

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2008 – 2010

*Advocacy to Improve Lives  
and Protect Rights*



**New York State Commission on Quality of Care and  
Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities**

David A. Paterson  
Governor

Gary O'Brien, Chair  
Bruce Blower, Member  
Patricia Okoniewski, Member

Revised 3/2008



## MISSION

To improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities, to protect their rights, and to advocate for needed changes by:

- ✎ Promoting the development of laws, policies and practices that advance the inclusion of all persons with disabilities into the rich fabric of our society;
- ✎ Enhancing the availability and use of assistive technology for persons with disabilities;
- ✎ Ensuring and furthering programmatic and fiscal accountability within the State's mental hygiene system;
- ✎ Providing person-specific and systemic investigative, educational and advocacy services; and
- ✎ Offering impartial and informed training, technical assistance, advice and recommendations on disability issues to government officials, individuals with disabilities, their families and advocates, service providers, and the public-at-large.

## VALUES

Charged with a variety of investigatory, advocacy and educational activities, our work is guided by principles which all Commission staff and volunteers embrace:

- ✎ Independence: We will faithfully carry out the agency's mission undeterred by external forces.
- ✎ Integrity: We will exercise diligence in our quest for accuracy, fairness and truth, inviting review and dialogue.
- ✎ Compassion: We will connect with the people we serve with empathy by listening and responding with caring and truthfulness.
- ✎ Empowerment: We will assist people to assume responsibility for and control over their lives.
- ✎ Respect: We will treat the people we serve and each other with respect.





## FOREWORD

Article 45 Mental Hygiene Law outlines the duties of the Commission. Put simply, our mission is to improve lives, protect rights and advocate for those changes which are necessary to improve the quality of life and protect the rights of individuals with disabilities.

Initially established as the Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled in the 1970s and charged with overseeing New York's mental hygiene system, the Commission's mandate has been broadened in recent years, particularly through its merger with the Office of State Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. As its new name – ***Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities*** – implies, the Commission now advocates for all New Yorkers with any type of disability, while still maintaining oversight of programs serving individuals with mental disabilities.

This broad mandate requires that the Commission strategically plan how to best marshal its limited resources to fulfill its mission. Toward that end, every three years the Commission invites individuals who have a stake in its mission to participate in a strategic planning process.

Representatives from the Governor's Office, Legislature, Division of the Budget and the State agencies we oversee or interact with, as well as persons with disabilities, their families, service providers, advocacy associations, our own staff and others, are asked to offer the Commission feedback on its operations – things we can enhance and issues we should address in the coming years in order to most effectively improve lives, protect rights and advocate for change.

***Strategic Plan 2008 – 2010*** sets forth the strategies, goals and planned activities the Commission will undertake based on the advice of stakeholders with whom we met in 2007. It establishes a direction and tone to guide the Commission, consistent with the Governor's vision and partnership with others, in improving lives, protecting rights and advocating for all New Yorkers with disabilities.

Gary O'Brien, Chair



# STRATEGIES, GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

## Strategy – Partnership

**Goal:** Assist in the development of public policies and programs which support individuals with disabilities and protect their rights by working in partnership with individuals with disabilities, advocates, service providers and public policy makers.

### Planned Activities

- ✎ Join with individuals with disabilities and their families, associations representing providers of persons with disabilities, our colleagues in other State agencies and other interested parties in launching an initiative which – through case studies, regional forums and/or other activities – promotes attention to quality of life issues, rather than compliance with minimum standards, in service design and delivery.
- ✎ Administer an Interagency Coordinating Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing created to engage in strategic planning and to offer policy and legislative recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.
- ✎ Broker and nurture new relationships among veterans and disability-related service and advocacy agencies to better address the needs of returning veterans with disabilities.
- ✎ Continue work with the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to become better acquainted with the needs of the people it serves and services provided.
- ✎ Serve, with other key State agencies and critical stakeholders appointed by the Governor and the Legislature, on the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council, created to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities receive care and services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.
- ✎ Assist the State Education Department in the development of training for bus drivers and aides who transport children with disabilities.
- ✎ Work with the Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives on exploring means of diverting individuals with disabilities from incarceration and into appropriate services.
- ✎ Continue to serve on, and provide advice on disability-related matters to a variety of program development and/or monitoring committees coordinated by, among others, the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, the Council on Children and Families, the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, the Office of Mental Health, the State Education Department, the Interagency Partnership on Assistive Technology and the Department of Health.

## Strategy – Oversight

**Goal:** Improve the quality of, and accountability for, mental hygiene service delivery by conducting independent case investigations and program, fiscal and policy reviews and offering impartial advice and recommendations to providers, certifying agencies, the Legislature and the Governor.

### Planned Activities

- ↻ Continue ongoing clinical and fiscal reviews in response to complaints, deaths, allegations of abuse and neglect, program practices and other matters brought to the Commission's attention.
- ↻ Continue monitoring conditions in adult care facilities licensed by the Department of Health and serving significant numbers of individuals with mental disabilities, both on an on-going basis and when special situations arise, e.g., the closure of a facility.
- ↻ Promote service quality and accountability by examining governance issues relating to the operation of not-for-profit corporations serving individuals with mental disabilities, identifying and encouraging best practices and offering training and technical assistance.
- ↻ Continue publication of the two case study series "***Could This Happen in Your Program?***" and the "***Can This Happen in Your Program?***" used by agencies throughout the service system as a quality assurance and training tool.
- ↻ Enhance the Commission's involvement with and oversight of forensic issues as they relate to individuals with mental disabilities.
- ↻ In response to Chapter 1 of the Laws of 2008 (the Special Housing Unit (SHU) bill), the Commission will establish a team to evaluate the psychiatric care provided to individuals incarcerated in the NYS prison system.
- ↻ Examine the special service needs of individuals with multiple disabilities.
- ↻ Conduct a programmatic review of case management services provided to individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
- ↻ Examine new residential and other service initiatives sponsored by the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

## Strategy – Advocacy

**Goal:** Protect the rights of individuals with disabilities and assist them in the exercise of such by, among other things, supporting statewide networks of advocacy, assistive technology and surrogate decision making groups with which the Commission contracts.

## Planned Activities

- ↻ Continue to administer a statewide network of over 30 advocacy and assistive technology contract agencies which collectively serve over 70,000 people annually.
- ↻ Expand advocacy services for parents with mental disabilities and, as funding permits, expand advocacy services for persons living in adult care facilities and other targeted populations.
- ↻ Continue to administer a statewide network of contract agencies providing Surrogate Decision Making services for individuals who may require medical treatments but lack the capacity to consent and have no legally authorized surrogate to provide informed decisions.
- ↻ Consider and guide careful expansion of the Surrogate Decision Making Program to serve individuals who might benefit from its availability.
- ↻ Continue to provide training for individuals appointed to serve on Boards of Visitors as advocates for individuals in State mental hygiene facilities.
- ↻ In cooperation with the New York State Bar Association, continue to produce *Disability and the Law*, an ongoing video series broadcast on local cable television stations throughout New York State, which deals with relevant issues in disability law.

## Strategy – Empowerment

**Goal:** Reduce barriers to the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into society's fabric by empowering them and the public at large with knowledge about disability-related rights and issues through outreach, training and technical assistance.

## Planned Activities

- ↻ Continue to maintain professionally staffed toll-free help lines which receives calls from individuals seeking advice and/or technical assistance on disability related issues.
- ↻ Co-sponsor a biennial Expo on Assistive Technology.
- ↻ Through its Speakers' Bureau, offer education and training programs on a broad range of disability issues, including, but not limited to mental hygiene issues such as guardianship, advocacy, healthcare decision making, advance directives and other matters.
- ↻ Through its Division of Advocacy and Outreach, offer outreach, training and technical assistance on broader disability-related issues including but not limited to: special education advocacy, assistive technology, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the State Building Code and accessibility, and diversity and disability awareness.



## CONTACTING THE COMMISSION

**Website:** [www.cqcapd.state.ny.us](http://www.cqcapd.state.ny.us)

**E-mail:** [webmaster@cqcapd.state.ny.us](mailto:webmaster@cqcapd.state.ny.us)

### PHONE:

#### **Quality Assurance Complaints/Calls for Assistance:**

Individuals, family members, advocates, etc., wishing to make a direct complaint or call for assistance are invited to use the Commission's 800 number: **1-800-624-4143 (Voice and TTY)**

**Executive Offices:** (518) 388-1281 Fax: (518) 388-1276

**Press and Freedom of Information Law Officer:** (518) 388-1270  
Fax (518) 388-1275

**Counsel's Office:** (518) 388-1270 Fax (518) 388-1275

**Quality Assurance and Investigations:** (518) 388-2854  
Fax: (518) 388-2860 [e.g., Incidents, Deaths]

**Policy Analysis:** (518) 388-2835 Fax (518) 388-2850

**Fiscal Unit:** (518) 388-2835 Fax (518) 388-2850

**Administrative Bureau and Personnel:** (518) 388-2805  
Fax (518) 388-2810

**Advocacy & Outreach:** (518) 388-0690 Fax: (518) 388-3375

**Protection & Advocacy:** (518) 388-2892 Fax: (518) 388-2890

**Surrogate Decision-Making Committee Program:** (518) 388-2820  
Fax: (518) 388-2828

**Newsletter:** (518) 388-1270 Fax (518) 388-1275

