility of a having a new teacher or new classmates could be met with a little apprehension for some students and their parents. Receiving schools will do everything possible to welcome your child and alleviate any concerns. The FCS Services for Exceptional Services Department is working extensively with the schools on ways to positively transition students into their new school environment and help them feel confident and at ease.

**Will students receive the same support services they have now (for example, adapted PE, speech/language/occupational therapies and art)?**

Yes, the support services will remain exactly the same; we are only expanding the locations where services are offered. Students may receive supports and services from a variety of staff members. Some of these include nurses, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Music Therapists, Adapted Art teachers, Adapted PE Teachers, Vision Teachers, Teachers of Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and Transition Teachers. Many of these individuals will work with students on an itinerant basis, coming in and out of each school on a variable schedule. All classrooms/schools will be provided with all of the necessary materials and equipment to ensure that students' needs are supported.

**How does this expansion impact transportation services?**

Transportation services will continue to be available for students in need regardless of the school they attend. While we may run special needs buses to additional locations, for many children the time spent on the bus will actually decrease as they will be attending school closer to where they live.

**What about Project LIFE and Project SEARCH? Are those programs changing?**

No, these programs will continue. The school district continues to work towards securing additional community partners to offer job-site training for our students who meet the agency/district criteria.

**How will the expansion change current off-campus Life locations?**

Current Life locations are designated per school in order to provide career exploration and intensive vocational training, which supports the ultimate goal of employment. Due to the expansion, Life campuses will be rezoned to accommodate the number of students per location, which enables us to continue this opportunity for our students.

**How will the CBI trips be impacted?**

Community Based Instruction, including community based trips, will continue to be available to our students, regardless of school location.

**Are there plans to offer more programs at elementary and middle schools?**

Our school system does intend to look at expanding programs to additional elementary and middle school locations. At this time, only high schools are part of the first phase.

**For more information, contact the Services for Exceptional Children Department at [servicesforexceptionalchildren@fultonschools.org](mailto:servicesforexceptionalchildren@fultonschools.org) or 404-763-5600.**

**A "CBI Resource Center" also is located at [www.tinyurl.com/SECdept](http://www.tinyurl.com/SECdept).**

**February 2015**



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