

A-Team Meeting
June 23, 2013 3:30 – 5:30 pm
Northwoods Inc.

Present: Kathleen Hardt, Carol Aertz, Deana Stankey, Sandra Pitsch, Joel Caulum, Jolene Wheeler, Ruth Lindert, Yael Kerzan, Dallas Kerzan, John Kerzan, Andy Ellis, Jane Ellis, Joyce Felicjan, Rob Crothers, Kit Eilertson, Brenda Bauer

Dallas welcomed Brenda Bauer, IRIS outreach specialist, as our speaker. She provided a very informative talk and PowerPoint presentation on the IRIS program, including its history and the services it provides for disabled people and their families. Discussion followed during which several members shared some of their questions and frustrations. Brenda promised to follow-up on their specific situations. She provided handouts and encouraged people to check the IRIS website at info@wisconsin-IRIS.com. The “go to” number for questions about IRIS is 1-888-515-4747. Brenda’s PowerPoint is attached.

Brenda also mentioned the resource of Wisconsin Independent Living Centers. There are 8 in Wisconsin, and they provide four core services: peer support, information and referral, independent living skills training, and person and systems advocacy. These centers may provide funding to renovate housing so individuals may be more independent. Questions on this service: sarah.lincoln@wisconsin.gov

Funding Updates

Jeff Aerts shared that he is still in negotiations with Care Wisconsin regarding their request for Northwoods to reduce service rates. Northwood’s service rates are in line with other providers in the area, and Jeff has brought this to the attention of Care Wisconsin. It is unclear why they request these rate cuts when they are making big profits. Legislators are beginning to take notice of this.

General Discussion

- NBC’s Rock Center with Brian Williams TV Special aired June 21st. This show focused on how Goodwill pays disabled workers less than minimum wage as allowed by Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Discussion of A-Team members brought out that this was a very slanted view of the situation, and the show suggested that these workers are exploited. There is proposed federal legislation (H.R. 831) that would phase out and eventually repeal Section 14(c). As a result, individuals with the most significant disabilities would be denied the option to work in skill development centers and disability-focused non-profit businesses at a wage that reflects their productivity. We must continue to oppose H.R. 831.
- Online Grassroots Action Center: Rehabilitation for Wisconsin has launched this new website for use by A-Teams and other advocacy groups. It will be updated frequently with local, state and national events, including legislative alerts and other information that affects individuals with disabilities. Dallas did a brief demonstration. www.ateamwisconsin.org
- Monthly Meeting Time: Should we continue to alternate times between 1-3 pm and 3:30-5:30 pm, or should we set only one time? Initially, it was the consensus that alternating the time would allow people with different schedules to attend.
- Mailing: The A-Team is working on a mailing to our members (over 200) the end of July. This mailing will include: Wisconsin Legislative Directory, directions to sign-up for the Grassroots Action Center, and the A-Team SCW Brochure.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.