

## Developmental Disabilities

### Trends

- Transition services are increasingly recognized as important service areas for youth with developmental disabilities (DD). Adult agencies are beginning to understand the specific needs of young adults on the autism spectrum and plan more specific job support for them. In preparation for adulthood, teens need to have a variety of work experiences, improve their social skills development and learn how to advocate for their own needs in the community. Professionals and parents need to ensure that these early steps are taken in preparation for adult life.
- Massachusetts' focus on the deinstitutionalization of DD: The deinstitutionalization of developmental disabilities services will help states (including MA) to serve more people; those with disabilities will be able to live independently with the inclusion of more community-based service institutions: "The environment is ripe for those states that want to expand the care options for their MR/DD populations. New perspectives and a clearer understanding of the lives of people with disabilities have demonstrated the capacity of persons with MR/DD to live independently and safely. As a result, all states have expanded their community-based delivery service systems to offer many services that, in the past, could be received only in an institutional setting."
- There has been a consistent closure of developmental disability facilities since the early 1960s throughout the nation: "The closure of large state developmental disabilities facilities continues. Nearly 40% of state institutions designated for persons with developmental disabilities (DD) closed between 1962 and 1996, and by December 1998, 8 states will have closed all state DD institutions and units. There are six jurisdictions that do not operate a large residential facility of any kind today (Alaska, District of Columbia, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Vermont). Hawaii and West Virginia each are planning to close their single large facility in 1998."
- Electronic data management and case management systems (generally web enabled) are growing areas of focus.
- Relating to autism, of the numerous treatment approaches currently practiced, some of the most well known include: Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA); Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH); and the Developmental, Individual-difference, Relationship-based (DIR) approach, often described as Floortime or the Greenspan approach. Each of these methods has documented success through case reports or research. Most programs are highly structured and individualized.

- Autism treatment. Nearly all empirically-supported treatments include a parent component and most research programs used a parent-training approach.
- Family support has been a rapidly growing service model in recent years. Between FYs 2000 and 2006, the number of individuals receiving family support services increased by over 108,000 (34%). Total adjusted expenditures for family support increased from \$1.3 billion to \$2.3 billion during that same period.
- There is a growing understanding of the importance of respite care. Families of children with severe disabilities frequently experience a significant amount of stress with providing care to their disabled family member. When a family knows there are supportive service programs available to share some of the responsibility for care, it becomes less likely that the family will enter an unbearable crisis situation. The family will be less afraid to commit to the long-term care responsibility for the child with disabilities if help is available. Respite care services allow the primary care giver to take a break from their care giving and provide a qualified and caring person to provide care for the person.
- Increased demand/reliance on assistive technologies.
- Approximately 500,000 people in America have some form of cerebral palsy. Each year 8,000 infants and nearly 1,500 preschool age children are diagnosed with cerebral palsy. (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2008)