

UPDATE FROM ADVOCATES ON GUAM'S DISABILITY AGENDA

May 2014

“It is best to try all
possibilities,
than not to try at all.
Possibilities are endless.”

- Lourdes Bascon Mendiola,
Parent Advocate
and son David



INTRODUCTION

On May 27, 2014, thirty-nine individuals with disabilities and family members gathered to review the priorities of the Guam Territorial Agenda on Disabilities and reassess their needs and service issues. The multi-disability and multi-age group engaged in a round of brainstorming for each of the nine life areas within the Developmental Disabilities Act to assess what works in our Guam community and what needs to change. After each round, teams regrouped with different participants to address subsequent life areas, contributing their various perceptions and experiences with a new set of individuals.

After interaction and discussion on Housing, Education/Early Intervention, Transportation, Quality Assurance, Recreation, Health, Employment, Community Supports, and Childcare, teams reported back with statements of summary key points and recommendations. Their ideas created a “wall of opportunity” which was prioritized by vote and is presented here to policy makers and agency leaders as a statement for the direction of policy and practice for persons with disabilities in 2015.

HIGHEST PRIORITY AND IMPORTANCE

Employment

Guam’s lack of full participation of persons with disabilities in employment is echoed nationally in a September 18, 2014 report from US Senator Tom Harkin’s Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions: *Fulfilling the Promise: Overcoming Persistent Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities*. The report’s message is substantiated by stories of individuals

residing stateside, who like our citizens, are disenfranchised in the job market. Guam stories are common in the reflection of the economic and social cost of having a disability. Too often, our local housing and transportation is an underlayer of many employment issues. They add complexity to the expressed need for greater employment opportunity, training, and supports to become more self-sufficient.



Housing and Transportation rank equally as Guam's second most important issue for persons with disabilities.

Connecting Housing and Transportation planning is noted as an important direction as this is key to full community participation and greater independence. It is also key to successful employment outcomes. Lengthy application processes, wait times, and few personal supports are barriers for accessing appropriate, accessible housing and greater independent living.

In Guam's public transportation system, insufficient attention and resources for route and service expansion, bus stop amenities, and paths of travel are existing barriers. Comments also reflected the need to include individuals with disabilities in planning activities and beefing up the personnel resources within Guam Regional Transit Authority. Customers are looking for good customer service, improved communication, increased manpower, quality vehicles, and alternative taxi service to augment paratransit.

Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance, which follows Housing and Transportation as the fourth priority, consists of advocacy, capacity building and systemic change activities that improve self-advocate and family centered quality assurance and protection. This includes **monitoring** of services, supports and assistance to ensure that a person will not experience abuse, neglect, sexual or financial exploitation, violation of legal or human rights, or be subject to inappropriate restraints or seclusion. It also includes **training** in leadership, self-advocacy, and self-determination to ensure that individuals are protected against abuse. Finally, it promotes the creation of **interagency coordination and systems integration** to improve and enhance services, supports, and other assistance that contribute to and protect self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life.

Constituents with disabilities are greatly concerned about the quality of services, access to interpreter services, shared information for certification purposes, coordinated case management, and the disability sensitivity awareness of service providers, including the private sector.



PRIORITY #1: Employment*

WHAT WORKS:

1. Job coaching
2. Collaboration with DOE & AHRD in providing summer employment experience (passport for careers)
3. Supported employment at Guma Mami, West Care, Behavioral wellness (Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center)
4. Public vocational rehabilitation program (DVR)
5. Client Assistant Program (CAP)
6. Guam Legal Services
7. Department of Labor (DOL)
8. Referral from Tri-agency online info-internet access
9. Small Business Administration (SBA)
10. Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
11. Get Guam Teleworking (GGT)
12. DVR services available for Persons With Disabilities (PWD)
13. Medical services to help you to get back to work
14. OASIS training
15. SBA: help starting business
16. GBHWC: work enrichment programs
17. GovGuam Laws regarding hiring individuals with disabilities
18. I can Programs
19. AHRD
20. Equal job for individual with disability
21. Guam System for Assistive Technology (GSAT)
22. Passport to Career (PTC) for high school transitioning students.
23. Job fairs
24. One stop centers
25. GGT
26. Guam Options for Alternative Loans - Assistive Technology (GOAL-AT)

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE:

1. Open to all levels that deals with their disabilities
2. On the job training
3. Transportation (I Can)
4. Stop segregation
5. More open positions with people with disabilities and degrees.
6. Longer grace period with loans
7. Provide long term trainings
8. Building rent free
9. Increase awareness of available programs
10. Job coaching programs
11. Provide more jobs that are available for them to work with stability.
12. Criteria for public assistance needs to be changed so Individuals with Disabilities (IWD) who seek employment not jeopardize losing or lessening benefits
13. Limited care provider service (respite) hours for parent to take care of family member with disability
14. 2% law not implemented
15. Certified VR counselors
16. More job coaches
17. Career exploration on site
18. Employment support
19. Assistive Technology (AT) training for both employer and employee
20. Ongoing support if required
21. Training to be self-employed for individual with disability
22. Transition services after leaving high school
23. Better awareness and education with the business communities regarding hiring/training individuals with disabilities

*Self-Advocates and Advocates input from the May 27, 2014 review of the Guam Territorial Agenda on Disabilities and reassessment of needs and services.

PRIORITY #2: Housing

WHAT WORKS:

1. Section 8 mainstream
 - Waiting period
 - Lack of information
 - How to access
2. Shelter care
3. Guam housing
4. Mainstreaming housing vouchers
5. Consideration of client's needs
6. ADA compliance
7. GHURA improvement for mainstream vouchers (planning division)
8. Section 8 provides the support needed for people with disability
9. More affordable housing within the Private development in collaboration with GovGuam
10. Residential group homes
11. DISID assistance with application process- Section 8
12. Mainstream program for people with disabilities
13. GHURA housing
14. To educate people with disability and family to be aware about GHURA needs: section 8/tenants, having rights to meet their needs.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE:

1. Housing for low moderate income
2. More vouchers
3. Residential assisted living varying levels of independent living
4. Personal assistance
5. Options for all income levels
6. Waiting list to receive vouchers
7. Types of services to inform and educate the public
8. Regular follow-ups with case manager
9. Consistency of services being provided
10. Waiting time of mainstream vouchers-section 8
11. Access to general materials, detailed policies (updated)
12. Infrastructures: Bus stops, sidewalks - ADA compliance; more visible signs
13. Fair housing rules
14. Focus on needs of clients (what assistance needed, efficiency on care, consistency)
15. Better accessibility-improve structures
16. More information on dissemination- comply with federal guidelines
17. The application process-tedious
18. Approval process too long
19. More vouchers
20. Need new information about technology to meet their need for housing
21. Emergency 911 need training; what to do with what if they call help.
22. Emergency 911 will know how to identify the house of people with disability



“My advice to teachers who are going to work with children with disabilities is to be creative...I tell you, children with disabilities are fun to work with and they can learn. And also, have FUN!”

- Vennie Colet, Parent

PRIORITY #2: Transportation

WHAT WORKS:

1. Public transportation (transit system)
2. Availability of door to door services for IWD (para transit)
3. Transportation services island wide
4. Affordable for the aforementioned
5. Accessible private transportation available
6. Dispatcher (Becky) polity and courteous
7. Supervisor (Mike) accommodating and responsive
8. Visual of bus time schedule
9. Fix route and paratransit
10. Shuttles and taxi services
11. Trained drivers for fix and para-transit
12. We have a system!!
13. Person with disability / self-advocates and families have a seat at the planning table.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE:

1. Implement destination indicators
2. Re-instate mid-day service (12:30-2:30)
3. Certified trainers for drivers, schedulers, dispatchers and staff members
4. Advanced training for GRTA active BM demand response service
5. Improve routes to increase access to location
6. To collaborate GRTA and DPW for accessible infrastructure in Fix routes
7. Better renewal ID policy
8. Need to provide more places that are available for transportation services to pick.
9. More para-transit buses (small)
10. Base access for buses
11. More GRTA staff
12. Pay for extra space
13. Bus stops with shades and covers
14. Public transit needs to be more flexible for scheduling rides-not restrict PWD to (2) days prior notice.
15. Better monitoring system needed for complaints
16. Directional announcements for people that are blind
17. Accessible routes to bus stops
18. Availability of hours for transportation
19. More buses: more drivers and better training accountability for drivers (after training) and dispatchers
20. More private transportation (available and affordable for IWD)
21. Maintenance of buses
22. Better planning of pick-up/drop-off (scheduling) of the IWD



**“Together We Stand,
in Unity We Can.”**

- Vince Guerrero, Parent Advocate

PRIORITY #3: Quality Assurance

WHAT WORKS:

1. DDC- monitors/collaboration with agencies and NPO
2. More training /awareness-DOE, Sp.Ed., NOPs, Guam CEDDERS, DDC, DVR, DISID
3. ADA compliance officers in each agency (DISID).
4. Self-advocacy movement
5. Piloted youth SA in high school
6. Self-advocacy workshop
7. Certified AT professional
8. Interpreter service needs more availability for clinic, ER, courts, meetings
9. Self-advocacy training billing adjustments
10. Counselor's being evaluated
11. Clients being employed
12. GSAT/Guam CEDDERS
13. West Care and Administration Native Americans, has successful grantsmanship training
14. Paying TA-gives opportunities for Non-profit organization growth and networking
15. Independent Living program-VRB
16. ADA compliance monitor in government agencies
17. Information of services available
18. Individualized Budgeting Program (IBP)

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE:

1. Evaluation for job's improve for disability
2. Counselors need to be more open-minded
3. Need more extensive training in use of Assistive technology for work and recreation
4. More certified VR counselors
5. More AT professionals
6. Training repeated to proper personnel
7. Implementation/accountability/mentorship
 - Training goes down and coaching
 - Training to private
 - Awareness
 - Sensitivity
8. Mentor/internships/apprenticeship private sector
9. Civil service needs to be revamped
10. In terms of accountability and issues need to be resolved
11. Needs evaluation system at work
12. Transparency on funding used

“Even if you have a disability
say you have an ability.”

- Gian Magana, Poet





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