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with intellectual disabilities

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Coming Up: There will be no Update published Friday, November 25, 2011. Happy Thanksgiving!

VOR and You

1. VOR's Nominating Committee seeks individuals interested in serving on the VOR Board of Directors

We are looking for applicants who:

- Have a passion for our cause on behalf of individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Can commit time for board meetings, committee planning and meetings, and can attend the annual meeting
- Are team players who work well with others in a group
- Listen well and are thoughtful in considering issues
- Are willing and able to assist in development efforts

If you are interested in receiving a VOR Board application form please contact Co-President Sybil Finken at finkensrc@aol.com or 712-527-3250 or Executive Director Julie Huso at jhuso@vor.net or at 605-370-4652.

If you would like to receive additional information from anyone on the nominating committee, please contact:

Ann Knighton, Co-President 706-993-6329

Bill Ryerson, First Vice President WTRyerson@aol.com or 336-765-6763

Mary O'Riordan, moriordan@aol.com or 415-927-0542

Action Center

2. VOR's DD Act Advocacy Project: Volunteers needed

For more than 2 decades VOR has led efforts to reform the DD Act. In 1993, VOR secured the "primary decisionmaking language" in law

and in 2000 that language was strengthened to recognize residential choice.

DD Act programs have persisted, however, despite the DD Act mandate and Olmstead requirements. With each June Initiative, VOR has called on Congress to reform the DD Act, sharing examples of the DD Act's attacks on the ICF/MR option and its human impact.

This fall, VOR launched its DD Act Advocacy Project in an effort to encourage regular constituent contact with key Members of Congress, especially Members of the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee.

Rebecca Underwood, VOR Legislative Committee member, is coordinating this effort. If your Congressperson serves on the E&C Committee, or you would like to help, please feel free to contact Tamie Hopp at thopp@vor.net; 877-399-4867; or Rebecca Underwood at krr.underwood@gmail.com; 920-474-4201.

For extensive background information on VOR's DD Act efforts and resources, visit [VOR's website](#).

3. Sign the VOR Petition! There is still time

Thanks to all 400 people (so far!) who has signed VOR's We the People petition which asks the President to reform a system of care in crisis; people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are being harmed.

Some of you have cited with frustration the process involved with "creating an account," a prerequisite to signing the petition. Please be patient and persistent! The problems are likely due to a virtual "traffic jam" because many, many people are trying to access the website at the same time. Please keep trying! We have until December 1 to collect as many signatures as possible!

4. Medicaid At Risk / Myths Persist

The Congressional Joint Deficit Reduction Commission (the "Super Committee") continues to meet in their efforts to find \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction. Its members must come up with a final plan by next Wednesday, November 23rd. Although it is unclear what will happen, Medicaid continues to be at risk of serious cuts.

VOR joins many organizations in their call to protect against arbitrary Medicaid cuts. Medicaid is a lifeline for so many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

A recent alert by one organization, however, has also alleged a Medicaid "institutional bias." Organizations that perpetuate the myth of an institutional bias also seek to eliminate all institutional options for all people with disabilities. These organizations do not support a full array of quality residential options; they do not support Medicaid-licensed and certified Intermediate Care Facilities for Persons with Mental Retardation (ICFs/MR).

The fact is, there is NO Medicaid "institutional bias" when it comes to Medicaid services for people with intellectual disabilities. In fact, all Medicaid programs for people with ID/DD are optional (not mandatory), whether provided through ICFs/MR or the HCBS program. In addition, far more Medicaid dollars are spent on HCBS than on ICFs/MR services for people with ID/DD, and many more people receive HCBS

support as compared to ICFs/MR services.

There simply is NO Medicaid “institutional bias” for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD). VOR has shared this perspective with the “Super Committee.” You can too [here](#), by Nov. 23.

Related reading: [Super Committee members face rising pressure from all sides, Washington Post, November 15, 2011.](#)

Effective Advocacy Online Course for VOR Members

5. Effective Advocacy Program * Course 2 *Researching Legislators

Welcome to our effective advocacy program offered by Stephanie Vance, the [Advocacy Guru](#) at Advocacy Associates.

As a follow-up to VOR’s recent in-person program in June and the related webinar, VOR members will receive a bi-weekly e-mail for three months with tips on how to deploy effective advocacy’s secret weapon: persistence. We all want to be heard and, more important, agreed with by our elected officials. This course helps you understand how, by providing specific next steps and resources. Happy advocating!

Video Tip from the Advocacy Guru:

[Thou Shalt Do Your Research](#)

Chat Hour

Join Advocacy Guru Stephanie Vance on Wednesday November 16th at 2:00 pm eastern for a chat session. She’ll be available to answer your questions on effective advocacy. Just go to www.join.me and type “advocacyguru” (no quotes) in the join box. Then click on the bubble to chat. It’s all free!

Course Materials

Section Two: Researching Legislators

Contents / Course 2

*** Knowing Who You’re Talking to (And Why You’re Relevant)**

1. Whose District or State Am I In?
2. What is the Member’s legislative record? What does she or he care about?
3. What Committee or Committees is my legislator on?
4. What party does she or he belong to?

*** Other Resources**

Knowing Who You’re Talking To (And Why You’re Relevant)

Take a little time to learn about your legislators’ interests so that you can frame your message in a way that’s bound to get their full attention. You can use our legislator research form to keep track of this information.

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1. Whose District or State Am I In?

One of the most common questions asked in congressional offices is “Are they from the district?” Representatives and senators represent distinct groups of people and devote their energy to the requests and needs of those individuals. Members of the House represent all the people (usually around 550,000) who reside in a separate and distinct geographic area called a congressional district. Senators represent an entire state. Hence, every American in the 50 states has one

representative and two senators who are responsible for representing their views in Congress.

In general, you should stick to contacting your own representative and senators, unless you can demonstrate that you represent the concerns of people who live in another district. If you contact other members of Congress, don't be surprised if your phone calls, letters and/or requests for meetings are referred to the representative or senator who serves the area or state where you live.

Your Association may have an online [legislative action center](#) and you can www.congress.org to find your specific legislators based on your zip code.

2. What is the Member's legislative record? What does she or he care about?

Most members have a record, reflected through votes, of formal support for legislation that has been introduced by other members (called cosponsoring a bill), and legislation they have introduced themselves on virtually every issue under the sun. It's always good to know where your legislators stand on your issues, as well as any other issues in which they might be interested. You can see bills legislators have introduced at www.congress.gov. Note: The bills are designated either House of Representatives (H.R.) or Senate (S.) by where in Congress the bill originated.

3. What Committee or Committees is my legislator on?

Members are assigned to committees based on their interests, their districts (or states, in the case of the Senate), and for the more competitive major committees, on how long they have served (seniority). Members usually serve on one to three committees. A member's ability to influence legislation depends largely upon whether she or he is a member of the committee of jurisdiction. Also, knowing committee assignments can give you insights into the issues that interest your member of Congress. This information is also available at www.congress.org.

4. What party does she or he belong to?

Members help all constituents, not just those who are members of their political party (as some people believe). After all, your representative has been elected to represent you and your interests, regardless of your party affiliation. But it is important to know the member's party affiliation to determine if they are part of the majority or minority party in Congress. While many members are seeking to work collaboratively and across party lines, members of the majority party still have an advantage in efforts to get legislative proposals passed.

Other Resources

In addition to the resources noted above, you can learn a great deal about your legislators at the following sites:

House of Representatives: www.house.gov

U.S. Senate: www.senate.gov

VoteSmart: www.votesmart.org

Open Secrets: www.opensecrets.org

Coming Up: Course 3!

About the instructor: *Stephanie Vance, the Advocacy Guru at Advocacy Associates, is a former Capitol Hill staff director and an*

internationally recognized speaker and trainer on effective advocacy. She is the author of four books including Citizens in Action: A Guide to Influencing Government and The Advocacy Handbook. Her fifth book, The Influence Game, is due to be published by Wiley Publishing in May 2012.

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