

The Lens



January 2008 Edition

EITAS Wins Lawsuit

In the fall of 2006, a lawsuit was filed against EITAS questioning our ability to fund a variety of services and programs we have been supporting for years. The plaintiff accused us of violating our governing statute and requested the court to enjoin us from funding such services as the ACED program, the Jackson County Special Population Recreation Program, crisis services for homeless persons with developmental disabilities and some early intervention services. The lawsuit essentially demanded – based on a theory about the statutory language in effect 31 years ago – that we fund only sheltered workshops and residential programs connected to them. If we had lost, we would have had to stop our transportation services and all funding for day habilitation services as well. This would have dealt a serious blow to hundreds of persons and their families.

“we can
move forward”

Fortunately, upon completion of the trial, the judge ruled in EITAS' favor, and found unequivocally that we were spending taxpayer funding appropriately. Unfortunately, because of the lawsuit, there were a lot of false rumors and misinformation being disseminated, as well as a lot of time and money spent on defending our position. With the lawsuit behind us, it is our hope that we can move forward with supporting all persons with developmental disabilities in Jackson County to the best of our abilities and to the greatest extent possible within our resources. 🏡



Meetings

Annual Meeting

The EITAS Annual Meeting is in the planning stages for 2008 and is tentatively scheduled to be held on April 22nd, pending finalization of hotel and banquet arrangements. Nomination forms for outstanding achievements awards will soon be available on our website and distributed to all providers.

Meeting Notice

The Board of Directors for Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County – EITAS meets monthly during the year. All meetings are open to the public and we appreciate input and public comments. The Planning and Services Committee and Properties Committee meet the third Wednesday of each month starting at 4:30 p.m. at our administrative offices. The Finance Committee meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. prior to our full Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m. that same day. Our meetings schedule is also available on our website at www.eitas.org.



Cold Weather Readiness

With the advent of the extreme temperatures we have been experiencing, we encourage everyone to have their property in shape for the cold blasts of winter. Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure the next couple of months go by without leaving you out in the cold:

- Make sure your furnace and heaters have been serviced and inspected
- Make sure your filters have been changed
- Make sure your fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are working and any and all batteries have been replaced
- Make sure you have a working fire extinguisher on the premises and that everyone is familiar with its use.
- Have a winter emergency kit ready with flashlight, cell phone, food, water, blankets, and a place to go to if your heat should go out for any length of time.
- Make sure all exterior garden hoses are disconnected and properly stored
- Make sure all basement windows and doors are kept shut and properly sealed.
- Never use extension cords on electric heaters

If you find you need more information about making your property more winter-ready, please call Marvin Blake, EITAS Facility Manager, at 816-363-2000, with your questions. 🏠

New Contract for Executive Director



Jake Jacobs

At a special closed executive session meeting in November, the EITAS Board evaluated Jake Jacobs, Executive Director's performance for the past year and unanimously approved a new four year contract for him. Mr. Jacobs pledged to continue working closely with the Board and stakeholders to be responsive to the community needs and accountable to the Jackson County taxpayers.

New Board Members

On January 28th, County Executive Mike Sanders named three new members to the EITAS Board of Directors. These new members will replace Jim White and Sheryl Max, who are retiring from the Board, and fill a vacant slot held over from last year. The new board members are Anita K. Parran, Associate State Director for Public Affairs at AARP; Becky Sandring, Director of Finance at Aquila, Inc.; and Mathew L. Levi, Vice President of Block & Company, Inc. Realtors. We are confident they will be making important contributions to our EITAS Board, just as Sheryl and Jim have.



✦ Topic for Discussion

Sheltered Workshops – Returning to our roots while cultivating change

The Missouri Revised Statutes Section 178.910 defines the purpose of a sheltered workshop as follows:

1. A sheltered workshop shall provide a controlled work environment and a program designed toward enabling the handicapped person enrolled to progress toward normal living and to develop, as far as possible, his capacity, performances and relationship with other persons.
2. A sheltered workshop shall, as far as possible, provide work experience sufficiently diverse to accommodate the needs of each of the handicapped persons enrolled.
3. A sheltered workshop shall coordinate and integrate its services with all community agencies for the benefit of its employees, and whenever practicable make use of the services available from these agencies. 🏠

“one thing has not changed –
our ongoing **commitment.**”

Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County – EITAS (formerly the Jackson County Board of Services for Developmentally Disabled) was originally created by the “SB 40” statute (205.968) to support local sheltered workshops and residential programs for the persons employed at them.

Over the past 30 years, several changes have been made to the original SB 40 statute, clarifying language and expanding our authority and ability to fund new and different services. But one thing has not changed – our ongoing commitment to work and vocational opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities. That not only

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means supporting sheltered workshops, but also opportunities for supported employment and competitive employment for those individuals who choose to pursue them.

Many of the workshops in Jackson County have embraced the idea that some people desire to work outside of a workshop environment and have developed special programming to allow for that. EITAS applauds those efforts and encourages all workshops to look at doing things differently. As you know, traditional workshop tasks and contracts are drying up or even moving out of the country. As a result, we all need to be responsive to how our environment is changing and how we can best abide by the governing statutes and regulations in meeting the needs of the individuals we are here to serve.

“We are here to serve.”

EITAS has a strong commitment to see the workshops succeed and survive. In 2007 we increased funding in support of the workshops by 28% or \$672,800. In the 2008 budget we have further increased financial support by another 20% or \$702,543. Traditional workshop jobs should be available to those persons wanting them. But EITAS is also supporting some new and exciting programs being developed by the workshops. In return, we are asking for continued cooperation and accountability for the taxpayer dollars spent on vocational services. Per the needs assessment completed in 2007, the citizens of Jackson County with developmental disabilities want to see a greater array of employment opportunities available. And who better to develop those than the organizations with

the most experience in employing persons with developmental disabilities – the workshops.

“We must all be prepared to respond.”

Times change, and the needs and expectations of individuals change. We must all be prepared to respond. This year every provider we fund is developing person-centered plans and programming around serving individuals and promoting positive outcomes. The bottom line to EITAS is that workshops are not just a place of employment. Their mission and purpose are well-stated in their governing statute. Going forward, let’s all make sure we honor the past, yet embrace a future of new possibilities – all aimed at helping the people we serve grow and thrive in our communities. 🌟





Dropping the MR from MRDD

For many years the terms “mentally retarded” or “retarded” have been unacceptable and offensive to millions of people across the country who suffer from intellectual disabilities. Now Missouri legislators are hoping to make a minor change that will make a major impact on people with developmental disabilities. “Senate Bill 756” and “House Bill 1627” have been filed to change the name of the Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities to just the Division of Developmental Disabilities. People opposed to the change fear that people who carry the MR diagnosis would be left out – that services or eligibility for services would also change. But that’s simply not the case. The bills specify the change *“shall not be construed to change the criteria by which the division makes eligibility determinations for its programs and services.”*

“a minor **change** that will make a major **impact.**”

- The Special Olympics – an international organization serving 2.5 million people officially opposes using the “R” word, ever. Why? Because the word is offensive to the people served.
- The two leading national organizations in the field of developmental disabilities – The Arc of the United States, and the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities – changed their names in response to widespread disdain for the “R” word among people with disabilities.
- In Washington D.C., the President’s Committee on Mental Retardation changed its name to the President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities after surveying constituents and learning how offensive the “R” word is to them.
- Last year, Connecticut changed the name of its DMR to the Department of Developmental Services, dropping “MR” from the title. They did so after they also surveyed constituents and found overwhelming support for the name change.
- Many other governmental bodies across the nation have dropped “MR” from their titles, and others will follow suit. Arkansas’ Division dropped “MR” from its title 25 years ago!
- The leading journal on cognitive disabilities – the Journal on Mental Retardation – changed its title and is now called Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

EITAS supports changing outdated terminology – especially terms and descriptions that people find offensive and demeaning. 🇺🇸

Program Updates

Service Coordination

On July 1, 2007, EITAS signed a contract with the Department of Mental Health MRDD Division to begin assisting with Service Coordination Jackson County. We have agreed in the first year to hire ten service coordinators whose salaries and expenses will be covered by DMH funding and Medicaid reimbursements to help reduce the caseloads and to improve service coordination services in Jackson County. Our service coordinators will carry caseloads no larger than 40 and will at first work only with adults who have Medicaid. This program is being designed to grow over the next three to five years to incorporate most service coordination in Jackson County, so eventually we will serve all persons with developmental disabilities regardless of age or financial ability. We have hired three service coordinators and they began filling their caseloads on December 1st. Persons interested in learning more about our service coordination, or those wanting to switch from the Regional Office to EITAS should

call 816-363-2000 for information.

Transportation Services

We continue to strive to improve services by adding new drivers, more routes, and new vehicles. Through cooperative agreements with the Missouri Department of Transportation we have been able to purchase three new buses and a new van to go into service in early 2008. For issues with or questions about our transportation services please call 816-461-3654

Strategic Planning

In February of 2008 our Board of Directors will begin looking at revising and updating our ongoing strategic plan which began in 2006. We will be using information from the needs assessment conducted in 2007 and welcome public comment and input at our Planning and Services Committee and Board meetings. For Board meetings times and dates please see the meetings section in this newsletter or feel free to call our offices at 816-363-2000.

Vocational

EITAS is pleased to be working with the local

association (ABOVE) that the Jackson County workshops have developed over the past year. A number of cooperative projects between the workshops are being explored to provide more jobs and more diverse opportunities for employment. We will update everyone as these projects get fleshed-out further.

Residential

The construction of the joint group home project with TNC in Independence has begun. The foundation for Englewood Home has been poured and basic plumbing and construction work has begun. This six-bed Level III group home will be totally accessible and state-of-art in residential care. We are hoping for a completion time by late summer. This project will be the model for several new group homes to come and has been developed and finalized in less than a year.

EITAS recently purchased a new group home on Blue Ridge in Independence to replace one of our

other homes (Carriage House) that was proving inaccessible to several of the residents. Some minor remodeling is required, but should be completed in the next couple of months.

Day Habilitation

We have quite a bit of remodeling and building improvement plans on the drawing board for each of the day habilitation programs in 2008. More information to come as budgets are approved and plans finalized.

Support Services

The Support Services Department has been working closely with all providers to develop our outcome standards and measurements for each person served and supported through ETIAS funding. We are taking a true person-centered approach to ensure that individuals are receiving all the supports and services needed to enable them to live as full a life as possible. In addition, it is holding the providers accountable for the funding they receive in a new manner. For more information about Support Services and our quality outcomes initiative, feel free to call Nancy Nicolaus at 816- 595-8253.