

Date

Re: Parents with Disabilities and SRS Custody

Dear Commissioner Morse,

Greetings. I am writing to you on behalf of a group of citizens, advocates, attorneys and professionals who have concerns about the plight of parents with disabilities whose children are involved in the juvenile justice system. Our group represents several decades of experience of working with SRS and the family court system around issues of supporting parents with disabilities whose children are, or are likely to be, placed in state's custody. Our experience indicates that there are often misconceptions and prejudices held by various participants in the juvenile justice system, SRS caseworkers included, about the situation faced by parents with disabilities and the accommodations necessary and available to support them in regaining or maintaining custody of their children.

We are cognizant that the recently enacted Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, which amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, 42 U.S.C. Chapter 67, includes several specific requirements that grantees such as the State of Vermont and SRS reach out to parents with disabilities to improve the services afforded to children and families. A brief summary of these references with citations, is attached to this letter for your reference.

Our group would like to meet with you in the near future to discuss implementing a statewide plan to educate your staff in the field about the variety of issues relevant to families with these special characteristics. We would also like to explore ways of finding or creating appropriate and often necessary services and programs for these families in order to allow parents with disabilities to maintain or regain custody of their children.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT AND ADOPTION REFORM 42 U.S.C. chapter 67, with amendments created by Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003.

42 U.S.C. Sec. 5116(b)(1)(G) - **Purpose and authority**

The Secretary shall make grants under this subchapter on a formula basis to the entity designated by the State as the lead entity (hereafter referred to in this subchapter as the "lead entity") under section [5116a](#) of this title for the purpose of – developing, operating, expanding and enhancing Statewide networks of community-based, prevention-focused, family resource and support programs that demonstrate a commitment to meaningful parent leadership, including among parents of children with disabilities, **parents with disabilities**, racial and ethnic minorities, and members of other underrepresented or underserved groups;

Section 5116a(2)(B) and (3)(D) **Eligibility**

A State shall be eligible for a grant under this subchapter for a fiscal year if the chief executive officer of the State provides assurances that the lead entity will provide or will be responsible for providing (2)(B)direction through an interdisciplinary, collaborative, public-private structure with balanced representation from private and public sector members, parents, and public sector and private nonprofit sector service providers and **parents with disabilities**...

And if (3)(D) the chief executive officer of the State provides assurances that the lead entity will integrate its efforts with individuals and organizations experienced in working in partnership with families with children with disabilities, **parents with disabilities**, and with the child abuse and neglect prevention activities of the State, and demonstrate a financial commitment to those activities.

Section 5116f(4) **Performance Measures**

A State receiving a grant under this subchapter, through reports provided to the Secretary

shall describe the number of families served, including families with children with disabilities, **parents with disabilities**, and the involvement of a diverse representation of families in the design, operation, and; evaluation of community-based and prevention-focused programs and activities designed to strengthen and support families to prevent child abuse and neglect, and in the design, operation and evaluation of the networks of such community-based and prevention-focused programs.

Thank you for your time reviewing this information and considering our suggestion to meet with us and coordinate our efforts in this important area. Nancy Briden will contact your office in the next couple of weeks to verify that you've received this letter and attempt to set up a time to meet together to discuss these issues.

Sincerely,

Nancy Briden
Disability Law Project

Susan Yuan
title?

Glenn Spradlin, Esq.

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