

“Catch the Wave – r” Forum

On January 17th over 200 family members and advocates for people with developmental disabilities met in two forums – one at noontime and the other at 6pm – to learn about the Person First §1115 Waiver proposed by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Several local agencies, including Enable, organized the forums in collaboration with Parent to Parent Network and OPWDD. Kate Bishop presented on behalf of OPWDD.

The new Medicaid Waiver is in the process of being approved by the federal government. The *Home and Community Based Services* §1915 (c) Medicaid Waiver that most people with developmental disabilities currently use was approved in 1991. The new *Person First* §1115 Medicaid Waiver is expected to be approved by the United States Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in the spring of 2012. Implementation of the waiver will be completed over a five year period.

OPWDD has been working for the past year to write a waiver application that is acceptable to the federal government. There have been committees, forums, surveys and a “request for information” survey which provided valuable input to the framers of the new waiver.

The family members broke into four sub-groups:

- Children
- Transition-aged youth
- Adults living in IRA group homes
- Adults living in non-certified settings (with parents or independently)

The people in attendance generated about 150 questions, 50 concerns and 100 suggestions which will be conveyed to OPWDD.

The OPWDD has a section of their website devoted to the Person First Waiver application process. Those interested can go to http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/2011_waiver/ for more information and to place questions or comments.