

DDS Intranet Site

Governor Malloy Signs Historic DDS Bill Into Law



Governor Dannel P. Malloy is joined by (left to right) (front row) DDS Self Advocate Coordinators, Carol Grabbe, Jamar Cherry, Jossie Torres, and Genna Lewis, (back row) Quincy Abbott, a member of CT ARC., DDS Self Advocate Coordinators; Carlos Colon, Jamie Louchen, Varian Salters, Ivan Villa, State Senator Terry Gerratana, Co-Chair of the Public Health Committee, Jennifer Carroll, a member of the Developmental Services Council, Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree, Lisa Sheppard, Co-Chair of the Family Support Council and Commissioner Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D.

Governor Dannel P. Malloy recently signed into law, the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) Respectful Language Bill, Public Act No.11-16 "An Act Concerning Revisions to Statutes Relating to the Department of Developmental Services Including the Utilization of Respectful Language When Referring to Persons With Intellectual Disability." at a ceremony in the State Capitol. DDS Commissioner Terrence W. Macy, DDS Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree, DDS Self Advocate Coordinators, State Senator Terry Gerratana, Co-Chair of the Public Health Committee, Jennifer Carroll, a member of the Developmental Services Council, Lisa Sheppard, Co-Chair of the Family Support Council and Quincy Abbott, a member of CT ARC all were on hand for the signing.

The new law is an historic change in the effort to remove the "R" word from the public's vocabulary and in showing respect for individuals with intellectual disability. This change has been championed by advocacy groups for years. In January 2010, DDS issued the department's Respectful Language Policy and then "Rosa's Law," federal legislation changing the term "mental retardation" to "intellectual disability" in most federal law. In 2011 the department proposed the legislation in House Bill 6379 to revise Connecticut statutes governing DDS which was supported by the leadership of the General Assembly's Public Health Committee and passed during the 2011 legislative session.

Another important part of the legislation that was enacted was the use of "person first" language in DDS statutes when referring to individuals who receive services from DDS. "Person first" language encourages persons to avoid language that implies the person as a whole is disabled.

As the Governor noted, this was a "historic moment" for the State of Connecticut recognizing the place and value of persons with intellectual disabilities. He specifically cited the role that self advocates have played in the creation of this bill, noted Commissioner Macy. He continued, "The leadership of the Public Health Committee was essential for the success of this important legislation."

According to the DDS Self Advocate Coordinators who attended the bill signing, this law marks not just the end of an era but the beginning of educating people about individuals with intellectual disability and their lives.

"It means so much to have the "R" word erased," said Ivan Villa, DDS West Region Self Advocate Coordinator. "I am so proud to be a part of this historic bill signing and know that future generations will be respected."

To view the exact language of Public Act No. 11-16, please visit the Connecticut General Assembly website page;

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2011/ACT/Pa/pdf/2011PA-00016-R00HB-06279-PA.pdf>

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