



***“It is the mission of the Council on Mental Retardation to be an advocate for children and adults with mental retardation”***

## **PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS**

### **Services to Individuals with Mental Retardation**

**Client Advocacy/Crisis Intervention** is available for individuals with mental retardation who are in crisis and need immediate assistance beyond that which direct service programs can provide. Services may include intervention and/or assistance with the legal system, medical care, protective services, residential services, guardianship, and other services that are needed to stabilize individual circumstances. Louisville Metro Government funds the Help Now portion of this program.

**Citizen Advocacy** is a program that matches a competent, capable and interested volunteer with a person who has mental retardation. The volunteer advocate looks out for the interests and concerns of the person with mental retardation as if they were his/her own. The relationships are individually and uniquely developed around the needs and desires of the person with mental retardation, range from friendship to adoption and guardianship, and often last many years.

**The Self Advocacy Connection** invites adults with mental retardation to work together, and in concert with other advocates in the community, to seek improved services and opportunities.

### **Services to Families of Persons with Mental Retardation**

**Parent Outreach** matches an experienced parent of a child with mental retardation with a parent of a newly identified child with a similar disability. The experienced parent provides information, shares practical tips, and extends support and encouragement to the new parent. On-going parent and family support groups and networks are an important component of this program.

**Guardianship and Planning for the Future** seminars are conducted through the Parent Outreach program to assist and support families in preventing crisis and planning for the smooth transition of their family members with mental retardation through the various stages of life. Louisville Metro Government funds the Help Now portion of this program.

**Information and Referral** activities include the sharing of information about services and programs in the community serving individuals with mental retardation and their families and assisting families in accessing those programs.

**FIND, the Family Information Network on Disabilities**, assists families in understanding the educational rights of their school-aged children with disabilities and supports family members in advocating for appropriate educational programs and services.

**Find a Future** is an online database of providers, agencies, and organizations that offer programs and services to persons with disabilities and their families. FIND a Future was developed to help consumers and families find needed programs and services, especially during times of transition. Check it out at [www.findafuture.org](http://www.findafuture.org).

**Family Friends** matches caring individuals (50+) willing to spend 2-4 hours a week as a mentor/friend to a child with a disability and his/her family. Family Friends offers older community members the opportunity to share their wisdom, love and experience in support to a family that includes a child under the age of sixteen with a disability. This is an intergenerational program that builds social networks through fostering friendly, mentoring relationships between three generations of community members. Family Friends is designed to benefit all who choose to become involved: the child, the family, the volunteer, and the community.

## **Advocacy and Systems Change Activities**

**Training, Education, and Information** activities include the provision of accurate information about mental retardation and the value and capacities of persons with mental retardation; the proactive presentation of issues of importance to individuals with mental retardation and their families to the general community, policy and decision makers, and professionals and service providers in the field; and the provision of training, workshops, and seminars by knowledgeable parents, professionals, and volunteers.

**Client/Family Advocacy** activities include active intervention with or on behalf of individuals with mental retardation and/or their families as they seek solutions to their individual needs or deal with unresponsive systems within the community. In some cases advocacy efforts are done on an individual basis; however, it is more often done on a group or class advocacy basis. The desired outcome of this work is to assist service systems to become more responsive to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

**Governmental Affairs & Disability Policy:** This program monitors public policies, legislation and regulations that impact persons with mental retardation. By negotiating with Executive Branch officials and communicating with legislators, the program seeks to amend and propose policies and legislation that best serve the interests of individuals and families. Primary goals include recruitment and training of advocates, building relationships with policymakers and establishing the Council as a trusted and influential resource.

***“It is the vision of the Council on Mental Retardation that all children and adults with mental retardation be included, empowered, and valued in the community.”***