

# On Target

Informing Indiana About  
Disability Issues

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*On Target* is a monthly publication of the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities.

We welcome your suggestions for newsletter content and ideas concerning the actions of the Council. *On Target* is made available in accessible formats upon request.

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## **Daniels takes helm of state government New FSSA leader addresses budget concerns**

Things are changing in Indiana state government - and fast. Gov. Mitch Daniels was inaugurated Jan. 10 and immediately went to work issuing executive orders and making key appointments. His decisions, now and throughout the next four years, will have a profound impact on Hoosiers with disabilities.

### **The new agenda: change**

Indiana's new governor campaigned on a strong message of change, and he repeated that message at his inauguration.

"We offered ourselves as people of change," Daniels said during the inaugural ceremony. "We tried to hold up the prospect of an era in which we would leave behind old arguments for new solutions, provincialism for unified purpose, timidity and caution for boldness and even risk-taking, all with the goal of restoring our state as a place of prosperity and promise."

Daniels' strong business experience was a driving element of his campaign, and he has pledged to reorganize state government to increase its efficiency and resolve the state budget deficit. Economic development, including job creation, will also be a top issue for the Daniels

administration. Other issues on Daniels' list include establishing daylight-saving time in Indiana, improving the state's child welfare system and addressing the needs of Indiana's schools.

### **Family and Social Services Administration**

Daniels has named Mitch Roob Jr. as the new secretary of the Family and Social Services Administration. Roob was formerly president of the Marion County Health and Hospital Corporation, and his first priority is revamping the state agency to address a budget deficit of more than \$17 million.

"We must rebuild financial solvency in FSSA," Roob said in a news release. "Common sense compassion balances the humanitarian efforts of this agency with the reality that we must live within our means."

According to a statement released by FSSA, the organization will focus on how to "succeed in revamping the [Medicaid] waiver program, implementing [the] Medicare ... prescription drug benefit and fundamentally reorganizing how FSSA provides service."

To play a role in decisions about disability-related programs and services, the disability community should stay informed and maintain open communication with elected representatives (see sidebar).

"With the new administration looking at making fundamental changes in Medicaid, the governor and new FSSA secretary need to hear ideas regarding the best way to administer services so consumers get the care they need and public dollars are used effectively," said John Cardwell, director of the Generations Project. "It's not a time to be shy."

## **Following state legislative activity**

### **You can be an important resource**

for your state legislators, if you stay informed. To learn more about legislative issues, consider the following resources.

- Hear debate on important bills without leaving the comfort of your home. Visit [www.in.gov/legislative](http://www.in.gov/legislative) to hear real-time audio from the General Assembly. You can also view a video transmission of live action in the House of Representatives.
- Follow the progress of important legislation with the state's Bill Watch system. Visit [www.in.gov/apps/lisa/session/billwatch](http://www.in.gov/apps/lisa/session/billwatch) and enter the appropriate bill numbers. You'll receive e-mail updates about any legislative action on those bills.
- Visit [www.indystar.com/special/citizensguide](http://www.indystar.com/special/citizensguide) for the Indianapolis Star's "guide to the Statehouse and making your voice heard." The site includes links to top state issues, a virtual Statehouse tour, links to legislators' contact information, committee listings and much more.
- Sign up for the Arc of Indiana's Action E-list. See "Of Note" for more information.

## **Learn to read Braille**

Many resources exist to teach Braille reading skills to people both with and without vision impairments. Available resources include:

- "Hooray for Braille" kit - Includes a touch-and-feel book, Braille for the Sighted, Braille alphabet magnets, a Braille placemat and other resources to help families learn Braille together (\$25, [www.seedlings.org](http://www.seedlings.org) or (800) 777-8552).
- Braille Enthusiast's Dictionary - Includes

supplementary information, such as a guide to Braille formatting (\$65, [www.Scalarspublishing.com](http://www.Scalarspublishing.com) or (901) 737-0001).

- Braille for the Sighted by S. Harold Collins, Jane Schneider and Kathy Kifer - Focuses on Grade One Braille for beginners (\$6.26, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).
- Handbook for Learning to Read Braille by Sight - A comprehensive guidebook (\$28, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).
- Pocket Braille Learning Device - A Braille cube with raised buttons that can be arranged to form Braille letters (\$4.95, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).
- The Braille Trail Activity Book - Includes a small slate and stylus so you can practice writing Braille (\$14.95, [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org) or (800) 232-3044).

### **The levels of Braille**

As you select Braille resources, start with Grade One texts and advance to Grade Two as your skills improve. Grade One Braille consists of the 26-letter alphabet and punctuation; Grade Two integrates contractions and abbreviations.

### **Now is time to apply for summer internships**

As we shiver in the winter cold, summer can seem very far away. In reality, though, now is the time to plan for summer activities, especially if you hope to have an internship. The federal and state governments in particular offer a number of paid summer internship positions that target members of minority groups, including people with disabilities.

### **Federal internship opportunities**

Visit [www.ourpublicservice.org](http://www.ourpublicservice.org) for a comprehensive listing of internships available with the federal government. Simply click on

"Work for USA" and then "Internships" for a listing of opportunities with the White House, federal agencies, the State Department, the Smithsonian Institution and even the Central Intelligence Agency. Application deadlines vary.

Another option is [www.studentjobs.gov](http://www.studentjobs.gov), which offers a database of internship opportunities with federal agencies and federally funded educational programs.

State internship opportunities The Indiana government offers paid internships in a variety of agencies. For more information, visit [www.in.gov/jobs/internships](http://www.in.gov/jobs/internships). The application deadline for all positions is Feb. 18.

Transportation internships Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the Summer Transportation Internship Program for Diverse Groups offers a 10-week schedule of research, work experience and field trips. Interns, who receive a bi-weekly stipend, work in DOT offices across the nation. Applications are due Feb. 28. Visit [www.fhwa.dot.gov/education/stipdg.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/education/stipdg.htm) for more information or an application.

Other opportunities For other internships, visit the career services center of your college or university. You can also visit [www.indianaintern.net](http://www.indianaintern.net), a local internship database sponsored by the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce.

Start planning now for spring tornado season

The United States experiences hundreds of tornadoes each year, which cause an average of 58 deaths and many more injuries, according to the National Weather Service. As this year's tornado season begins, remember that planning

ahead can help save lives in an emergency.

To prepare, the American Red Cross suggests the following:

- Assemble a "disaster kit" containing food, bottled water, flashlights, batteries, a fire extinguisher, a battery-operated radio or small television, blankets, a first aid kit and a one-week supply of important medications. If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, include an extra battery. Also include a whistle or other noise-making device you can use to attract attention if you are injured.
- Determine the safest place in your home, usually a basement or interior room without windows. Store your kit there and practice getting there quickly. Consider holding household "tornado drills."
- Establish a "buddy system" with a family member, friend or neighbor. Agree to contact each other if a natural disaster occurs. Share any disability-related needs you might have.
- Ask whether your home health care provider, if you have one, offers natural disaster and emergency services.
- Monitor weather conditions in your area. Being aware of tornado watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service gives you time to reach a safe place before a tornado strikes.

### **ADA to celebrate 15th anniversary in July**

On July 26, the disability community will mark the 15th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the landmark civil rights legislation that opened many doors for people with disabilities.

Now is the perfect time to start planning for ADA

celebrations and other activities in your community. For example, you might hold a community-wide disability awareness event or organize an open house for a disability-related organization or service provider. For other ideas, visit [www.in.gov/gpcpd](http://www.in.gov/gpcpd) and view the Council's free Disability Awareness Month activity packets. Many of the ideas used each March will be applicable to anniversary events.

July will also be a good time to remind business owners and other community leaders about the importance of meeting ADA requirements. You might organize volunteers to conduct accessibility surveys of stores, restaurants, government buildings and businesses in your community, then work collaboratively to address concerns you identify.

Please contact Ashley Petry at (317) 631-6400 (voice) or [apetry@bjmpr.com](mailto:apetry@bjmpr.com) (e-mail) with information about anniversary celebrations in your community.

### **Indiana's ADA implementation**

At the 2004 Annual Conference for People with Disabilities, conference attendees completed a survey about ADA implementation in Indiana. Preliminary results include:

- 74 percent consider themselves to be very or somewhat knowledgeable about the ADA.
- Respondents said "hiring more people with disabilities" would be the most helpful step toward ADA compliance and awareness in their communities.
- The top three issues communities need to address, according to respondents, are hiring more people with disabilities, providing accessible transportation and

removing physical barriers in buildings.

The survey, conducted by the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, is open until June 30. Visit [www.thepollingplace.org](http://www.thepollingplace.org) to respond.

### **Plan awareness activities in your community**

March is Disability Awareness Month, and it's not too late to plan activities to build awareness and understanding of disability issues in your community. Consider the following activity suggestions.

- Explore opportunities to speak to classes or community service organizations about disability issues.
- Organize a disability awareness fair that includes speakers with disabilities, children's activities and more.
- Conduct an accessibility survey of local buildings, such as restaurants, stores or government offices, and report your findings to building owners and/or managers.
- Order free Disability Awareness Month posters, bookmarks and stickers and distribute these items in your community.
- Work with your local library to arrange a disability-related book display and/or children's story hour.
- Encourage your mayor to release a proclamation announcing March as Disability Awareness Month in your community.
- Encourage clergy members to include disability awareness lessons in adult and children's educational programs during March.

The Council provides free activity planning guides for these and many other activities. To place an order, visit [www.in.gov/gpcpd](http://www.in.gov/gpcpd) or contact Kim

Dennison at [kdennison@bjmpr.com](mailto:kdennison@bjmpr.com) (e-mail), (317) 631-6400 (voice) or (317) 631-6499 (fax).

### **'Brain power' controls new technologies**

Today, neuroscientists around the world are developing technologies that translate human thought into computer commands - creating the potential for assistive technology that dramatically expands the independence of people with mobility-related disabilities.

In one study, neuroscientists implanted a computer chip into the brain of a man who is paralyzed. With training, the man was able to play computer games, check e-mail, control a television and even turn lights on and off, all using simple thoughts. The computer chip detected neural activity in the brain and sent commands to a computer via a small wire mounted on the skull.

The chip, called BrainGate, is scheduled for its second phase of clinical trials, when up to five more people will receive implants.

In another study, four test subjects were trained to control a computer, with thoughts alone, while wearing a "thinking cap" covered with electrodes. This technology has similar potential; it could one day allow people with mobility-related disabilities to live more independently. However, the "thinking cap" requires no surgery or implants.

While these technologies are still in the earliest stages of development, they represent a growing area of research that offers significant potential for people with disabilities.

### **Of Note**

**Order Disability Awareness Month materials now** It's not too late to order free Disability

Awareness Month materials before March. Simply visit [www.in.gov/gpcpd](http://www.in.gov/gpcpd) or contact Kim Dennison at [kdennison@bjmpr.com](mailto:kdennison@bjmpr.com) (e-mail), (317) 631-6400 (voice) or (317) 631-6499 (fax).

**Wanted: Partners graduates, others to form advocacy teams** Fifth Freedom, the first statewide, cross-disability, grassroots advocacy organization, seeks graduates of the Partners in Policymaking Academy, as well as other disability advocates, to form Advocacy Coordination Teams in every Indiana county. For more information or an application, visit [www.fifthfreedom.org](http://www.fifthfreedom.org) or contact Karen Vaughn, ACT Teams coordinator, at (866) 757-7299 (voice).

**Save the date: Self-advocates statewide conference**

Self-advocates of Indiana will host its first statewide conference April 21-22, 2005, at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Columbus. The conference will offer two session tracks, one for people with disabilities and another for parents or adult children of people with disabilities. For more information, contact Maribeth Mooney at [mfmooney@indiana.edu](mailto:mfmooney@indiana.edu) (e-mail) or (812) 855-6508 (voice).

**Sign up for Arc Action E-list**

The Arc Action E-list offers e-mail alerts about legislative issues of interest to the disability community. To join the mailing list, visit [www.arcind.org](http://www.arcind.org), click on "Arc Legislative Information Page" and select "Sign up for Action E-list." Each alert includes links to send e-mail messages to your state and federal legislators.

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