

Inside...

President's Letter
Technology Update
US DOE IDEA Determinations
New Advocates Corner
NAMI State Report Cards
Upcoming Events

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President's Message

Dear Fellow Advocates
and SPAN Members:

As a new fiscal year begins for SPAN, I would like to take the opportunity to review the highlights of this past year's tremendous success and to thank everyone for their superb efforts. First, I would like to mention our surging growth in membership, which almost doubled last year. By the end of 2006-07, our membership stood at 110 strong. An unrelenting drive on the part of our past Membership Chair as well as an intense campaign by both our Publicity and Professional Development Committees and other support volunteers, were the primary components of this important achievement. In addition, the combined development of our new branding line, new website, the reinstatement of our newsletter, and new informational literature and folders, prepared us to venture forth into a more public arena.

Last March, SPAN appeared at the Federation for Children with Special Needs Annual Conference, with a workshop on advocacy and a well-staffed literature table. Spearheaded by our Professional Development and Publicity Committees, this wonderful opportunity accomplished several things. It facilitated widespread visibility of

our organization within the Special Needs community, and revealed to us an enormous need for accurate and well-defined information on educational advocacy to be made available to parents. It also inspired SPAN to consider various outreach initiatives, focusing on informational and collaborative projects.

However, none of the aforementioned would have been possible without strong and dedicated support from all Board Members and volunteers who worked tirelessly throughout the year. I give a heartfelt thanks to all of you. Of course, the guidance, support and encouragement from our then President, Ruth Smith, was invaluable. We are very fortunate to have her this year in a newly created advisory capacity as Past President.

And now we begin another year, hopefully even busier and more exciting than the last! In order to effectively handle the new level of activity, we have increased our Board of Directors by 3 members this year, and our support committees continue to grow...

Continued on page 2

President's Message (cont.)



The result is a contagious and increased vital energy, enabling us to continue our mission of being a reliable resource to advocates. To that end, our Programming and Professional Development Committee is sharpening their focus on all members' needs, by providing education and information for both new and seasoned advocates. Our commitment to newly trained advocates emerging from the Federation endures, as made evident by our 3rd Annual SPAN Orientation/How to Set Up Your Business workshop in September.

We have also kept the Communication & Negotiation Skills workshop for October, although this year with a more advocacy-specific format, as a follow-up to September's essential training. However, it is imperative to realize that these two workshops are not only for newly trained advocates, but for everyone. Apart from learning new skills and honing old ones, we need seasoned advocates to welcome and encourage new colleagues into the profession. We must remember that our strength is in our numbers, and we must strive to preserve and promote the profession of advocacy through careful education and peer support.

At this point in time, both SPAN's short and long term goals consist of the following: continued growth of our membership; increased Professional Development through quality programming, networking and educational opportunities; begin various outreach initiatives within the special needs community; access various sources of funding. We are well on our way to meeting these goals, and I am sure that with the continued support and involvement of all our members, we will become ever-stronger in our commitment to serve those in need. We are expanding not only in terms of our membership numbers, but also in our dedication to support each other as professional advocates, as well as helping to inform others within the educational community that "equal access equals opportunity" and the ways in which that can be accomplished.

I look forward to a highly productive year as SPAN's President, and our rewarding journey forward together.

Yours in advocacy and equality,
Lynn Kreutz
President, SPAN 2007-2008

"We will become ever-stronger in our commitment to serve those in need."

Technology Update

Did you know...

- ❖ If you have a website, you can now add your web address to your professional listing so that potential clients can link directly to you!

- ❖ Advocates are now sorted by geography as well as name, so that potential clients can find someone in their area.

Look for new features to arrive shortly—and if you have suggestions for the website or listings, please send them to renewilliams4@aol.com



US DOE Issues Determination Letters on States' Implementation of IDEA

In June, 2007, The US Department of Education for the first time issued determination letters to categorize each State Education Agency (SEA) for Part B and each Lead Agency for Part C. Each state submitted an initial State Performance Plan in 2006. In February of 2007, each state submitted its first Annual Performance Report, detailing its progress in meeting the targets it set in its State Performance Plan.

There are four categories of determination:

1. Meets the requirements and purposes of the IDEA
2. Needs assistance in implementing the requirements of the IDEA
3. Needs intervention in implementing the requirements of the IDEA
4. Needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of the IDEA

Massachusetts scored in the "Needs Assistance" category for both Part B and Part C.

More information is available at:

<http://www.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/index.html>



New Advocate's Corner

Q: How do I know what to charge, and what to bill for?

A: Fee setting is not an exact science and no governing body oversees it. Ultimately, you have to make this decision for yourself. Factors to consider in setting your rate are how experienced you are, how much relevant background you have, and what the market supports. Seasoned advocates warn that charging too little can backfire if clients think you're not professional, or take your time too lightly.

Some people work pro bono. For those who charge, fees range from \$30/hr to \$100/hr and up, with seasoned advocates usually \$60-110/hour. Some advocates use a formal sliding scale based on family income; others have a single rate that they may discount if they feel it's warranted. Some beginning advocates set their rates low but bill for all their time; others set their initial rates higher but bill for only a portion of the time they spend, until they feel they are reasonably efficient.

Most advocates take some money upfront, either as a deposit or a retainer, to draw from as they set up and review a new client's file. This ensures they have been paid for their time if an agreement ends quickly.

Advocates generally charge for organizing (if the parent does not submit the file pre-organized) and reviewing the client's records, for conferring with parents, experts, or school staff regarding the case, for writing letters, emails, or meeting notes (whether before or after the meeting), for helping develop IEPs or researching placements, and for attending Team meetings, mediation sessions, and hearings. Most advocates charge either a flat fee or an hourly rate (often their full rate) for travel time.

Advocates do not, in general, charge for time spent researching laws or disabilities. This is considered background knowledge that a good advocate brings with them, and/or a learning opportunity. As in any field, there are some grey zones; for example conferring with colleagues could be acquiring background knowledge, or it could be the equivalent of an expert consult. A good rule of thumb is, Anything you would already know if you had a few years' experience and/or a dozen or so clients under your belt shouldn't cost the client.

New Advocates Corner (ok, you don't have to be "new") is an opportunity to have your questions addressed by one or more seasoned advocates.

Please submit your questions to: mehrzad@alignedconnections.com

Upcoming Events 2007-2008

Friday Oct. 12th - Mediation Works- **Full Day**
Moshe Cohen & Shelly Greene

Friday, Nov. 9th - Current Legal Topics
Attorneys Connie Hilton & Tim Sindelar

Friday, Nov. 16th - Peer Consultation-Free

Friday, Dec. 14th - Transition Planning
Elizabeth (Betty Anne) Ritcey, MS, RN

Friday, Jan. 11th - BSEA Summaries
Attorney Daniel Ahearn

Friday, Feb. 8th - Understand Asperger's
Alex Michaels

Friday, Feb. 15th - Peer Consultation-Free

Friday, Mar. 14th - Neuropsychological
Assessment: Utilizing Testing in IEPs
Reva Tankle, Ph.D

Friday, Apr. 11th - Caring for Children with
Special Health Care Needs in the School Setting
Stephanie Porter

Complete details at www.spanmass.org

Support Children with Autism

Shop anytime on Tuesday, October 16th at one of thirteen Whole Foods stores, and each store will donate 5% of your shopping bill to Massachusetts Advocates for Children's (MAC) Autism Special Education Legal Support Center!

For more information, or to see the list of stores, visit www.massadvocates.org or contact Stephany Melton at 617-357-8432 x244 or smelton@massadvocates.org

NAMI Grades the States

In 2006 the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) issued State Report Cards. Areas assessed, with Massachusetts scores in parentheses, were:

Infrastructure (C-)
Information Access (F)
Services (D+)
Recovery Supports (B+)

The report card also ranks states in per capita mental health, per capita income, total mental health spending, and frequency of suicide, and lists recent innovations in each state.

further details are available at:

[http://www.nami.org/gtstemplate.cfm?section=grading the states](http://www.nami.org/gtstemplate.cfm?section=grading_the_states)

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