

# Human Services Setting

**How are national policy themes (ex. Civil rights protections, immigration, sexual harassment) impacting university systems, and how are UCEDDs responding?**

Tuesday March 20<sup>th</sup>. Breakout sessions.

Zolinda Stoneman:

- One of two personal stories presented: ACA resulted in a good deal of funding for mentors to help families navigate new insurance
  - Put in application for educators to help individuals with disabilities navigate the system, resulting in the hiring of people around the state who were tremendously helpful.
  - One obstacle after another put in front of them by the state legislature (ex: insurance exams)
  - Trainings and programs were planned, but legislature came through and blocked university funding related to ACA. As a result, all of those people lost their jobs (some people had left previous jobs just to take on these roles, so this was tremendously hurtful)
- Second personal story presented: Children Freedom Initiative: state-wide initiative trying to create a situation where no children live in nursing homes
  - Put out fact sheet for state legislature which included organizational logos on it. While an explanation regarding why the UCEDD was involved was in an opening paragraph, they didn't get permission from UGA to put their logo on the fact sheet
  - This led to a little scare of a potential hand slap from UGA leadership.
- Difficult to navigate the line between being passionate about views and communicating with university leaders, particularly when it comes to advocates
- Work issues need to be presented in a business model
  - Need to present a bottom line. Day rates need to be more profitable
- A "fuzzy issue" is employment
  - What's employment about – making money
  - Used to be niche positions, those wages were higher
  - Hiring people who aren't as disabled as others
  - A drive by legislature to see more "community engagement" – volunteerism vs. making money

Linda Bimbo:

- NH isn't typically considered diverse, university isn't either. Students came together after a culturally insensitive event last May (Cinco de Mayo) and said people need to be treated fairly
- UCEDD was an integral part of a yearlong training program around cultural diversity
  - It's not "one and done," one training isn't enough because changes are typically incremental. The student efforts highlighted the importance of grassroots initiatives.
- As an interim director, the worry about getting "hand slapped" is more potent
  - Would love to publically support AUCD, but they are barred from contacting local legislature regarding programs or initiatives

- They will forward AUCD emails to legislature, but receive silence, which is worse than a “yes” or “no”

#### Cindy Thomas

- Make often make assumptions about politics that we are all one mind, need an environment which is accepting and welcoming to all employees since there are a couple of people with different perspectives
  - All people regardless of political opinions need to be ok with conversation. Need to balance advocacy agenda with how it feels for employees.
  - If a great program or initiative comes out and affects agenda, then step up, no matter if it’s red or blue
- Me Too movement: we are seeing people get much more comfortable bringing up issues as employees
  - Complicated, but trying to balance advocacy with being respectful to other positions
- Sexual abuse issues: There was talk about just doing an op-ed, but they reasoned that an op-ed isn’t enough. They don’t have any work in this space, need more than an opinion
- Bright line: policy vs. supporting people to make change
  - Meet them where they are at – need to meet with people of differing views and can’t be in the “we know all” mentality

#### Fred Biasini

- Issues with transitions in university administration are issues. The people who supported them (past provost) are gone. They aren’t listed in booklet put out by new VP of research because people are new and don’t know what the UCEDD does
- Couldn’t get Jeff Sessions’ office to discuss disability policy with students and faculty. Trying to get Sen. Doug Jones, Shelby’s office supportive in the past, but there’s been a lot of turnover. One of the representatives was very helpful in getting people to understand the LEND program’s importance, but he isn’t there any longer
- All of this serves to highlight the importance of long term relationship building, despite the constant turnover due to political reasons
- If there were any questions regarding what to say, they used to reach out to Kim (Rylin’s predecessor) for a paragraph that they then forwarded to the higher-ups in administration
- Employment First blocked by Arc, because they ran the sheltered workshops and thought those would be done away with
- FLSA revisions done 2 years ago – nightmare for their university system
  - Took professionals and made them non-exempt
  - Disparities in pay for individuals with disabilities

#### Carol Salas Pagan:

- University leadership in transition too (Interim president, etc). Difference in political ideologies among leadership too also leads to struggles. Things are moving slowly as a result
- 6 months post-hurricane, UCEDD still doesn’t have office. There is no understanding between FEMA and private insurance, which pays for what?
- Child development center (main project) destroyed, most families lost eligibility to receive services due to parent’s lack of job
- No planning right now, state senate just passed charter schools (among local opposition) in PR
- Disabled community accounts for large portion of death toll of Hurricane Maria

- Doctors have left island, leading to accessibility issues in regards to getting to a doctor
- Hurricane Maria put them on high priority – will get visit from HHS Secretary (to the UCEDD center that doesn't have an office)
  - Put them on good place for systematic change regarding emergency preparedness for individuals with developmental disabilities
  - Network has been good support. Immediately reached out to Dawn and Andy, Board members too.
  - Local efforts to divide municipalities and obtain data and plan efforts
    - Plan has been championed to others by FEMA, will get recognition from FEMA for their efforts

Susan Fox

- Private nonprofit, not part of a university system, strongly affiliated with NY Medical College though
  - University has no authority of them, Nuances to ability to advocate since university has no say. Careful dance of building relationships and not creating negative image of institute. Protect image – “informing and educating” vs. advocating for a particular position
  - Facebook is a big media now for message distribution – careful not to take position (for example, no mention of “call your legislator,” but contact information is provided)
  - Forwards AUCD emails about “call your legislator”
    - “We are a member of this organization and we want to let you know what they say:” creates a buffer for yourself
- Getting to know state senators and county legislators. Building relationships on the state federal level is a bit harder, but this is an important part of the UCEDD's job for these relationships
- Thinking about how UCEDDs approach has changed, more to being collaborative now – impacting change without dictating from best practices

