Site Visitors Reflect on the Future

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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Recommended Citation
SITE VISITORS REFLECT ON THE FUTURE

April 30, 2009 by Jolynne Lyon

AUCD representatives Daniel Bier, David Mank and Dawn Rudolph with CPD Director Bryce Fifield.

Colleagues from university centers like the CPD and the Association of University Centers on Disabilities visited us at Utah State University this month. As part of a technical assistance site visit, they offered some insights on the future of the disability field, especially as it relates to the CPD's work.

The disability field may change as baby boomers age, said Dr. David Mank of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community. "How will that affect even the definition of disability, and how society responds to it?" he asked. For example, a retired couple may build their new home all on one level to spare their knees, but they may not ever mention words like "universal design" or "disability"

Daniel Bier is the associate director of the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin ad Madison. He said international connections will probably become more and more important in the future, and that university centers are well poised to collaborate with people from other countries on disability issues.

For example, more than 50 countries from China to Argentina to Rawanda have ratified a UN Convention on disability rights. Now they will be seeking technical assistance to put its principles in place.

"UCEDDs are in the best position to facilitate that discussion and create the agenda," Bier said.

Other issues stem from the current economic crisis and the budget cuts that came with it. Around the country, the staff people who provide services like supported employment will be reduced and people within the disability field will struggle with what "inclusion" really means.

"That discussion has to play out," said Bier. The important thing is that university centers do not back away from their commitment to inclusion.

Whatever the challenge, the Center for Persons with Disabilities should not feel alone, said Kathryn Cargill-Willis, who spoke by telephone to the visitors and people from the CPD. Cargill-Willis is the Program Specialist for the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

Every university center for excellence on developmental disabilities faces the same issues, she said.

The site visit was requested by CPD Director Bryce Fifield. It allowed people within the center to discuss their goals and the best ways to achieve them.