

2010 ADD Technical Assistance Institute; June 24-25, 2010; Arlington, VA

Transcript of Luncheon message delivered by David Hansell, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services

Luncheon Speaker, June 24, 2010

SHARON LEWIS: I am happy to introduce our next speaker to you. David Hansell, my boss, has been a huge support to ADD. We're thrilled to have him here. You know we have not had high level ACF support at ADD for many, many years at these events, and so we're thrilled. As commissioner, it's been incredible to feel like I'm an important part of a team, and a huge piece of that has to do with David.

David is also in the process of moving into or re-moving into the role of acting assistant secretary, as many of you are aware. Our current assistant secretary, Carmen, who has just been wonderful, is departing the administration due to personal reasons. Actually something that would be of great concern to many of you and something that all of you would empathize and understand in that her husband has rapidly advancing Alzheimer's. We're all going to miss her tremendous leadership, which has been important in moving the agenda ahead. But the good news is that we will have great continuity in David, who served as the acting assistant secretary before Carmen arrived. So he knows the role well already and will keep all of the issues running smoothly at ACF and certainly issues of concern to people with developmental disabilities are central to the things that ACF works on.

Just by way of background, you have David's bio in your packets, but David is not new to our issues. David served as the commissioner of the New York state office of temporary disability and assistance, the state agency in New York charged with assisting low income New Yorkers. He was the associate commissioner at the New York City Department of Health.

He also served in a range of positions, including director of legal services and deputy director for government and public affairs. We are just thrilled to have him at ACF. I have to say, it has been, again, a tremendous opportunity for me personally and professionally to be able to come in and work with folks like David and the administration.

So give David a warm welcome. I'll turn the podium over to him.

(Applause.)

DAVID HANSELL: Good afternoon, everyone. First thing I have to say is, I wish I hadn't had lunch before I came here. I saw that buffet and thought, wow, that's a real opportunity. So please do not let me interfere in your enjoyment of what looks like a delicious lunch.

Thank you, Sharon, for that very nice introduction. But even more I thank her for the incredible intelligence and commitment and energy and enthusiasm that she's brought to ACF and ADD. I can't tell you how much difference she has made in a very short time, which is only a harbinger of things to come. I know you realize this, but I want to be sure we all realize how fortunate we are to have her at the helm.

I also want to acknowledge the staff. We've waited a long time. Transitions aren't easy, but the ADD staff performed with professionalism and dedication and kept the programs going and we're very appreciative of all that work.

It's also a great pleasure to be here with all of you, because I know you also share a dedication and concern just as deeply as we do about issues that affect people with developmental disabilities. The state councils occupy a very, very important place in the lives of people with DD. Because of your work, systems have been significantly changed and evolved in many important ways for the better, and many,

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many lives have been touched by that. Your continuous education of policy makers helps those who sit in the position to make important political decisions to be aware of the barriers that affect people with DD and the way policies may unwittingly affect them. And your tireless efforts have improved access to many integrated support services to help people with DD live more self determined lives. You are at the forefront of issues of importance to people with disabilities and their families. Access to employment, housing, education, healthcare, transportation, social justice, and many others. And your work enables people with developmental disabilities to lead more productive, independent, and fulfilling lives. By doing that, you also help all of us to create a more just and humane society, so I thank you.

I want to convey greetings on behalf of HHS Secretary Sebelius and also on behalf of our assistant secretary, Carmen. I don't know if any of you had a chance to meet her. Unfortunately, she was with us for all too brief a time, but in that short time, she brought with us a strong commitment to the disadvantaged, the underrepresented, and really as an advocate for making sure that all of our systems serve the most vulnerable and most disenfranchised, including people with DD. So she's made a significant difference in a short amount of time.

I have, as Sharon said, spent a good deal of my career doing similar things, being involved in the delivery and development of policy formation around services for the poor, people with disabilities, people who face discrimination, and people who cannot advocate for themselves.

In the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, I ran a clinic for people who in those early days when fear was running rampant, people with AIDS faced insurance, job, housing discrimination, all of the things you're familiar with in the DD world. Back in those days, we figured out, took us some time to do that, but we figured out how to use discrimination laws already in place, beginning with section 504 and moving towards the ADA to fight this newly emerging discrimination against people with AIDS based upon the construct of disability and the protections in the law for people with disabilities, and, in fact, the AIDS community partnered very closely with the disability community in getting the ADA passed back in 1990.

So coming from that background, that's why it is so exciting for me and such a privilege to be part of ACF and the Obama Administration, because ACF plays such an important role for the most vulnerable people in our country, serving as both a safety net and a launching pad for millions of people who benefit from our services. We have a tremendous responsibility to make a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families. We welcome your advice and also the way in which you sometimes push us to do things differently than we have done in the past, because you help us to stay active, agile, and accountable to the clients we serve. In past administrations at ACF, I want do you know that this administration will not forget ADD nor will it forget the people you serve, the people we represent. You will continue to receive our full support and attention.

So I want to give you a bit of a big picture. I'll give you a picture of ACF as a whole so you have a better sense of context within which ADD functions.

Almost a year ago, three overarching priorities were laid out for our work at ACF. All I think are relevant to ADD. First, we aim to support families and their efforts to achieve economic success. This means strong concentration on community building and meaningful collaboration with our partners at all levels of government and the advocacy world. It also means that we take care to make sure that everyone, regardless of disability, has access to education, training, and employment, and particularly for people

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with DD, the supports that are necessary to ensure that access without which their chances for a productive life are very much reduced.

Second, we are actively promoting healthy comprehensive early childhood development. There is no investment more critical for the future of our country. This means attention to a whole child's needs, a high quality inclusive education, a stable family with a decent income, good medical care, excellent nutrition, and access to all needed supports and opportunities. To accomplish this, we're not only strengthening our programs for young children, but also establishing stronger linkages with other programs and states.

And third, within our own house we're trying to enhance and improve ACF's own institutional capacity to do the important job we have to do, which means enhancing our ability to respond quickly by using the latest data and technology, eliminating duplication and fragmentation, and constantly communicating with all of our partners.

I hope these priorities speak to what all of you in this room would want of yourselves and for your children and for the people you represent, which is a focus on social and economic development, ensuring an equal chance for every person, especially at the early ages when neural pathways are being laid down. All of our children deserve the highest quality of learning in a supported environment. And finally, greater responsiveness and accountability.

These guide posts speak to the empowerment and quality for those who have barriers to overcome. At ACF, we want to stand shoulder to shoulder at anyone looking to overcome obstacles and lead a fulfilling life.

We've come to know that no one agency can solve all these problems alone. And in a time of the scarcity of resources we're in today, we have to be very smart with our budgets and expertise. We have to combine forces to make a real difference. That's why President Obama has charged the federal government with taking collaboration across agencies very, very seriously. It's time to recognize the synergy and partnership we need requires more than just signing documents together. We need to make sure that collaboration actually improves and makes a meaningful difference in people's lives.

Let me give you one example of cross agency collaboration. That is, the President's community living commission. This was announced last spring on the tenth anniversary of the Olmstead decision, which you know is the one that held that the unjustified isolation of people with disabilities is unlawful under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Since the ADA passed, people with disabilities have found that people get the services and accommodations they need, but more needs to be done.

So we are working with other federal partners, Department of Justice, Labor, HUD, Agriculture, to work with people with disabilities and their families. Our secretary has charged the office of disability in the secretary's office with convening an interdepartmental council to guide the work under Henry Claypool's leadership. I think many of you know Henry. ADD in fact represents ACF on our interdepartmental council. Over the course of the past year, the community living initiative resulted in several important accomplishments. For example, in May of this year, our center for Medicare and Medicaid services released a letter to state Medicaid reaffirming their commitment to policies identified in the Olmstead letters and offering tools and information to help states make greater strides in achieving the promise of the ADA. In April of this year, HHS together with HUD announced \$40 million in housing choice vouchers for 5300 nonelderly people with disabilities living in the community or transitioning out of institutional

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care. HHS, our role in this is to use our network of state Medicaid agencies and local human services organizations to link eligible individuals and their families to local housing agencies.

In May of this year, our Administration on Aging and CMS jointly announced an additional \$60 million for the expansion and improvement of aging and disability resource centers as visible and trusted sources where people can turn for objective information on their support options and long term benefits. The office of disability awarded a contract to establish a center of excellence on care coordination and integration to create the data infrastructure to support the development of comparative research on services and supports and models of care for people with disabilities.

And finally, HHS is collaborating with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, SSA, and Department of Labor, to produce a guide for federal financing of support and customized employment as an important resource for states striving to promote value --

(Applause.)

Thank you.

These are just a few of the exciting new initiatives in well under a year, and they are leading the way to enhanced opportunities for people with disabilities to live with respect and dignity as full members of their communities.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about research. I know Sharon has already talked to you about the evaluation of DD grant programs and where we're going with the evaluation, but I would like to give you a quick overview of the broader portfolio of ACF research activities, so again, you can see how the national DD study and reporting requirements fit into our overall focus on program performance, evidence based strategies, and quality improvement.

Currently our major studies focus on creating economic well being for families, including childcare and welfare for low income families, and introducing early head start. We're looking at the child welfare system's effects on children and adolescents by conducting a longitudinal study of children who come into contact with tech services. The study is examining reports from parents, case workers, teachers, and data on their cognitive development, their academic achievement, their social competence, and their skills living independently. And the hope is to learn things that will help us to reform and reengineer all of these systems and programs so that they better serve vulnerable children.

Also relevant to the DD community, we have results from a project with a perilously long title, identifying promising practices for helping TANF recipients enter and sustain employment. As the name suggests, at least it's enough to tell you what it's about. This study is focused on adult TANF recipients living with mental, intellectual, and physical disabilities. We have new ideas on how best to provide personal and workplace support, create employment opportunities, conduct meaningful assessments, and create partnerships between TANF programs and vocational rehabilitation agencies, something that I know has been sorely lacking at the state level in many states in our country.

It's important that we demonstrate the achievements and the effectiveness of the DD network programs as well. The national independent study on the administration of developmental disabilities program will help us to better understand some elements of program performance, and we look forward to partnering with all of you to make sure that we're capturing the right data in the right ways.

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So I have just given you a very quick overview of our research portfolio and ACF programs. I hope if nothing else, you've seen that our priorities and programs are quite wide ranging, but all guided by one principle: The desire to help children, families, and vulnerable populations access services that will help them live productive and healthy lives. We know that people with disabilities are served by nearly every program that we administer. Not just ACF, but across HHS as a whole. And we're strongly committed to ensuring that our policies and our programs improve and enhance access for all vulnerable populations, including people with DD and their families. We are proud that ADD is part of the portfolio of programs that help us to achieve that goal. As all of you fight prejudice, ignorance, and discrimination by promoting knowledge, innovation, and community services, you stand as witnesses to the conviction that disability is not destiny, and that every American is extraordinary and entitled to all the richness that our society can offer. And for doing that every day, day in and day out, I commend you for your partnership and your hard work, and I look forward to our continuing partnership with you.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

I would be happy, with Sharon's assistance, to answer a couple of questions if you have them.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon. My name is Catherine. Can you all hear?

AUDIENCE: No.

AUDIENCE: I work for the Virginia Board of People with Disabilities. I would be interested in reaching out beyond HHS to work with education for the college initiatives, and I would also be interested in your thinking with respect to all of the work the DD councils have been engaged in for service providers. It's a lie that's getting better in Virginia. But within education and employment, I would like to know what your thoughts are about when does that get integrated into those systems.

DAVID HANSELL: Very good question. We are beginning to do that. We have a long way to go, no question. What we really want to do is try to create an integrated workforce development system across the federal government. We have components of that system primarily within the TANF program, within ACF, the Department of Labor obviously has a big part of that program within its WIA programs, the Department of Education with both its educational and postsecondary and other adult education programs. So the challenge is to try to pull those together into one system rather than multiple systems.

We have begun to do that. We began earlier with the Department of Labor. Our partnership with them I think has already paid off some very, very significant dividends. One example, as you may know, at the moment because of some delays in Congress acting on jobs bill before the Senate, states have not received any new funding for summer youth programs this year. We identified funding through TANF funding to allow states to use that funding source in order to fund summer youth employment. In fact, we now have 19 states that have applied. 14 I think already approved but I think there will be 19 in total that will be able to run summer youth employment programs this summer because they will have access to the funding stream that we've identified through this partnership with the Department of Labor which normally would fund summer youth programs through WIA money but Congress hasn't approved yet. So that's one. There are many others. We're also trying to integrate WIA and TANF programs. And also working across agencies because we realize we have to bring our education departments in, both

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the secondary side and the vocational rehabilitation side on this conversation. So we're doing that. We're getting off the ground. I hope near term you'll be able to see results from the collaboration.

SHARON LEWIS: I'm going to jump in and follow-up just to answer your question specifically. We are actively working with the Department of Education. As many of you may know, the Department of Ed is about to issue a funding opportunity announcement for the model demonstration programs for comprehensive postsecondary transition programs for students with intellectual disabilities. ADD, through our national training initiatives, has been supporting many grants, working with institutions of higher education across the country, prepare for application of those grants in building those model demonstration projects and programs. We continue conversations with the Department of Ed around how do we continue to support that initiative. And as many of you may know, that's work that's near and dear to my heart coming off the Hill. That was a measure that we championed to ensure that those resources would be available through the Higher Education Opportunity Act. It's great to see it come to fruition.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon. I'm Lisa from Nevada DD council. We recently had a group of veterans come to us and talk to us about having the younger members of the service organizations who are coming home with traumatic brain injuries being qualified under the Developmental Disabilities Act because the cutoff date is 22 years of age, and with one child already with autism and my oldest about to enlist, I'm very interested in finding out if these veterans have been applying for any kind of aid through the Developmental Disabilities Act and what their success rate has been, because right now, and veterans groups are painfully aware of this, the Karzai 12 rules of engagement are increasing those who come home with traumatic brain disorders and injuries. Not just that, but also amputations. These kids are coming home paraplegic. How are we going to get the word out that they are eligible for what we have to offer as well. These guys will be 21 years old, basically legally minors, especially in Nevada where we have more than one classification of juvenile versus minor, who can drink, who can gamble. You know, they're still minors in our state. How are we going to help these guys?

SHARON LEWIS: Well, I think, as all of you know, under the DD Act, we are not direct service providers in terms of kind of addressing your direct service question. I think that our role in terms of councils and folks at the state level are ensuring that we're reaching out to those communities. One component of that that we have initiated has been, as many of you may know, family support projects that have been specifically targeted to military families. We have those programs developing on bases and have developed a very active partnership with the Department of Defense folks who operate family programs for military families. And we're excited because they are actually taking the seeds that we have plant and are picking up and running with that based on our models and our values and our folks from the Department of Defense are, you know, for example, participating in our family supports efforts and engaging with us to see how to better support families, including those with young returning service members. And as you know, the culture and the fact that these families move as much as they do create unique challenges that I think our network as well as CMS are going to have to be looking at in terms of access and provision services.

DAVID HANSELL: That's a very important question. I frankly wouldn't want to do the disservice of giving an uninformed answer. We all know, it's certainly true that we're seeing a pattern of injuries from this war that we've never seen before, for a variety of reasons. And I think that probably is taxing a lot of our programs. So I guess what I would say, in addition to what Sharon said, is I hope as you identify either your personal experience or your professional experience, ways in which federal programs are

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not adequately serving returning servicemen and women with physical or emotional disabilities, because serving veterans is a high priority of this administration. I think all of us would want to look at where there might be opportunities to improve those services and modify programs where we can make sure they are appropriately serving returning vets. It's an important issue, and please continue to advise us when you find problems.

SHARON LEWIS: No other questions?

DAVID HANSELL: All right. Well, thank you all very much and please enjoy the rest of your day.

(Applause.)