

Stop. Report. Prevent. Zero Tolerance for Abuse and Neglect.

Inside this month's newsletter is a poster for OPWDD's new *I Spoke Out* campaign against abuse and neglect. Please hang it in a location where all employees have access.



News and Information for Employees of the
NYS Office For People With Developmental Disabilities

People First



July 2011

New Fire Safety Inspection Agreement

As part of ongoing reforms to ensure the safety of individuals with disabilities, OPWDD recently announced an important agreement with the State Office for Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC), which will now conduct all fire and Life Safety Code inspections at all OPWDD State operated sites, as well as those of its nonprofit provider agencies.

Commissioner Courtney Burke said, "Unsafe conditions are unacceptable. This partnership exemplifies our commitment to reform external oversight and controls. With this agreement, we are guaranteeing that fire safety is a top priority and will focus on preventing any further tragedies like the one that occurred in 2009 when four people lost their lives at an OPWDD State-operated group home."

Under the new agreement, OFPC will 1) oversee evacuation plans and promptly report any deficiencies; 2) review records of evacuation drills and conduct random drills to evaluate effectiveness; 3) conduct fire and safety training programs; 4) jointly participate with OPWDD's Division of Quality Management to conduct Life Safety Code surveys and preopening surveys of residential facilities and other sites; 5) review OPWDD vendor contracts pertaining to the testing and maintenance of fire suppression systems, alarm systems, fire extinguishers, and standpipe hoses and advise OPWDD in contract renewals; 6) act as a liaison with local fire departments; and 7) assist in the areas of fire investigation, hazardous materials, fire, and other emergencies.

Commissioner Establishes Group to Modernize Core Competencies & Supports for Those in Direct Care

Continuing critical reforms at OPWDD, Commissioner Burke has announced the formation of the Developmental Disabilities Talent and Development Consortium—a group tasked with the development and implementation of new standards for direct support professionals statewide.

Commissioner Burke said, "The health and safety of the individuals we serve is our highest priority, and doing that to the best of our ability requires consistently improving on our skills. For the first time in its more than 30-year history, OPWDD is modernizing the competencies required of staff and is implementing a comprehensive plan that provides our direct care employees with the support and resources they need to succeed."

This important group ensures a collaborative approach by involving those in direct care, self-advocates, family members, nonprofit providers, academics, and other national experts in the field of developmental disabilities. The group's first report is expected by the end of this summer.

People First Waiver: OPWDD's Innovative Approach to Achieving Community-Based Care

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Commissioner Burke, who undertook a statewide listening tour with individuals and families after taking the helm of OPWDD in March, explained,

"This is a major undertaking that will result in improved quality, greater personal choice, financial transparency and efficiency, and most importantly, richer lives for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities. We must ensure the health and safety of individuals receiving care and also be proactively modernizing and improving the system."

"Many great suggestions came from our conversations on the listening tour, and I am pleased that individuals and family members are personally engaged in this process to deliver better services," the Commissioner added.

In a state as large and complex as New York, it will take time to design and implement more organized and accountable approaches to a comprehensive delivery of needed Medicaid services for people with developmental disabilities. In the weeks and months ahead, OPWDD staff will work with all stakeholders so that the waiver application submitted to the federal government is a collaborative product. Your input is invaluable to the development of OPWDD's waiver application.

For more information, including ways to get involved, please visit www.opwdd.ny.gov/2011_waiver.

A Note from the Commissioner

As I travel the state meeting with individuals, family members, and care providers, what I find most inspirational is the incredible dedication of everyone to those we serve.

This is an agency in transformation, and we are continuing to make positive changes. We are aware of prior mistakes, inconsistent past practices, and a failure to support employees and get bad people out of the system. This administration is committed to righting these wrongs, and I want to thank all those who have offered ideas, concerns, and solutions. Please continue to do so, as you are critical to our success.

In this first newsletter, you will read about our long-term plan to reform OPWDD's model of care. You will also find, as part of our new *I Spoke Out* campaign, a poster containing information on how to report abuse and neglect. Please post this in an employee area. Remember—one person speaking out can make all the difference.

I invite your participation in future newsletters. Is there a topic or issue you'd like to hear more about? Let us know. We will also feature stories about individuals we serve and those who serve them. If you have been inspired by someone, we would like to hear from you. Send an email with your contact information to barbara.l.stubblebine@opwdd.ny.gov.

Sincerely,

Courtney Burke
Commissioner

People First Waiver: OPWDD's Innovative Approach to Achieving Community-Based Care

OPWDD's current model of service was largely defined more than 30 years ago, in response to the tragic stories of Willowbrook. Then, the state promised a more individual and family-driven model of care. OPWDD Commissioner Courtney Burke is taking that further yet, advancing a long-term, innovative service structure driven first and foremost by the priorities and needs of individuals and families—service that is community-based, and provides the best options for the 126,000 New Yorkers supported by our system.

To achieve this goal, New York State is requesting federal government support to improve the developmental disabilities service system through what has been dubbed the "People First Waiver," which, with increased funding flexibility will also:

- Provide for new methods for care coordination and managed care;
- Reduce reliance on institutions;
- Create reimbursement reform; and
- Improve overall quality.

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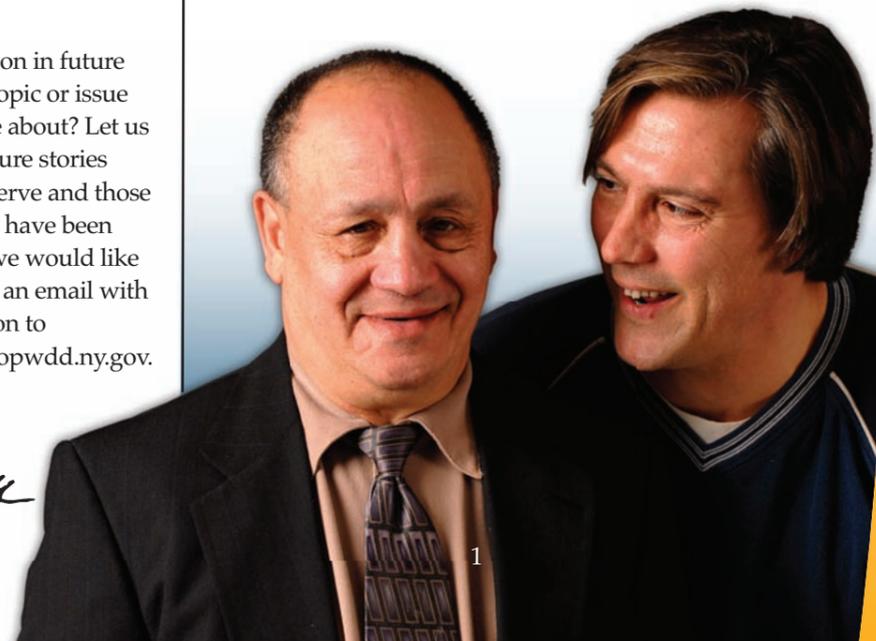
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Stop. Report. Prevent.

All OPWDD employees have a responsibility to report abuse and neglect directly to their supervisor.

CQCAPD: 1-800-624-4143, or

OPWDD: 1-866-946-9733 (TTY: 1-866-933-4889)

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

Courtney Burke, Commissioner

