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# THE ADVOCATES' VOICE

Calling for Justice, Respect and Quality of Life

Spring 2016

## Rally In Support of 4410 Special Education Preschools

As the April 1st deadline approaches for the New York State Legislature to pass the budget, the Queens Council on Developmental Disabilities members must work diligently. Later in this newsletter you will see the legislative agenda for which we are advocating on behalf of the children and adults we serve. Our priorities are: tuition increases for 4410 Special Education Preschools and 852 School-Age programs, wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and residential options for adults.



This past October, organizations were notified that classroom-based 4410 special education preschools would receive a 2% increase in funding, despite the NY State Education Department's recommendation for 3.1%. This is the first increase seen by our preschools in six years.

Without the rallies held by over 200 families, staff members, and advocates at the Governor's NYC Midtown Office this summer, even the 2% increase would not have been possible.

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Check [WWW.QCDDNY.ORG](http://WWW.QCDDNY.ORG)  
for updated information on QCDD activities

## Rally in Support of 4410 Special Education Preschools

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The battle must go on, because although providers received a 2% increase, many schools are still at risk of closing. Those that remain open cannot provide salary increases or maintain competitive wages for their hardworking staff.

Our staff work for wages far lower than their counterparts working for the New York City Department of Education and Long Island school districts. Many have stayed because they believe in the work they do and see the impact of their work with students. Yet many of our teachers still resign to take positions with the NYCDOE. We cannot fault them, especially when most did not receive any salary increase over the last six years.

We must continue urging the Governor to provide funding increases for our preschools. The long term negative effects on our children will be more costly and leave students without appropriate placements.



In the next few weeks we will continue to advocate for more funding for our 4410 preschools, but we cannot do it alone. The staff, advocates and most importantly the families need to let our elected officials and the Governor know how important these increases are for the future of our students.

## QCDD Budget Recommendations

2016-17

There are many important issues that families face every day in raising a child with a developmental disability. Many of the issues families face are in the hands of Albany lawmakers. QCDD and its partner member organizations will be hard at work making sure that the issues are heard and addressed before the 2016-2017 NYS Budget is passed.

### Summary of Budget Recommendations

#### OPWDD

- ◇ **Minimum Wage:** Include funds to allow non-profit providers to increase salaries for Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) and other lower paid staff proportionally with the new minimum wage increases. Our industry already has difficulty retaining staff due to low wages and the challenging nature of our work. While we fully support an increase to the minimum wage, we require adequate funding to keep pace with their current salaries. Many of our workers currently earn somewhat above the minimum wage and we must maintain this differential. Our workers must not lose ground as minimum wage rises – these positions require expertise, skill and good judgement; our staff are not doing the typical work of other minimum wage jobs.

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## Budget Recommendations

2016-17

*Continued from pg. 2*

- ◇ Support the Governor's proposal of adding funds for the development of new services and supports but also include additional funding for the development of residential supports for people with high priority needs who reside at home and need 24 hour residential support. Elderly, ill and/or aging parents can no longer manage their adult children at home, especially individuals with higher need
- ◇ Include funds for a 3% Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA)/Trend Factor for OPWDD Services
- ◇ Support the Governor's proposal to transition 152 residents of Developmental Centers and Intermediate Care Facilities to community-based residences.
- ◇ Support the Governor's proposal of adding \$15 million to expand affordable housing development
- ◇ Support the Governor's proposal to extend OPWDD's exemption of the Social Work/Psychology licensure requirement for 5 years. An exemption from licensure for psychologists and social workers who provide services in programs approved by OPWDD and other NYS Departments expires this year. The Governor proposed to extend that exemption for 5 years. Licensure requirements protect the public from unqualified people providing services and billing insurance, but our programs have many safeguards, including supervision and oversight, to ensure quality. Furthermore, even if provider agencies could afford to pay licensed staff, there would not be enough available to work in our programs. If the exemption is not extended, the cost to the state is calculated at \$90 million for OPWDD programs alone
- ◇ Add funds to support the transformation of OPWDD's service delivery system, specifically to downsize ICF's and to create integrated employment opportunities

### State Education/Special Education

- ◇ Include a 5% tuition rate increase for the 2016/17 school year for classroom-based 4410 special education preschools and a 4% tuition increase for 853 school-age special education programs. This year preschool programs received a 2% increase, their first increase in 6 years, although the NY State Education Department recommended 3.1%. Several preschools have already closed due to funding constraints. Preschools will continue to close if future years do not include adequate tuition increases. School age programs need annual tuition rate increases to sustain their programs and retain quality staff.
- ◇ Include funds to allow school age (853) and preschool (4410) providers to increase salaries for certified teacher's assistants and teacher aids proportionally with minimum wage increases. Our schools already compete with the NYC Department of Education for qualified staff. Staff retention will become more challenging if our salaries do not keep pace with the minimum wage.
- ◇ Include the Board of Regents' and State Education Department's recommendation including the creation of a statutory index for establishing growth in annual tuition rates to maintain fiscal viability for 853 schools (school-age programs).
- ◇ Include a statutory index for tuition increases for classroom based 4410 preschool special education providers for subsequent years. A workgroup report noted that tuition does not cover costs for 4410 preschool providers across the State and warned of the program's fiscal instability. Six years with no growth, and only a 2% increase this year, led to the closures of many preschools. A reliable growth factor is essential to ensure these services remain available.
- ◇ Include the extension of the exemption for school psychologists to perform multidisciplinary evaluations of prospective preschool children and for the Early Intervention program. Without this law, psychologists cannot perform initial multidisciplinary evaluations. This would cause significant delays in service not only because tuition does not cover the cost of a Ph.D. level psychologist, but also because such certified psychologists are in short supply.

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# Budget Recommendations

2016-17

*Continued from pg. 3*

## Department of Health: Early Intervention Program/Article 16 Clinics

- ◇ Include a 4% increase in the Early Intervention Program reimbursement rates. Early Intervention has been underfunded for many years and the few providers left are in tenuous fiscal positions. Allowing the extinction of EI programs is both a terrible loss to children with disabilities and their families and is also a missed opportunity to maintain a program that will result in less costly future services in school/adult programs.
- ◇ Reject the Governor's proposal to mandate standardized screening prior to a full multidisciplinary evaluation for eligibility determination. Currently, NYS Law already allows an evaluator, with parental consent, to conduct a screening prior to evaluating the child. This proposal removes the evaluator's authority to clinically determine the necessity of an evaluation and requires screenings be done every time, thereby lengthening the process. This requirement will interfere with the existing mandatory timeframe of 45 days, from referral to the development of the IFSP. In addition, we are concerned about the inconvenience for parents, having to bring their child for both a screening and an evaluation, as a matter of course.
- ◇ Support the Governor's proposal to increase insurance company participation in the Early Intervention program.
- ◇ Eliminate utilization thresholds as per MRT (Medicaid Redesign Team) recommendation #26 in Article 16 clinics. Three years ago, programs that exceeded the threshold for number of services provided received a 2% budget cut. This cut was restored to many programs, but not to Article 16 clinics, causing clinics serving people with more severe physical disabilities to lose money.

## My Football First

Kurt Glenn, P. 811Q

First time experiences can sometimes be a big deal such as going to your first Broadway show, your first time traveling out of the country or taking in a real life sports experience for the first time in your life. Sure, I have been to some basketball and baseball games in the past. But I haven't been to a football game in my whole life. Until most recently, that is.

On December 13th, I was invited along with some of my friends from the Self-Advocacy group meetings at QSAC in Astoria to see the Jets take on the Titans at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. I was so excited to go because I haven't been to a football game before. For the record, I been always been a Giants fan, but I didn't mind going to a Jets game. I even brought Jets apparel for the game so that I could root in the team's green colors without changing my team's allegiance.

The day of the game, I met my QSAC friends outside the office on a warm, not-too cold early Sunday morning. We were each assigned to a chaperone and left the office in two vans to go across the Hudson River into Jersey. When we arrived at the stadium, a representative from the team invited my group into the stadium's facilities because QSAC was one of a few groups from the area to participate in a pre-game activity on the field, holding the green team flag. I was among one of the handlers holding and raising the big flag on the handle. When I came on the MetLife Stadium field, I felt proud. I even saw my face on the stadium's big screen. It was a good moment for me to be on a real football field.

After that, we found our seats high up in the stadium and watched the game. Compared to watching it on television, seeing the real thing was an undeniable thrill. The Jets were really on fire that day, literally knocking down the Titans. For food, I brought a cheesesteak sandwich and water to have during the game. At halftime, I even brought a Jets cap because of the warm weather that day. It was a shame that we had to leave early before the game ended in the fourth quarter, because we had to beat traffic. The Jets won that day, beating the Titans 30-8.

My first football game was a fascinating experience that I will remember. I'm definitely looking forward to go to another football game in the future when an opportunity comes up. For now, the only type of spectator sport I haven't been to is hockey. When the chance to go to a hockey game comes, I'm going to plan not to pass that one up.



## Queens Centers for Progress - 164<sup>th</sup> Street Day Services Department



On August 21, 2015, Queens Centers for Progress Day Habilitation individuals brought Paris to their 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Prom Celebration at 164<sup>th</sup> Street, Jamaica, New York. With a backdrop of the Eiffel Tower, complemented with décor of fleur de lis and half-moons hanging from the ceiling, staff and individuals transformed the Auditorium into a magical Parisian atmosphere. All of the decorations and paintings were collaboratively designed and made by our Day Hab individuals.



The idea of a formal dance was the inspiration of Activities Coordinator, Tara DeLaine, to promote socialization among our Day Hab peers as well as to celebrate the many successes they had accomplished throughout the year. And celebrate they did! The afternoon was full of dancing, socializing and a dessert bar with choices of ice cream parfaits. And, to top it off, a white stretch limo pull up to the front of QCP and our Prom-goers had an opportunity to sit inside and pose in front for a photo-opp. What is a prom without the limo!

To end this special occasion, as a remembrance, each individual was given a framed photograph taken in front of the Eiffel Tower backdrop. This event was truly an inspiration and everyone can't wait until next year's event!

### *Finally...* Sabrina Alphonse

Throughout my years I have struggled to become an independent young woman. Because of my limited mobility using a manual wheelchair I was unable to become an independent traveler. But then I began the process to become more independent.

First let me talk about "My Team"- Ms. Andrea, Ms. Beth, Ms. Sally, Mr. Phil and, most importantly, my mom worked together and with their help I applied for and received an Access to Home Grant through UCP of NYC. This was a really big deal! A ramp had to be installed at my home before I could apply for a power chair. We had to find a wheelchair vendor and check that they accepted my insurance. Then we found YAI and they accepted my insurance and they helped me apply for a power wheel chair.

I feel like I have been waiting for this forever and now I feel that all my dreams have come true. I am hoping that one day I can travel independently on a city bus with my friends. I have used Access-a-Ride to come to school during the bus strike a few years ago.

Following my graduation in June I hope to attend Goodwill's vocational program where I will learn worksite skills and one day be on supportive employment and have a good job. My dream is to become a nail technician and maybe own my own business.

## QSAC Day Hab Attends Title Boxing Club



On Feb 9th, some of the individuals from QSAC's Astoria 38th Street Day Habilitation program began volunteering at the Forest Hills Title Boxing Club. Title Boxing has partnered with QSAC to provide an opportunity for our individuals to work on their job skills and community integra-

## Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King

To celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, some of Queens Centers for Progress, 164<sup>th</sup> Street Day Habilitation individuals visited the Veteran's Administration St. Albans Community Living Center on Friday, January 15, 2016. Kaleem Lowney, Greg Paek, Luis Larco, Patricia Rodriguez, Harold O'Brien and Caria Bailey each wrote of their personal experience and love of volunteering for the VA Hospital and other organizations. Elizabeth Putnam, from the VA, extended a warm welcome to these individuals and marked this special occasion by awarding each of these individuals a Certificate of Appreciation for their commitment to provide service to others.



## QCDD Sub Committees

### Medicaid Service Coordination Sub-Committee:

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Toni Cassara Martinez, YAI (P) 212-273-6609 (E) toni.martinez@yai.org

Jessica Paravalos, (P) 347-287-7107 (E) mintjoy@juno.com

### Children's Sub-Committee:

Dianne Cattrano, Heartshare (P) 718-441-5333 x1401 (E) dianne.cattrano@heartshare.org  
Johanna Arteaga, QSAC (P) 718-728-8476 x1317 (E) jarteaga@qsac.com  
Nina Roberto, Parent (P) 718-846-6606 (E) nroberto@praderwilli.org

### Adult Transition Services Sub-Committee:

Josephine Davide, QCP (P) 718-380-3000 x363 (E) jdavide@queenscp.org  
Wendy Schoenfeld, Lifespire (P) 212-741-0100 x4575 (E) wschoenfeld@lifespire.org  
Kerbanoo D'Rozario, Parent (P) 917-371-4441 (E) artychef@aol.com

### Family & Community Support Sub-Committee:

Gnanendra Sinha, AABR (P) 718-321-3800 x245 (E) gsinha@aabr.org  
Dorothy Wohl, Shield Institute (P) 718-939-8700 x1242 (E) dwohl@shield.org  
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### Public Information / Legislative Sub-Committee:

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### Residential Sub-Committee:

Brien Cummings, YAI/NIPD (P) 212-273-6100 x2528 (E) brien.cummings@yai.org  
Linda Renyi, Life's WORC (P) 516-741-9000 x271 (E) lrenyi@lifesworc.org

## NYC FAIR Family Advocacy & Information Resource

Introducing NYC FAIR, NYC Family Advocacy and Information Resource: we are a group of family members from throughout New York City with diverse needs but with one common problem - New York State is undoing the services we depend on.

We follow the news, what changes are being made, what the budget means for us this year, all the things that make a difference in our lives.

We invite you to participate. Check out our website: [www.nycfair.org](http://www.nycfair.org), Face Book Page & FB Group, and come to our meetings.

## Important Numbers

### Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices (DDROs)

#### Region 4 NYC & Metropolitan Area

**Queens:** 718-217-5890 **Manhattan:** 646-766-3222

**Brooklyn:** 718-642-6000 **Bronx:** 718-430-0885 **Staten Island:** 718-983-5233

**Queens Front Door:** 718-217-6485

#### Area Developmental Disabilities Councils

Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Council (718) 642-6000

Bronx Developmental Disabilities Council (718) 231-7711

Manhattan Developmental Disabilities Council (212) 799-2042

Staten Island (718) 983-5200

## FREE Psychological & Psychosocial Evaluations

Available in Queens for individuals without Medicaid.

All OPWDD services require evaluations to determine eligibility for services. This is an excellent opportunity to get FREE and necessary evaluations.

**General Human Outreach:** (718) 307-6563

**Lifespire**, Kimberly Reynolds: (718) 454-6940 ext. 246

**New York State Institute on Disability:** (718) 494-6457

**PSCH:** (718) 777-5243

**QSAC,** Dr. Kristen DuMoulin: (P) 718-728-8476 ext. 1517; (E) [KDuMoulin@qsac.com](mailto:KDuMoulin@qsac.com)

**YAI-LINK:** (212) 273-6182



ACCESS NYC is a free service that helps you find out if you may **qualify** for over 30 City, State and Federal benefit programs. You can **apply online** for certain programs through ACCESS NYC.

**Visit the NYV Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities  
at [www.nyc.gov/mopd](http://www.nyc.gov/mopd)**

**QCDD Full Council Meeting Dates**  
(All meetings Monday's at 9:30am-11:30am)

Queens Borough Hall,  
120-55 Queens Blvd, Kew Gardens, Room 200  
(718) 286-3000

03/07/2016 Topic: "LIRR Freedom Ticket"  
PCAC (Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA)

Topic: "Housing Options"  
Autism Community Experience

04/04/2016 Topic: FIDA Managed Care Plans for People with Developmental  
Disabilities with both Medicaid & Medicare

Joanne Lamphere, OPWDD  
AI Kaplan, AHRC

**QCDD Full Council Meetings (Alternate Locations)**

\*05/02/2016  
Bernard Fineson DDRO  
80-45 Winchester Blvd, Queens Village

\*06/02/2016  
Bernard Fineson DDRO  
80-45 Winchester Blvd, Queens Village

**IMPORTANT QCDD EVENTS!**

March 11, 2016  
Rally at Governor Cuomo's Office  
633 3rd Avenue, NYC  
11:00AM-1:00PM

April 19, 2016  
Celebration of Success  
Queens Center for Progress  
81-15 164th Street, Jamaica, NY  
6:00PM-8:00PM  
718-380-3000

RALLY TO ASK GOVERNOR CUOMO  
FOR MORE FUNDING TO COVER RAISES  
IN STATE'S MINIMUM WAGE

**QCDD Committee Meetings 2016**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone #</b>
March:				
	3/16 9:30AM	Adult Transition	PSCH – Astoria, 19-04 49 <sup>th</sup> Street Astoria, NY	718-278-8080
	3/17 9:30AM	Children's	QSAC Preschool 245-37 60 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Douglaston, NY	718-728-8476 ext. 1500
April:				
	4/7 10:00AM	MSC	Bernard Fineson DDRO, 80-45 Winchester Blvd, Queens Village, NY	718-217-4242
	4/20 9:30AM	Adult Transition & Children's	AABR – St. Pascal's, 112-33 199 <sup>th</sup> St., St. Albans, NY	718-776-3900
	4/27 9:30AM	Residential	YAI, Hollis Hills IRA, 82-24 209 <sup>th</sup> Street, Hollis Hills, NY	516-978-8945
May:				
	5/12 10:00AM	Family & Community Support	***** <b><u>PLEASE CHECK WEBSITE FOR LOCATION</u></b> *****	
	5/18 9:30AM	Adult Transition	QCP – Bellerose, 249-16 Grand Central Pkwy, Bellerose, NY	718-217-4242
	5/19 9:30AM	Children's Committee	***** <b><u>PLEASE CHECK WEBSITE FOR LOCATION</u></b> *****	
June:				
	6/2 10:00AM	MSC	Bernard Fineson DDRO, 80-45 Winchester Blvd, Queens Village, NY	718-217-4242
	TBD 9:30AM	Adult Transition Luncheon	***** <b><u>PLEASE CHECK WEBSITE FOR UPDATE INFORMATION &amp; LOCATION</u></b> *****	