



The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) was passed and signed into federal law in October of 2002. The goal of the legislation is to modernize our election process in order to avoid complications such as those experienced during the 2000 presidential election. An important part of this "modernizing" process is to ensure an equal and open voting system accessible to all American citizens.

To achieve an inclusive and equal voting standard for all fifty states, the Help America Vote Act includes the following stipulations:

- *By 2006 all polling places must have at least one voting system which allows all citizens to cast a vote privately and independently whether or not one has a disability.*
- *States must ensure accessibility at all public polling places in a manner compliant with The Americans with Disabilities Act.*



Get More Election Information at www.michigan.gov/vote

With this tool you can:

- Track your absentee ballot
- Determine if you are registered to vote
- Find your polling location
- Contact your local election official
- Learn to use your voting equipment
- Find answers to frequently asked questions
- View your sample ballot

Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service

(MPAS) will Act as a knowledgeable resource to be contacted by concerned parties regarding the current process of election reform in Michigan as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

When should I contact MPAS?

- If you have questions about your rights as a voter with a disability.
- If you need assistance or have questions about registering to vote.
- If your local polling place is not accessible.
- If you have encountered prejudice by a poll worker due to a disability.
- If you would like assistance initiating the state's official complaint process for violations of the rights of voters with disabilities.

Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service

TOLL FREE 1-800-288-5923 (Voice or TTY) <http://www.mpas.org/>



Check out the article on the back to consider the impact of politics on people with disabilities.

Recovery is a life full of meaning



GL-CAP

By Michelle Kimber



I had the opportunity to attend the 15th Annual Consumer Conference in Lansing on September 19. The Conference was sponsored by the Michigan Department of Community Health/Justice in Mental Health Organization. Not being a clinician, I am typically reluctant

to attend conferences of this type. However, I have a personal goal to push myself to do new things and this was the perfect opportunity.

When I requested to go to the Consumer Conference, I was hoping to learn some new information about mental health services. What I learned was how determined our consumers are in achieving their goal of recovery. There were many workshops to attend throughout the day. I attended "Relationships & Recovery," "Understanding Healthy Relationships," and "Self-Determination." The presenters were good but the real value of the workshops was the sharing of experiences by the consumers. I was humbled by their willingness to share their stories with strangers and yet felt there was a sense of unity among them. Despite the obstacles they face every day, the misperceptions about their mental illness, they are determined to be heard and to continue towards their goal of recovery.

I encourage staff to take advantage of opportunities to attend events that promote wellness, recovery and awareness of mental illness, not only to better serve our consumers but perhaps to learn something new about themselves.

Ginger Martinez
CMH Youth Services

MDCH and JIMHO 2012
Consumer Conference Theme



The Creative Art Project is a wonderful program that is offered to expose CMH consumers and the general public to art in many ways. I had the chance to take part in a couple of these over the last few weeks and I wanted to share some of my thoughts on this amazing program and the awesome women who run this.

Amy Smith and Laura Ritchie are the two main minds behind these extraordinary occasions. I had the great pleasure to participate in the photography class they offer. They supplied me with a digital camera to use and set me loose at certain parts of Muskegon to take shots. We visited Hackley Park and Central UMC. We went to Hoffmaster Park and the Scolnik House. I took tons of photographs and some even turned out pretty good. Chris Wyns, the instructor, has an excellent eye and helped me look at shots in different ways. The experience was a fun way to try a new skill and see the city in a different light.

I also had the pleasure of joining a group of consumers with my daughter to go to Art Prize in Grand Rapids. We loaded up in a van on a weekday morning and headed to the city. Once we parked in a general location we headed out looking for the art installations all over the city. We saw a dragon and a sand castle right on a busy sidewalk. There were driftwood and stick horses near the museum in the Grand River. We stood in line at the Grand Rapids Art museum to see some of the top ten picks. They were amazing examples of what people can do with just paper or a pencil. I registered there and made my vote and it won in the end. We had a great time of talking about the difference in the things on display and just had a great time being together.

The Creative Art Project or the Art Project as it is becoming known as, is an amazing way for people to experience art and get a chance to create something wonderful themselves. Whether a photography or a painting or just learning how to dance some great moves, it gives us a chance to express ourselves and helps us to interact with others. I will be signing up for more classes. Watch for their schedule and take a class.

Recovery Policy and Practice Advisory Michigan Recovery Council

Recovery is choosing and reclaiming a life full of meaning, purpose and one's sense of self. It is an ongoing personal and unique journey of hope, growth, resilience and wellness. In that journey, recovery builds relationships supporting a person's use of their strengths, talents and passions. Recovery is within each and every individual.

Guiding Principles of Recovery

The following principles outline essential features of recovery for the individual:

- 1. Recovery is a Personal Journey* and each person can attain and regain their hopes and dreams in their own way. Each journey is grounded in hope, and a sense of boundless possibilities. The strength, talent and abilities of each individual provide an opportunity to reach his or her own life goals. Everyone can attain and maintain recovery and move to a place of independence beyond the public mental health system.
- 2. Recovery includes all Aspects of Life* and is driven through the services and supports selected and controlled by the individual. Partnerships are formed based on trust and respect. Recovery will be attained and maintained with the support of friends, family, peers, advocates and providers.
- 3. Recovery is Life Long* and requires ongoing learning. Each individual has the courage to plan for and achieve wellness. Increased personal knowledge builds experience in advocating for services and supports.
- 4. Recovery Supports Health and Wellness* and is the responsibility of each individual with support from others who provide physical and mental health services. Integrating physical and mental health is essential to wellness. Through self advocacy and support, the highest attainable quality of life will be achieved with the integration of mental health and physical health, increased length of life is possible.

"How To Draw Better Pictures"

By Dwayne Harris

Since my very first day at the Lakeshore School of Fine Arts I wanted to learn how to draw better pictures. I started out with a color wheel and I had to do something different by making a great big circle and then I had to color it in with light and dark colors in water colored pencils.

My favorite part was to make a portrait of a celebrity by the name of Stacy Keibler who is a famous woman who stars in TV shows like Dancing With the Stars. First I started with her head and face and it must be real just like in an 8x10 photo, then I had to draw her eyes, lips, eyebrows, teeth and hair so it looks real. It took me 14 months to make it complete and I was in some stress, but I had to keep my cool and try again.

Every Tuesday afternoon I ride the bus to art class to meet some people who know how to draw. I made a landscape once and acrylic painted it. In fact I want to do more acrylic painting and I love it. Maybe I should go to Hobby Lobby to check out some art supplies like water colored pencils and come up with an idea like making pictures of animals. It could be a horse or a parrot or a rabbit. Needless to say I'm used to try new things at art class when I first come in.

Maybe someday when I have a picture whether it is in acrylic painting or water colored pencils I'm going to sell it. Bottom line is a true work of art transforms in to a complete masterpiece.



Introduction

Working-age Americans with disabilities are much more likely to live in poverty than other Americans and generally did not share in the economic prosperity of the late 1990s. At the same time, public expenditures to support them are growing at a rate that will be difficult to sustain when the baby boom generation retires and begins to draw Social Security Retirement and Medicare benefits. We argue that this discouraging situation will continue unless we can bring disability programs into line with more contemporary understanding of the capabilities of people with disabilities and successfully implement broad, systemic reforms to promote their economic self-sufficiency. This policy brief summarizes a larger paper (Stapleton, O'Day, Livermore & Imparato, 2005). It suggests principles to guide reforms and encourage debate. Future policy briefs will elaborate on some of these principles.

Dependence on Public Programs is Growing and People Still Live in Poverty

The employment rate of working-age people with disabilities is about half of the employment rate of working-age people without disabilities, regardless of what national survey is used or how disability is measured. According to the American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 38 percent of working-age people with at least one disability were employed in 2003, compared with 78 percent of people reporting none of the disabilities measured by the survey (Weathers 2005). Poverty rates for people with at least one disability are more than twice as high as for those with no disabilities (See Figure 1).

The fact that people with disabilities are falling further behind others economically is not due to a decline in public expenditures for their support. In fact, almost nine million working-age adults with disabilities receive income support from the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs; about \$87.3 billion is currently being spent on these programs annually. Rather, the poverty rate and quality of life of beneficiaries has not significantly improved despite ever increasing expenditures (Burkhauser, Houtenville & Rovba, 2004; Burkhauser, Daly & Houtenville, 2001; Burkhauser & Stapleton, 2003; Burkhauser & Stapleton 2004). This is partly because benefits are often insufficient to lift incomes above the poverty standard (the maximum federal SSI benefit is now only about 75 percent of the federal poverty standard for an individual), partly because many people with disabilities do not receive support from these programs, and partly because people who are on benefits are often unable to add to these benefits by working.

Today's Support Policies Create a Poverty Trap

Today's income support policies are built on the obsolete premise that people with particular disabilities cannot work, and therefore must rely on others for support. These policies create a poverty trap for many people with disabilities. An initial critical component of the poverty trap is that when people apply for Social Security disability benefits (either SSI or SSDI), they must demonstrate that they cannot work by not working. A second component involves the rules that sharply reduce benefits as a beneficiary's earnings increase. SSDI beneficiaries are able to earn up to the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) substantial gainful activity (SGA) level each month (\$830 for SSDI non-blind beneficiaries, and \$1,380 for blind beneficiaries in 2005) without losing any benefits, but if earnings exceed that amount by as little as one dollar for nine months or more, the beneficiary faces the "earnings cliff" where all SSDI cash benefits are lost. For those with benefits in excess of SGA, the income loss can actually be greater than the individual's earnings. Beneficiaries who return to work within the first 24 months also lose the opportunity to qualify for Medicare coverage, which is provided 24 months after the individual is found eligible for SSDI.

The SSI recipient faces a different constraint; after earnings reach \$65 per month, benefits are reduced by one dollar for every two dollars of additional earnings. Put differently, the SSI recipient's income is implicitly taxed at a rate of 50 percent – a tax rate that is higher than that paid by even the wealthiest individuals. Many may also face reductions in food stamps, housing subsidies, and other assistance as their earnings increase.

Another significant component of the poverty trap is the sheer complexity and poor coordination of support systems for people with disabilities. The many in-kind supports that are available to people with disabilities are administered by a variety of state and federal agencies and private organizations, each with its own rules, many of which are very complex in their own right and take a great deal of time to understand. Each additional program improvement seems to add to, not remove, this complexity. As Oi (1978; 1992) says, "Disability steals time." The gross inefficiency of our current support system steals even more.

The final key element of the poverty trap is the self-fulfilling expectation, ingrained in the support system, that people with disabilities cannot support themselves, or perhaps worse, may come to believe that they cannot contribute to their own support through working. In this policy environment, many individuals with significant functional limitations and relatively low earnings capacity face the following choice. They can work, receive wages, perhaps obtain some in-kind supports, and live in or near poverty. Or, they can severely limit their work, navigate the support system, and receive income and in-kind benefits that also leave them in or near poverty. They are trapped. The problem is not that the benefit levels and supports are too generous; it is that low-wage beneficiaries need a gradual reduction in benefits and the provision of some in-kind supports to make employment pay off. A successful economic self-sufficiency policy would create greater incentives and opportunities to escape poverty.

Read the full report at

<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/edicollect/124/>

Figure 1: Employment and Poverty Rates by Disability Status, 2003



Source: Weathers (2005).