



# The Urban Advocate

January 2007



## Getting a Life: Transition Workshop



On December 9th, Urban PRIDE held its third workshop in a series of trainings for families and youth living in Boston who have children and who are receiving Special Education Services. This workshop's title was "Getting a Life: What Parents and Students Need to Know about Transition Planning". Over fifty people registered for the workshop and participants included both parents and transition aged youth. "Transition aged youth" as defined by IDEA 2004 and Chapter 766 includes young people ages 15-22 who are receiving special education services.

The workshop included training on the rights, roles, and responsibilities of families and youth under the Transition and IEP requirements of the special education law. The workshop included a panel of speakers with a community provider, a parent, and two successfully transitioned young adults who discussed effective strategies for planning for a successful transition from school to independent adult living. The panel included Fabienne Renelien, Unit Supervisor at the Roxbury office of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission; Jocelyn Choate, the parent of a recently transitioned young man with significant disabilities, Keith Jones, an entrepreneur, and Jason Cruz, an arts therapist working with high-risk urban youth. Keith Jones and Jason Cruz are also two adults who have successfully transitioned from high school to college and beyond.

Special Education Law under IDEA requires that transition services be written into students' Individualized Education Plans (IEP) developed in the year the student will turn 15. Transition services are defined as "a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability designed to be *results-oriented* and focused on improving both the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability. Transition services should be designed to facilitate the student to move from high school to post-school activities. Post school activities might include college, trade school, vocational education, and/or continuing and adult education, supported employment, adult services, and independent living.

The IEP team, *which includes the parents and the student*, and other school staff should draft a transition statement which reflects the student's input, preferences, needs, interests and vision for adult life. This provides for the student to start receiving services such as work and travel training as part of his IEP, and helps the transition to adult life and independent living go more smoothly. If a student has severe disabilities, they may be eligible for transition services through Chapter 688. For more info about Chapter 688, call 617-727-7600 or go to <http://communitygateway.org/faq/laws/688.htm>. Also, the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) provide transition services to eligible students. For more info, call 617-727-5608 (DMR) or 1-800-245-6543 (MRC).



Following the panel, the group split-up, with youth attending a separate session. Jason Cruz, a trained art therapist, led the youth in designing a creative project. He had each person chart their own "lifeline" using multiple media materials. Each participant made a creative interpretation of how their life had been in the past and how they envisioned it in the future. Each student then presented their artistic rendition to the other participants and shared a little of their life story.

The parent session included a training on Transition and an overview of Person Centered Planning. The two groups came back together for lunch and a wrap-up session. After lunch, the participants departed with a better understanding of transition and feeling more prepared to plan for their own or their child's future.



### Interview with Carlos Candelaria By Shannon Van de Riet



In late December, Carlos had an opportunity to work with Gary Ijams again. Gary is the property manager for several properties in the Boston area, one of which hired Gary and "his crew" to move some boxes and furniture. This provided an opportunity for Carlos to gain some work experience and earn some cash to boot!

S: So Carlos, where did you guys go to work on Saturday?

C: We went to a fancy house on Beacon Hill. The family that lives there needed us to move some stuff around.

S: How many people were you working with?

C: Four. It was me, Gary, and a few other guys.

S: So you had plenty of help lifting heavy stuff?

C: Yeah.

S: How did the job go?

C: Good. Only Gary's truck broke down, so we had to use David's truck.

S: How much money did you earn?

C: 75 bucks.

S: Wow! \$75 for half a day's work? What are you gonna do with that money? Buy a video game?

C: (Smiling) Yeah.



*Soon, Carlos will have his IEP meeting. In preparation for the meeting, we interviewed him about what types of things he would like to see written into his IEP, based on his goals for the future.*

S: What do you hope to accomplish at your IEP meeting? What types of things do you want on your plan?

C: Well, I'd really like to learn how to drive, so getting my driver's license is a major goal for me.

S: So you'd like to take Driver's Ed courses?

C: Yeah.

S: What else?

C: I'd like to be trained in mechanics, like how to work on cars, and eventually have my own car-shop business in the future.

S: That's great; based on your work with Gary, you seem well suited to be a mechanic.

C: I'd also like to live by myself in my own place one day of course.

S: What kind of skills do you think you'll need to live on your own?

C: learning how to cook, and clean, and learning how to payi the bills...

S: Balancing a checkbook?

C: Yeah. I also want to go to college.

S: Great; We can explore options for you to go to college, too.



## Proposed Massachusetts budget cuts affect people with disabilities

On November 10, 2006, Governor Romney announced deep cuts to the state budget that greatly impact programs for peoples with disabilities in Massachusetts. Here are a few examples of programs that will be affected:

- *Salary reserve* - \$28 million cut  
These funds were supposed to provide cost of living increases to workers in all branches of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, DMR, DMH, etc... This is already one of the lowest paid workforces in the Commonwealth providing care for vulnerable citizens, and it is disappointing for the workers who have been expecting the increases since they were signed into law as part of the FY2007 state budget in July.
- *Turning 22* - \$2,032,330 cut  
These funds are for young adults aging out of the public school-funded services. There are approximately 580 people for whom this account was earmarked to serve in this fiscal year, translating into an average per-head cost of \$14,655 (some students receive more and others less depending on need). This means that 136 people will not be receiving services as a result of this cut.
- *Family Supports* - \$618,241 cut  
This means that 300 individuals and families will lose services.
- *Day/Employment* - \$1,370,973 cut  
This means that 95 people will lose day/work programs.



There have been questions as to why the Governor has taken this action and whether there is any basis for his claim that the cuts are a direct response to revenue shortfalls. Some groups and elected officials feel it is premature for the Governor to be invoking emergency finance laws to rationalize drastic cuts less than a quarter into the fiscal year. The timing of the cuts is also questionable, announced 3 days after the November 7 election. Before the election, the Governor and Lt. Governor were claiming the state had sufficient funds to roll back the income tax rate to 5 percent. Friday's cuts total \$435 million. In September, the Mass. Taxpayers Foundation estimated rolling back the income tax rate from 5.3 to 5 percent would reduce available revenue by almost \$700 million. The discovery of a projected revenue shortfall of more than \$1 billion in a week's time is questionable. The good news is that the cuts are not necessarily permanent, and Governor-elect Patrick has promised to revoke the cuts after he assumes office.



### The Truth About Budget Cuts - kinda.

*By Keith Jones*

In the last budget put forth by his administration, Governor Romney's \$425 million in cuts targeted programs and agencies that serve critical functions for un-served and under-served communities. This is disheartening. There is hope, however. In a statement to the Boston Globe, Governor-Elect Patrick promised to restore the cuts put in place.

Communities of color are often at the mercy of "budgetary forces" that ignore the consequences of there actions. However, we within our own communities are not fully aware of who, when, or even how the decisions are made. This is the truth - often times education, along with social services are the first to get cut and the last to be restored.

Over the next four years it is important that we as a community learn and understand the process by which decisions are made. In order for the community to receive services, we must educate ourselves as well as each other. There will be opportunities to do so through a variety of organizations that will be offering legislative advocacy training sessions - to be announced in early 2007.



## ACTIONSPO RTS

Take advantage of information about several community groups to find places where people of all abilities and disabilities participate in amazing sports. Many of these organizations offer scholarships so that everyone can participate. Here are a few listed in the Boston Area. For a full listing of programs in New England and Nationwide, go to [www.mass.gov/mddc/documents/AdaptiveSportsActionBrochure.txt](http://www.mass.gov/mddc/documents/AdaptiveSportsActionBrochure.txt)

### **The 4th International Conference on Positive Behavior Support** **Boston, MA, March 8-10, 2007**


This conference will provide families, professionals, support providers, researchers, and school personnel with innovative positive behavior support (PBS) skills and the latest research findings on a variety of topics related to PBS, including school-wide applications, early intervention, autism, family, and individual supports for adults with disabilities.

<http://www.apbs.org/conference/>

### **Black Male Teachers**

Do you know any black males in their senior year of high school who want to go to college out of state for FREE. The black colleges are looking for future black male teachers and will send them to universities/college for 4 years FREE. This is for MALES ONLY. Have the parents fill out this application. Read the Mission Statement. There are about 10 different colleges or universities. Tell your friends also.

<http://www.callmemister.clemson.edu/index.htm>

 For updated information on local workshops, web-based resources and publications, check out our web-site at [www.urbanpride.org](http://www.urbanpride.org)



### The N.I.C.E. Program

The N.I.C.E. Program (*Nurturing Inclusion thru Community Engagement*) is an enrichment program for Boston residents ages 8 to 22 with special needs.

*The goals of the program are to:*

- To provide high quality care for children, youth and young adults with special needs.
- To support participants' social, emotional and educational development through a variety of specialized group activities.
- To connect participants and their families to community resources and new opportunities.

The program will run on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., alternating each week between two different locations - the Blackstone Community Center in the South End and Curtis Hall Community Center in Jamaica Plain.

For more information or to register, please contact Nicole DaSilva at 617-635-4920x 2402 or via email at:

[Nicole.DaSilva@cityofboston.gov](mailto:Nicole.DaSilva@cityofboston.gov)

### **Intergenerational Book Club**



Read exciting books! Foster discussion among family members! Learn lots of new stuff!

You are invited to join the Parent's Management, Inc., monthly book club. Come on Saturday, March 10, 2007 with suggestions for books you and your family would like to read together. Bring a book that you have recently read, to share. Kids can read to grown-ups, and grown-ups to kids. However you do it, the idea is to get reading and talking!

Come, Start something Good! Bring a friend and get a prize! See you there!



**The Dudley Branch Library**  
**65 Warren Street**  
**Roxbury, MA 02119**

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 857-492-6911

[www.parentsmanagement.org](http://www.parentsmanagement.org)





