

Actualizing Empowerment Through Public Policy Advocacy



Nebraska Advocacy Services
The Center for Disability Rights, Law, and Advocacy

THE PUBLIC AND ITS PROBLEMS

WHEN THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN ANY TRANSACTION ARE *UNEQUAL IN STATUS*, THE RELATIONSHIP IS LIKELY TO BE ONE-SIDED, AND THE INTERESTS OF ONE PARTY TO SUFFER. IF THE CONSEQUENCES APPEAR SERIOUS, ESPECIALLY IF THEY SEEM TO BE IRRETRIEVABLE, THE PUBLIC BRINGS TO BEAR A WEIGHT THAT WILL EQUALIZE CONDITIONS.

John Dewey, 1927

Empowerment

Mobilization is the active expression of our faith in the dignity and worth of the individual. To deny effective participation, including the opportunity to choose, to be heard, to discuss, to criticize, to protest, and to challenge decisions regarding the most fundamental conditions of existence is to deny the individual's own worth and to confirm his impotence and subservience.

Alfred Kahn, Principles of Social Planning, 1971

Principles of Empowerment

What Good Is A “Right To Be In The Community” With No Role, No Respect And No Resources?

- Empowerment has as its aim enhancing the possibilities for people to control their own lives

What Good Is A “Right To Treatment” If Treatment Is Neither Available Nor Good?

- Empowerment sees people as full human beings who have both needs and rights
- Empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights

Nebraska Advocacy Services:

Promoting Empowerment of People With Disabilities
Through Public Policy



NEBRASKA ADVOCACY SERVICES

Significant Initiatives

LB 724 Taskforce - examining system reform from a consumer perspective

- 20-person taskforce was primarily consumers and family members
- December 19, 2003 published final report, "The Behavioral Health Services Act: Reform From a Consumer Perspective"
- Distributed to Senator Jensen, Governor's Policy Research Office, Omaha World Herald, and NAMI

"I finally had time to read the taskforce report over Xmas vacation, and it was great-- so well done. The information about the importance of peers and family members was very [well] written. I am proud that my name was on the list." – Linda Jensen, RN, MN, PhD

Significant Initiatives

Peer Advocacy Taskforce

- Consumers comprised significant membership
- Published report, "Developing a Peer Advocacy Program Model for Nebraska"
- Current collaboration with Lincoln Regional Center on a pilot program

Participation in advocacy organizations and coalitions premised on empowerment of people with disabilities

- Parity Coalition
- Nebraska Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities

Significant Initiatives

Self Advocacy Organization Development

- People First of Nebraska, Inc.
- Mental Health Association of Nebraska, Inc

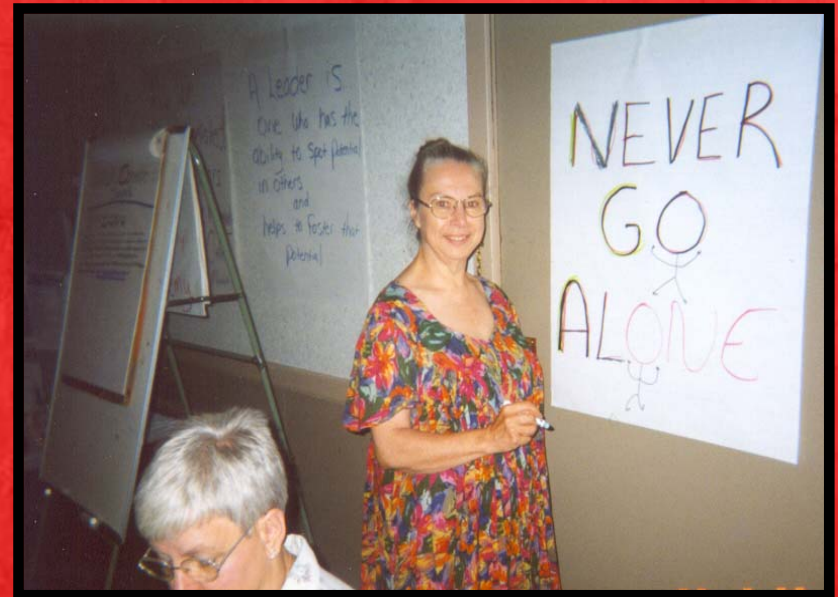
Coalition Building

- Parity Coalition
- Nebraska Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
- Mental Health Association of Nebraska, Village Integrated Services Agency Project

Significant Initiatives

Nebraska Leadership Academy

- Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Advisory Council initiative
- Consumer-developed and directed
- Education about coalition building, organizational development and legislative advocacy
- 145 graduates since 1998



Significant Initiatives

Presentations and trainings to consumers and consumer organizations on systems advocacy, the legislative process, and disability legislation.

Emphasizing the importance of participating in the legislative/policymaking arena and successful techniques of voicing the concerns and expertise of people with disabilities



Examples of Public Policy Empowerment Activities

- State NAMI convention and NAMI groups in Hastings and Lincoln
- Mental Health Planning and Evaluation Council
- Disability Awareness Day 2003
- Mental Illness Awareness Rallies
- Medicaid Budget Reduction Rallies
- Statewide Independent Living Council
- Depressive and Manic Depressive Association
- Victory House
- Community Alliance
- Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- ADAPT
- AbilityQuest Conference
- Direct assistance to consumers in developing testimony for presentation at legislative hearings