



# Public Policy for the People

Brought to you by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

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- Don't miss this first edition of GCDD's new public policy newsletter, "Public Policy for the People"!!
- The 2015 Georgia legislative session is right around the corner - find out how YOU can get involved!!
- Meet the newest (four-legged) member of GCDD's public policy team!

## INSIDER HIGHLIGHTS

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities wants to wish you a Happy New Year!! The 2015 Legislative session starts on Monday January 12th and we are looking forward to an exciting 2015! Keep reading to see some of the great things we have planned.

First, many of you may remember our legislative newsletter "Moving Forward" from previous years that went out electronically each week during the legislative session and was mailed every other week. We are replacing that with a public policy newsletter entitled "Public Policy for the People." Public Policy for the People will be an electronic-only newsletter that will go out approximately every other week during the legislative session and quarterly during the rest of the year. Our hope is that this newsletter will provide you, the concerned citizens of Georgia, with valuable information that will empower you to become involved in our advocacy to make Georgia a better place for people with disabilities!

In other news: Dawn Alford, the Acting Public Policy Director, at the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, has a new service dog, Kab (pictured below), who is the newest (four-legged) member of the GCDD public policy team. Just as her previous service dog McAllister was, Kab will be an integral member of the GCDD team supporting Dawn as she works down at the Capitol during the session.



And D'Arcy Robb, who many of you remember as the former Public Policy Director of GCDD, has a new role as a public policy contractor specifically to work toward creating an Employment First policy in Georgia.

Be sure to read the rest of the newsletter to see how you can get involved!

## **BUDGET 101**

This section of the newsletter will highlight the activities and information regarding the Amended FY2015 and FY2016 Budget. Below is the Unlock the Waiting Lists Legislative ASK. For more information on Unlock the Waiting Lists, visit <http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/>

### *2015 Legislative Session - FY 2016 Ask*

Unlock Waiting Lists advocates investing in Georgians with disabilities so they their families can live full lives and contribute to Georgia communities and the Georgia economy. We believe Georgia must rebalance its system of long-term supports, so that fewer dollars are spent on institutional care and more dollars are invested into long-term supports in the community.

### Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities, FY 2016

Increased funding for 1,000 NOW/COMP waivers to address the community waiting list of 7,378 people:  
**\$16,493,000**

Housing vouchers to support 100 people with developmental disabilities who wish to live in their own home or apartments

**\$600,000**

Fund 26 COMP waivers so that young Georgians with disabilities under the age of 22 who are currently living in nursing facilities or intermediate care facilities can move out of these facilities into permanent

loving homes  
**\$799,316**

Department of Community Health, FY 2016

Increase the ICWP rate for Personal Support Services to \$20.00/hour to be consistent with other Georgia Medicaid Waivers \$21,000,000. We recommend phasing in this amount starting with increasing the Personal Support rate by \$3/hour for FY2016.  
**\$7,975,490**

**Who's Who:**

The 2015 legislative session is the first year of a two-year legislative cycle. Below we review the leadership changes. You can visit <http://www.legis.ga.gov> to find the contact information for these elected officials.

House:

Speaker of the House: David Ralston  
Speaker Pro Tempore: Jan Jones  
Majority Leader: Larry O'Neal  
Minority Leader: Stacy Abrams

Senate:

Presiding: Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle  
President Pro Tempore: David Shafer  
Majority Leader: Bill Cowsert  
Democratic Leader: Steve Henson

Contact Information for the Governor:

The Honorable Nathan Deal  
Office of the Governor  
206 Washington Street, Suite 203, State Capitol  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
Phone: 404-656-1776  
[Send an Email](#)

**ADVOCACY CORNER**

**New this year: Advocacy Days at the Capitol**

Here at GCDD we are asking everyone impacted by and interested in disability rights to get involved. We realize that the idea can seem daunting, but your voices need to be heard. For that reason, we want to help teach you how to speak to your legislators. During the 2015 legislative session, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities and Unlock the Waiting Lists! will be hosting a series of **Advocacy Days at the Capitol!** See the schedule below for dates and times. Due to space limitations,

everyone must register in advance using the link below. While you are there, don't forget to register for Disability Day.

[http://www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e\\_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E\\_ID=500061&RegType=ATT](http://www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E_ID=500061&RegType=ATT)

**We Need Waivers Day - Wednesday, January 21st, 9:00-12:00:**

Did you know over 7,000 Georgians are on the waiting list for a NOW or COMP waiver? Join us as we advocate to get more waivers!

**ICWP Raise the Rate Day - Thursday, January 29th, 9:00-12:00:**

The going rate for personal care is \$20 an hour, but under ICWP, caregivers take home as little as \$8. As a result, Georgia families are in crisis because they cannot find caregivers. Join us as we advocate to raise this impossibly low rate!

**Kids Need Real Homes, Not Nursing Homes Day - Wednesday, February 4th, 9:00-12:00:**

Did you know that right now, at least 26 school aged children in Georgia live in nursing homes or facilities for people with disabilities? Join us as we advocate for 26 COMP waivers to bring these children home!

**Employment First Day - Wednesday, February 11th, 9:00-12:00:**

Working age Georgians with disabilities want real jobs in their communities, and right now, so many people can't get the support to do so. Join us as we advocate for an emphasis on real jobs with Employment First!

**Youth Day - Thursday, February 19th, 9:00-12:00:**

Calling all youth with disabilities! The future of the disability community lies in your hands. Come advocate for yourself and your friends and enjoy the excitement of the legislature in action!

**\*Question of the Week\***

Question: How do I find out the name and contact information of my state senator and representative?

Answer: Visit [www.openstates.org](http://www.openstates.org) and simply type in your address.

If you have specific questions regarding a public policy issue or advocacy please email us at [GCDD.PublicPolicy@gmail.com](mailto:GCDD.PublicPolicy@gmail.com). Use the subject line "Advocacy Question for Newsletter." Your question could appear in a future issue of the newsletter. We look forward to seeing your faces and hearing your voices.

**Advocacy of the Week**

We need YOU to get involved TODAY. Here are three things you can do this week:

1. If you haven't already, check your calendar and register for at least one of the Advocacy Days you want to attend. Remember, your voice counts!

2. Mark your calendar to join us for the first legislative call on Tuesday, January 20 at 9:30 a.m. (Note that after this week, legislative calls will be every Monday at 9:30am during the session). Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter passcode 232357 at the prompt.

3. Visit the Unlock website at <http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com>. It has a new look. Send your comments to [unlockthewaitinglists@gmail.com](mailto:unlockthewaitinglists@gmail.com) about what you like, don't like, and what is missing.

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

Georgia Legislative Session begins: January 12

Martin Luther King Remembrance Day: January 19

Mental Health Day at the Capitol: January 20

February is Self-Advocates Month at the Capitol

Be There 4 Seniors Rally at the Capitol: February 5

Alzheimer's Awareness Day at the Capitol: February 27

Disability Day at the Capitol: March 5

## GCDD Advocacy Days

We Need Waivers Day - Wednesday, January 21st, 9:00-12:00

ICWP Raise the Rate Day - Thursday, January 29th, 9:00-12:00

Kids Need Real Homes, Not Nursing Homes Day - Wednesday, February 4th, 9:00-12:00

Employment First Day: Wed. Feb 11, 9am-12Noon

Youth Day: Thurs. Feb 19, 9am-12Noon

Weekly GCDD legislative call: First call is Tuesday, January 20 at 9:30am. After that, every Monday at 9:30am. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter passcode 232357 at the prompt.

## **2015 LEGISLATIVE BILLS**

This section will present a list of the bills that GCDD is tracking in a summary form. Detailed information will be available by clicking on the actual bill number. Both the House and Senate Bills will be presented

by showing the Bill number, Sponsor, Title Summary and the most current activity. There will also be a link provided to a detailed legislative report after the session starts on January 12.

The Bills below are Prefiled Bills which GCDD is tracking.

## **2015 House Bills**

**[HB 0001](#)** Peake, Allen    Haleigh's Hope Act; enact  
11/17/2014 - House Prefiled

## **2015 Senate Bills**

**[SB 0007](#)** Curt Thompson    Controlled Substances Therapeutic Relief Act; repeal provisions;  
provide for medical use of marijuana; definitions (PF)  
11/24/2014 - Senate Prefiled

For the latest public policy updates, go to [www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org) and click on Join our Advocacy Network. Be sure to subscribe to the Unlock and Public Policy Alerts.

**Thank you from the GCDD Public Policy Team**

**Dawn Alford: Acting Public Policy Director**

**D'Arcy Robb: Public Policy Consultant - Employment First**

**Dave Zilles: Public Policy Consultant - Unlock the Waiting Lists -Parent Advocate**



THE STATE'S LEADER IN ADVANCING PUBLIC POLICY  
ON BEHALF OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.

