CAC Corner: Disability Concerns Heard

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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This month’s CAC Corner Blog voices the concerns of the CPD’s Consumer Advisory Council Family Representative Charlotte Spencer.

By Charlotte Spencer & Connie Pehrson

Parents of children with disabilities too often hear the discouraging words “Sorry, you don’t qualify for services.” “Sorry we don’t have the money in our budget right now to help you.”

It is frustrating when I receive the annual DSPD (Division for Services for People with Disabilities) questionnaire asking if the requested services are still needed for my daughter and am told that she is still on the “eternal” waiting list for services and they are still not available. Of course she still needs these services! Does the person with assistive technology suddenly not need it anymore? Does the person who is wheelchair bound magically not require a new chair after so many years of use?

When we hear of the aged widow who struggles to live independently because of her “fixed income,” our hearts go out to her. When we learn that a young family is struggling because of the loss of a job, we may cry for them and be grateful inside that we are not that bad off. When we learn of the struggles that people with disabilities have, do we hear them?

When did the words “budget,” “funds,” or even the phrase “Sorry, we can’t help you right now!” get to be such ugly words that just make you anxiously hold your breath as you hope you won’t hear them, but you cringe anyway when you do? I miss the old days where your child or young adult qualified for services because that is what is required through the school district--you might have to fight a little for it, but it can be obtained. It is a harsh reality when those days are over and the “Sorries” are coming from higher up.

During the 2011 Utah Legislative Session, legislators showed that they had heard many of the concerns of people with disabilities and their families. More funds were appropriated for those on the seemingly never ending waiting lists for services.

Our thanks goes out to them. Perhaps many of us won’t hear “Sorry, there is no money for those services right now” this year.