



## CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES

### CCD Social Security Task Force Report January 2011

#### ISSUES/ACTIVITIES IN 2010

The Social Security Task Force continued its work on the Social Security and the Supplemental Security Income programs on behalf of people with disabilities.

Areas of focus during 2010 included the following:

- **Working to educate the public about the importance of Social Security benefits for people with disabilities and to ensure the solvency of the Social Security Trust Funds.**

The Task Force was asked to testify at a House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee hearing in July 2010 on the occasion of Social Security's 75th anniversary. The testimony focused on the importance of all Social Security programs to people with disabilities.

The Task Force also participated in CCD meetings and discussions regarding the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, including the testimony presented by CCD Chair Donna Meltzer on June 30, 2010.

The Task Force was awarded a grant by Social Security Works, which was used to develop and update materials for use by CCD members and others in the disability community. In addition to updating Fact Sheets, we created a website dedicated to issues involving Social Security solvency and how they impact people with disabilities, [www.disabilityandsocialsecurity.org](http://www.disabilityandsocialsecurity.org). Funds from this grant were also used to hold a briefing in September 2010 for CCD members to provide an overview of the Social Security programs. A PowerPoint presentation from this briefing is available on the "disabilityandsocialsecurity" website.

In addition, the Task Force was awarded a \$50,000 grant by the National Academy of Social Insurance and the Ford Foundation as part of a project to educate vulnerable populations who most rely on Social Security benefits. With this grant, we will engage in a public outreach and education campaign for people with disabilities. Under this grant, we will hold four policy briefings for CCD members into early 2011, hold two webinars for groups outside Washington, DC, and develop educational materials. The first briefing was held in December 2010 and the speaker was Virginia Reno, NASI's Vice President for Income Security.

Finally, the Task Force was given approval by AARP to use unspent funds from a 2005-2006 grant for activities related to Social Security reform issues. These funds will be used for grassroots activities.

- **Advocating that SSA has adequate resources for its administrative budget.**

A major issue in 2010 continued to be SSA's need for adequate funding to reduce the disability claims backlog and prevent deterioration of other critical services, primarily caused by the underfunding of SSA for many years. Significant efforts were taken to ensure that SSA received adequate funding for its FY 2011 administrative budget. Congressional hearings in the House highlighted the problem. During 2010, the Task Force was invited to testify on two occasions before the House Ways and Means Committee in April 2010 in a joint hearing before the Social Security and Income Security and Family Support Subcommittees. The Task Force was involved in sending letters to the House and Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees throughout the year and we worked closely with other stakeholder organizations and Congressional staff to advocate that SSA receive adequate funding. Efforts have already started for the SSA FY 2012 budget as the Task Force was involved in a September 2010 meeting with OMB.

- **Ensuring that proposed changes to the disability claims process protect the rights and interests of people with disabilities.**

In November 2010, the Task Force provided extensive comments on an August notice of proposed rulemaking regarding changes to the mental disorders listings of impairments, with a focus on proposed changes to use of testing results.

The Task Force is also monitoring the work of the SSA Occupational Information Development Advisory Panel and the SSA workgroup developing a new Occupational Information System. In February, the Task Force met with Social Security personnel on the SSA workgroup. The Panel published a report and recommendations to the Commissioner in September 2009. The Task Force has identified significant concerns with some of the recommendations and submitted comments in June 2010.

The Task Force was invited to a two-day symposium in October 2010 regarding the future of the listings of impairments that was organized by the Institute of Medicine and SSA, sending four representatives. We were asked to be panelists on three panel discussions.

- **Monitoring proposals to promote employment and advocating to improve disability work incentives.**

We continue to coordinate efforts with the CCD Employment and Training Task Force. Members of both Task Forces met with SSA to discuss a legislative proposal to simplify the work incentives program. Susan Prokov serves as a liaison as a Co-Chair on each Task Force.

- **Monitoring implementation of provisions in Pub. L. No. 108-203, the Social Security Protection Act of 2004.**

The Task Force has focused on the "fleeing felon" provision, which was the subject of a nationwide class action, *Martinez v. Astrue*. The case was recently settled and the Task Force has discussed the settlement provisions. The Task Force also sent letters of support to Congress regarding extension of the provisions in the Act that allow direct payment of fees for representatives in SSI cases and establish a demonstration that permits certain nonattorneys to obtain direct payment of fees. These two fee provisions were made permanent in February 2010.

- **Monitoring proposals to update the SSI program and implementation of the SSI childhood disability program.**

We have monitored implementation of Pub. L. No. 110-328, which extends SSI benefits for two years to refugees and other humanitarian immigrants. This provision expired on September 30, 2010, and efforts continue to obtain another extension. We also monitored implementation of policy Rulings that

will improve the SSI childhood disability program. With other advocates, the Task Force has worked on a list of recommendations to simplify and update the SSI program.

- **Proactively meeting with SSA officials and Congressional staff on a broad range of topics affecting people with disabilities.**

## **GOALS FOR 2011**

The Task Force expects to continue to work on all of the issues described above. Specifically:

- Continuing work under the NASI and AARP grants regarding the solvency of the Social Security Trust Funds to ensure that the impact on people with disabilities is considered and their interests are protected. Three more briefings under the NASI grant will address (1) options on benefits cuts; (2) options on revenues; and (3) establishing benchmarks and/or principles in the coming debate on solvency.
- Advocating that SSA's administrative budget be adequately funded so that SSA has sufficient resources for personnel and service needs.
- Monitoring proposed changes to the disability claims process, including the work of the Occupational Information Development Advisory Panel and the way that SSA obtains medical information.
- Advocating for legislation, regulations, and policy changes to improve, simplify, and update the Social Security and SSI disability programs, including work incentives.
- Continuing to work with other CCD Task Forces to monitor proposals to promote employment among disability beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. In particular, we will seek to influence the development of these proposals to ensure that they are directed toward maximizing employment opportunities while also doing no harm to existing critical income supports. The Statement of Principles that we wrote in 2008 will be used as the basis for our work.
- Monitoring of the implementation of provisions in Pub. L. No. 108-203, the Social Security
- Monitoring the implementation of the disability programs in the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program and the SSI program; presenting testimony as requested to Congress; responding to notices of proposed rulemaking; and raising issues of concern to people with disabilities to SSA officials and Congressional staff.

## **CO-CHAIRS:**

Marty Ford, The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy Disability Policy Collaboration

Susan Prokop, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Paul Seifert, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

Ethel Zelenske, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives

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