



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Public Forums

To identify the concerns of people with disabilities and their families

Wednesday July 25, 2007 10 am – Noon

Woonsocket Senior Center's Conference Room

84 Social Street, Woonsocket

Governor's Commission on Disabilities

John O. Pastore Center – 41 Cherry Dale Court, Cranston, RI 02920-3049

Transcript

>>LEO: We're going to get started, not that we have to rush, we have two hours. The panel has to be here for two hours, you don't have to. My name is Leo Canuel, director of PARI Independent Living Center, hosting this panel today. We have a couple rules and things to go over before we get started and then I'll ask the panel to introduce themselves and explain their position and where they come from and what gets them here today. But the purpose behind this event today is this forum that is held on an annual basis and if you ever want to make a note, it's always during this week which falls July 26th and for people with disabilities, July 26th is a very important date because that's the date that the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed in 1990. So the Governor's commission always picks this week to have these forums because it's very important for us to hear concerns and issues from the community for our next year's agenda. What you say today creates the agenda for what this group of people will do over the next year. And speaking for PARI ourselves, while we do have a satisfaction survey from the consumer, we also use the document that is developed from this forum, this is last year's document, and if -- this is my copy, but you're free to look at it today if you choose to, it has everyone's testimony of everything that everyone said at all of the forums that were held last year. And then what the Governor's commission will do, their legislative committee will take these, this testimony and work out what the Governor's commission is going to work out and organizations like PARI also use this document for our future planning. And what we as an independent living center are going to do over the next year and three years and five years to work on for people with disabilities. So I have to say, I've been doing this now for I think about five years and every year we learn something new and we take that information and develop our advocacy for the coming year so it's important for us to hear from you. So I hope if you came to listen today, that's great but while you're listening, something sparks your interest and there is something you want to say, please don't hesitate to say it. I run this forum very informally. Everything that you will be saying is going to be documented by the CART reporter. If you're not familiar with CART, CART stands for computer aided real-time reporting and what they do is verbatim writing exactly what we say. So if you're stupid like me and sometimes say something weird, it's up there and everybody knows it's up there. Couple formalities you should know of as we go along this morning. The bathrooms are out this back door and to your left straight ahead of you. The accessible bathrooms are out this way to my left, all

the way to the end, you'll see that exit sign through the window over there, the bathrooms are just on the other side there. We have some basic rule that is we want to follow. Basically we try to give people about five-minutes to say what they need to say. While it is an opportunity for you to tell us, if you say something that interests the panel and the panel has a response to you because I've been to these forums where we've already had an answer to the problem the person is bringing but the person didn't know about the answer so sitting on this panel we've been able to give feedback right away and sometimes get your questions answers very, very quickly. So we try to have a little bit of a dialogue. And we do have interpreters in the room in the back of the room that I don't think we need, hi interpreters. Are you guys staying the full two hours?

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Yes.

>>MALE SPEAKER: So should someone need a sign language interpreter, we have them here. And we also have Harvey from the Governor's commission who is our greeter and be sure to sign in even if you don't choose to speak, just sign in just so we have your name. On the back table, we do have a couple of handouts that if you'd like to take on your way out, we do have some information put out by the Sherlock Center regarding health insurance purchasing and buying health insurance for Medicaid. We have information on the public forum and all of the sponsors and participate abilities. We also have that's hot off the press, right here all of the bills from this year's legislative season that have been signed by the Governor. So these are all of the bill that is actually came a lot of them came from this, what we did last year what the governor's commission worked on and now they're law. So you can see the direct result of the two of them. But I haven't had a chance to read this myself, I just printed it this morning but you might want to grab that, bedtime reading tonight when you can't get to sleep. We have information on voting, Rhode Island has a disability vote movement going onto try to get people with disabilities to vote. So, this is some information on that. And then we have information on the Sherlock Center in Spanish so if you serve the Spanish community, you can access that. What I'll start doing with this fine woman right here is allow Lezlee to introduce them selves.

>>LEZLEE: My name is Lezlee Shaffer, program director at the other independent living center based in Warwick, Ocean State Center for Independent Living, known as OSCIL. I've been to a number of these forums over the last ten years. And I'm here to really get some feedback from the community as an agency that works with people with disabilities to help them to stay independent in the community. We wanted to have some sense of what the concerns are for the average person. With money constraints being what they are, feedback from you folks will help us to start to look at some of the service provisions that we have and also help us to do some prioritizing in terms of where we should be putting more of our energies.

>>ANNE MULREADY: Thank you. Hi I'm Anne Mulready, supervising attorney at the Rhode Island Disability Law Center, nonprofit law office in Rhode Island designated to be the protection and advocating agency for people with disabilities so we represent people with disabilities exclusively on disability related legal issues. As Lezlee and Leo have said, we use this process to help us identify what are the most important legal issues and barriers facing people with disabilities, so that will help us use our resources to focus on priority issues for people with disabilities. So this is a process that's very valuable to us and your input is valuable to us. We also have and I'll leave them on the table out back, a paper survey if you want to fill it out to give us some idea of what the priority legal needs are of people with disabilities. Thank you.

>>CHRIS: I'm Chris butler, executive director of In-sight, statewide nonprofit people that are blind and visually impaired to help people with visual impairments to become fully independent in the community.

>>SUSAN: Susan Silva, supervisor with the Office of Rehabilitation Services and here to get feedback on services you may have been happy with or things you think we might do better in the communities. We work with individuals with disabilities to help them become employed and maintain that employment. Thank you.

>>ANNE LECLERC: I'm Anne LeClerc with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, work with the RIDE program and tax service, emergency preparedness and other things. Also a member of the state rehabilitation council.

>>ARTHUR: I'm Arthur Plitt, Commissioner, Governor's Commission on Disabilities as well as a number of other disability-related organizations. I find the testimony very insightful and confirmation of some of the legislative issues that we're concerned with as well as getting an idea of what the real problems are for real people. Thank you.

>>REGINA: I'm Regina Connor, also a commissioner with the Rhode Island Commission on Disabilities and also the director of vision rehabilitation at Insight working with Chris Butler. Interested of course in hearing what the issues are for people with disabilities in community. And in particular, if any of you are visually impaired or have family members or friends who are visually impaired and you're aware of particular issues you would like to bring forward, I'd certainly be interested in hearing.

>>BRIAN: Brian Monteiro, aid for the Lieutenant Governor and work on the long-term care coordinated council monitoring legislation that comes before the General Assembly, propose certain legislation. And that's pretty much it. We do a lot of work with community based care and nursing homes and things of that nature.

>>LEO: Okay, that's who we are. So let's start getting to the real reason we're here and that's to hear from you. Before you begin your testimony, please state your full name. And if you want to tell us what city or town you live in, that would be helpful, too. And also for the panel, as, if you begin speaking, state your name every time you speak so the CART reporter can put as a direct transcript who was speaking at all times. So the first person who has signed up to speak and you can just stay exactly where you are, you don't need to come forward. Right from your chair is fine, Michelle.

>>MICHELLE: I'm Michelle, I live in Cumberland, for four-and-a-half years now.

>>LEO: Just don't look at it.

>>MICHELLE: No.

>>LEO: Look at me.

>>MICHELLE: I love living where I am. I go out, I go out and do activities at night, go with my father every weekend and when my father, my aunt, my cousin and my father and me, I take them out to eat every weekend.

>>LEO: Yep.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: You did a very nice job, Michelle. No questions? Maybe you'll have some questions later.

>>LEO: Is there something that would serve you better to help you go out with your family on nights and weekends? Maybe transportation or something else that would help you?

>>MICHELLE: There is some activity trips that I could go to on the weekend but on the weekend I like to see my father.

>>LEO: Okay. That's fine. Is that it?

>>MICHELLE: That's it.

>>LEO: Eileen.

>>EILEEN: From the Homestead Group in Woonsocket and I've never been to one of these forums and I didn't really know the procedure. But the only difficulties that we find with The Homestead Group is right now, we're getting individuals jobs in the community, we have several individuals who are working at the naval war college and as a result of the wages they're paying at the

naval war college, several of our individuals are going to be losing their social security benefits so I was just wondering if there's a specific individual like in the social security administration or like in that area who could be of assistance to us, if anyone had the name of like a liaison.

>>LEO: Someone to help with benefit's planning.

>>SUSAN: Susan Silva at the Office of Rehabilitation Services, we have some benefit specialists, two people right now, Jeanne Fay generally meets with individuals and I'm sure if you called her, she would be happy to meet with your groups and talk about benefits and what can continue even though you're working because you are entitled to certain things when working.

>>EILEEN: I know we've met as a group. She has met with the whole group but I think in these situations, it's a little more of a, like a smaller group within the group that were affected.

>>SUSAN: That's fine, I think she would be willing to do that to, if you give her a call and I'll let her know also we spoke, you can arrange something because she'll meet individually.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Is she at the 421 number?

>>SUSAN: Right.

>>ARTHUR: I also serve on the roads to independence advisory committee and working on a retreat in September to address some of these problems. But I know that you may not be aware of the Medicaid buy in which may allow some people to keep their benefits by paying out a small type pen towards that.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: There's a brochure in the back.

>>EILEEN: Yes, I was looking at that, thank you so much.

>>ANNE MULREADY: Anne Mulready from the disability law center. We also have a project that represents people with disabilities when they're having difficulty with overpayments or managing work incentives so if you have individual clients who are beginning to have benefits problems, you should feel free to refer them to us and we actually go with Jeanne and do trainings. So, the wippa (sounds like)

>>JEANNE: Thank you.

>>LEO: So, as you can see, the reason why I like these panels is because we have all the experts and when you have a question we can usually come up with an answer rather quickly. There is no answer just yet. Moving on. Roger Harris.

>>ROGER: Well, you know my name. Hi Susan. Born and raised here in Woonsocket. I'm paralyzed veteran, here though, my capacity, I represent the Rhode Island Disability Vote Project, one of the founding managing directors, also on the steering committee and I'm here to hopefully register those of you who are not yet registered voters, I have registration forms with me and also have information about the project if you would like to have that as well.

>>LEO: Okay. Thank you.

>>ARTHUR: Can I also make a comment? Many people don't realize that you can sign up as a poll worker to work on the day and always looking for poll workers for election day. It does pay a very small stipen so maybe that might be of some interest.

>>LEO: Small stipen that doesn't affect your benefits. Which is important because many times people -- go ahead.

>>ROGER: I just want to throw this out as well. There's a few cities and towns in Rhode Island doing elections this year. There's some specific elections, primaries, also general elections this year. So, I would behoove you if you would like to participate in the polls, definitely go out there.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Who are the contacts?

>>ROGER: Local board of elections, board of canvasses.

>>LEO: Do you want to explain the disability vote project?

>>ROGER: Sure, I don't want to take too much time. The Rhode Island Disability Vote Project is made up of, we have about 26 member organizations. Our main focus is to elevate the disabled community in the realms of voting. We

understand in Rhode Island there's upwards of 185,000 people with a disability. Of that number, there's about 20 percent of them who vote. That means 80 to 85 percent of people with disabilities don't vote and the reason they don't vote is huge. What we do is go out into the community and try to educate disabled community about the importance of voting, why is it important to vote and how to get them registered. Also we educate them on legislation issues that may come up that effect us with disabilities. One case, the closed captioning bill. We put a lot of energy into getting that bill passed this year. Closed captioning for people who are deaf or hard of hearing legislators who run for office who get public funding, now they have to spend some of that public funding on the commercials when they do ads for closed captioning for those of us who are deaf and hard of hearing. Another thing, I I'm going to hope to invite PARI, I'm not sure if you're members.

>>LEO: We are.

>>ROGER: And any other organizations who are not members, we're recruiting and I think there's strength in numbers. Like I said, 185,000 people with disabilities, imagine the power we could have in Rhode Island. Thank you.

>>LEZLEE: Can I add a couple things, OSCIL has been involved with the group as well. Some of the other things that the organization has been doing is providing information about some of the new technology that's out there like the new voting machines for people who are visually impaired that are in place at the different polling places, accessibility and accommodations that you can request to get out to vote. And things like absentee ballots and such. And I think both centers do registrations for the registrations as part of our intake process when we go out into the community and we meet with someone in their home, we also have voter registration forms so that they can sign on at that point.

>>LEO: For us it's always a question asked when we work with a new consumer every year.

>>ROGER: One more thing. I was also appointed to the secretary of state's voter initiative task force. Prior to my appointment, there was no one there representing the disabled community so I think someone from the disabled community got on that task. What they're doing is having public forums throughout the state, two coming up, one August 6th at the URI campus in Warwick and September 10th, I do believe in Newport. What they do at these forums, people come and ask questions regarding voting. The hope is, the hope for the commission to make voting easier for people in Rhode Island, not just people with disabilities but for every Rhode Islander. Thank you.

>>LEO: Roger, do you vote?

>>ROGER: Of course; since I turned 18.

>>LEO: Next person on the list is Karen Racine.

>>KAREN: I've never been to one of these, I'm Karen Racine from Cumberland. I'm basically here as a mom of a son who has a mental illness and I guess one of my sources of frustration is, he was sick when he was 8, he's presently 19, and kind of the different agencies that we've been referred to over the years, I just feel like people, a lot of times will say, we're going to do this, we're going to do that, and it never ends up happening. And it's kind of a source of frustration, you need res pined care, okay, you have two months, have you the application process and then you have, okay, you've been accepted but we're out of funds so then you wait so long and then you finally get someone in to help you and there's an anxiety issue and she invites him over and 22 other people and has a party and obviously that didn't work out, you know, referred to different like goodwill industries and, we're going to get him into this and that. It's a summertime program, it finishes, it's done. And that's it and then he has nothing to do so then he found a job, worked one week a month and then ORS signed off on him and, I don't know that there's really a question here, it's just a frustration of people from different services promising different

things and I wish that they wouldn't say it if it's not going to happen. You know, he, up until present, he's going to be, he just started a week ago at Gibbs college, I have no idea if that will work out or not but basically sat in a chair for about a year because there wasn't anything to do, had anxiety issues, has no friends, there was no place to take him. You know, nothing really for him to do. You know, he got on SSI but that really didn't solve his problem at all. I don't know if there's, you know, it's the transition from teen to adult, there was no place for him to go. He also is, in addition to his mental illnesses, he's 6 foot 6 and 350 pounds and has issues with his feet so he has trouble walking long distances so that counts out a lot of different jobs he could possibly do. And I guess that's just.

>>LEO: Can I ask a question as to what type of a program -- I'm assuming he's transitioning into adult services, what type of a program are you looking for for him, or is he looking for, sounds like you're looking for.

>>KAREN: Like a social skills, not necessarily skills, there's nothing wrong with his skills, a place for him to go, to meet people, to get out of the house, someplace for him to go. I have been to a lot of different agencies. He is now hooked back up with ORS, they're involved again, but I just feel like I was disappointed by a lot of different agencies and there wasn't anything available and I tried Cedar, I mean, it's not like I haven't been trying.

>>LEO: Where does he live?

>>KAREN: Cumberland.

>>LEO: Does the panel have any suggestions.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: I would ask if you've connected with the community mental health centers?

>>KAREN: I tried here in Woonsocket and they have nothing available.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Nothing available in what terms? They did not accept him into any of the programs.

>>KAREN: Not as far as like a meeting group for kids his age, they didn't have anything. He has a psychiatrist, we have been seeing a counselor, I mean that wasn't really the issue, it was just a place to go.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: There's a place I think on north Main Street, the Oasis it's called, like a center for mental health -- whatever you want to call them -- they have all kinds of stuff going on there, it's on north Main Street in Providence.

>>KAREN: Maybe some of the issue is his age, turning from.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: They might even have --

>>KAREN: You know, high school kid into, he's now 19. He got his drivers license which was very nice through ORS, they tested him first because I couldn't have him try to drive my own car because he couldn't fit and I had to buy him his own and didn't want to if you couldn't drive, so, I mean, I have gotten some services. There's, there have been other ones that just.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: I know that group still exists.

>>ANNE MULREADY: Anne Mulready. Is one of your concerns, is there a sense you have to find out what they were as opposed to somebody helping you coordinate the needs.

>>KAREN: Probably.

>>LEO: When he was younger, let's say 16, how were services then?

>>KAREN: I don't know, there really weren't any services for him. He was in school, they had said, you know, they had kind of hooked up with goodwill industries but that was just a summer one time job, they had him tested in the beginning and that just, it ended is what it did. They said, we'd look into training him for something, that happen never happened, kids were picking on him on the bus so I had to drive him myself. I could go on and on and don't want to take a lot of the time but that's, you know, there wasn't any services for him.

>>LEO: Okay. Arthur.

>>ARTHUR: Arthur from the commission. Have you talked to Nami (sounds like),. I know Oasis does have support groups.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Rhode Island Parent Information Network.

>>MALE SPEAKER: I was telling her about the Trudeau center, as well, they work with adults.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Not adults with mental illness.

>>MALE SPEAKER: They don't? I didn't know that.

>>LEO: Well, I would suggest that, I don't know Susan, if you want to help.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: I was going to say I would talk with you after the meeting if you like.

>>KAREN: We're trying the college thing, have been recently hooked back up with ORS again, they had denied him because they thought, I don't know, he was working one week a month. You know, he's on SSI, well that happen didn't do a thing for him, really. So he did get the services but that didn't help him.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Sometimes someone may ask if he's happy with his job and he said, just assume that he was. So we can talk afterwards in more detail.

>>LEO: I find one of the problems we have here in Rhode Island is first of all that transitioning from youth to adult hood because services for kids and services for adults are completely different. And the expectations are completely different. And many times, people tend to kind of just fall off when they transition so we need to make sure that services continue and that, we call it transitioning, that transitioning has been. And that's a difficult task sometimes to get that done. Okay, so you two can connect up afterwards. Linda Stone.

>>LINDA STONE: I was born and raised in Woonsocket. And I have a lot of trouble getting places because I can't drive and I had an appointment, I have to go to Rhode Island hospital, no neurologist in Woonsocket that take Medicaid and Medicare so I have to go to Rhode Island and I had an appointment for an MRI Wednesday and they picked had he up two hours late, they're going to be there, they'll be there, from universal and flex sometimes, they take you an hour ahead of time to bring you to your place and it's just too, it's too much. There's not enough rides for, you know, I go to a lot of doctor's appointments and most of them are in Providence because that's where the neurologists and neurosurgeons are and even though Friday they picked me up early from my other MRI but they picked me up two hours late and I went because I was going to wait a couple hours, I needed that MRI done, too. So I don't know what other transportations there there are.

>>LEO: Mostly just to get from Woonsocket to Providence you're having an issue?

>>LINDA: Yes because that's the only place that takes my Medicaid for neurosurgeons.

>>ANNE LECLERC: You're using the RId program now?

>>LINDA: I don't know the RId program.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Flex is the would know sockets local, how do you get to Providence.

>>LINDA: Universal, it's a van. I usually go in my wheelchair and they take me in that.

>>LEO: Medicaid funded.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Yeah, it's different. There's another service called the American with disabilities act, it's under the RId program and I can give you the number and send you an application for that. Under ADA, transit companies have to provide this service for people whose disability prevents use of the fixed use system. So if you don't take a regular bus into Providence, you could take this one.

>>LINDA: I could but my MRI was at seven o'clock at night, I'm not taking a bus into Kennedy.

>>ANNE LECLERC: The service is a van that will take you from your house to the MRI location, operates the same time as the fixed route so if you could get there on it's regular bus at seven but can't get to one, you can take this.

>>LEO: Is there a regular bus that goes close to your house?

>>LINDA: Yes, I moved to Main Street where the buses are right there, I purposely took that because of the buses. I can take a bus, but if it's at night, there's no way I'm getting in the middle of Kennedy plaza at night.

>>LEO: The RIDE service is kind of like a taxi service, van comes directly to your house, you have to get to the curb, the van picks you up, will drive you to, right to Rhode Island hospital and let you off at Rhode Island hospital and pick you up again at that same place at Rhode Island hospital and drive you right back to your house. So you're not getting off in Kennedy plaza, you're getting off at your appointment and, I don't know what the fee would be for that.

>>ANNE LECLERC: It's \$3 each way.

>>LINDA: Sometimes that's kind of tough. I've already had two MRIs last week and then I had one of the week before that. And that's where my neurologists all are.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Is Medicaid arranging your ambulance service?

>>LINDA: I don't know, I call universal, I don't know how I.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: You should call and complain about not getting to your appointments on time.

>>LINDA: They know that.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Not Universal, call your Medicaid provider.

>>LEO: The number on the back of your Medicaid card, have you a number on the back of your Medicaid card, call that number and tell them what you just told us, you're trying to get there and universal is showing up two hours late.

>>LINDA: That was the latest, normally they're late and, you know, I even try to say my appointment is earlier than it really is and it doesn't do anything.

>>LEO: Because Medicaid is paying them to drive you to your appointment and pick you up and taking you home so it's their money and they should advocate for you to make sure that universal is getting you there at the time that you need to get there because I'm assume that go a seven o'clock at night transport, they're not really that busy at that time.

>>LINDA: No, it's the mornings, mostly in the mornings there.

>>LEO: Seven a.m.?

>>LINDA: Well, I guess.

>>LEO: They pick you up at seven so you can get there.

>>LINDA: Whatever time at no time morning, yeah. I have another question. How come fibromyalgia, can't get a hand capped parking.

>>LEO: It doesn't depend on disability, it depends on function. It depends on how your doctor writes up the paperwork that states you're having an issue getting from your vehicle to the front door of the vocation. So it's function, not disability based.

>>MALE SPEAKER: Can you look back on what she just said? I think that system is being abused. I know people that have just a bad toe and they get a handicapped parking tag and you're saying about how it's based on how the doctor writes up the script or whatever, I think it's not fair. For example I go to the state house quite a bit and all the handicapped spots at the present handicapped entrance is taken by legislators and I see them getting out of their cars. Physically they don't have a disability, visually I mean, they're able bodied, they walk in there and I question that each time I see one of them and they say, have I a sticker, I can park there, which is true. But I think that should be looked into. I think that system is abused.

>>MALE SPEAKER: That's been a problem up there for a long time. Everybody complains about it. The best thing to do is before you go to the state house, call ahead so they can reserve.

>>MALE SPEAKER: They'll reserve is spot for me?

>>MALE SPEAKER: If you call ahead.

>>LEO: Call the Lieutenant Governor's office, say Brian.

>>MALE SPEAKER: Okay, Brian.

>>LEO: And he'll be standing outside holding the spot for you.

>>CELESTE: Could you tell me more about the flex?

>>LEO: Can you state your name.

>>CELESTE: Celeste. I lost my car so I have no way of getting around.

>>LEO: Hold on. I want to be sure Linda is done first. Do you have any more.

>>LINDA: No.

>>ANNE MULREADY: This is Anne Mulready, I wanted to respond to Linda, sometimes, I know it's hard to believe but the DMV makes mistakes on their issuing. So it could be that your relatives did say the right things that would enable your relative to get a placard so that is something that our offices will help people with if they've been denied a parking placard, we'll look into it because sometimes the DMV, it's a paper shuffle and things get lost in the shuffle if area relative thinks that may have happened to them, you can call our office and we'll look at it.

>>LINDA: Your office is what?

>>ANNE MULREADY: I can give you a card.

>>LEO: Always remember that any decision the state makes about anything, you can appeal. And I always encourage people to appeal. Just to have your case heard. And let me also add that there are some hidden disabilities that you would not see that people can get placards with, so, respiratory issues, card vascular issues, circumstance la toyer issues, you are you can get a placard so if you can't walk a long distance for those reasons. So it's difficult to say if you just see someone getting out of a vehicle and walking away that person does not have a disability. I'm not saying there's no abuses with the placard because I'm always questioning as to is the person the placard assigned to still living? You know. Dead people are still on voter roles and still using placards in the state of Rhode Island. So it's always an issue and I know that the governor's commission had looked into it and I was actually interviewed by channel 10 on this very issue because people are abusing placards which is illegal and if you're found, police can fine you.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Couldn't you just take the placard from the person who is disabled, put it in your car and you go and

park.

>>LEO: Yes. If you were to use my placard and didn't have a disability and my placard has my picture on it and the police officer says let me see that placard and your picture is not there, that's illegal and you can be fined and I can lose my placard forgiving it to you but if I'm already dead -- but, yeah, that happens many times where people's parent vs. a placard and they cover the picture so you can't see it and leave it there in the window. Let's go back to your, is it Celeste.

>>ANNE LECLERC: I should have brought some brochures. Flex service is a general public service, anyone can use it for any reason. It's zone based and up here the city of Woonsocket is one zone. We have six others in the state, South county, Kent County and the ports mouth, Tiverton area. The service is mostly reservation based, you call and ask them to pick you up at your home. So any where in Woonsocket.

>>CELESTE: For doctor appointments and stuff?

>>ANNE LECLERC: Any reason, anyone can use it for any reason, Monday through Friday six to 6:30.

>>CELESTE: I'm kind of way out.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Any where in Woonsocket. It's \$1.50 each way, if have you a bus pass.

>>CELESTE: I'm in the process of applying, it's still pending.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Bus passes works like on the fixed route passes. If you want to apply for the senior bus senior or disabled bus pass, you can use those as well. If you're transferring, it can take you to the regular because just like you would between two regular buses.

>>CELESTE: How soon do you have to call ahead?

>>ANNE LECLERC: We ask 48 hours. They can sometimes do it less but Woonsocket is very busy so it can be hard to schedule it in in less than that because right now it's one person doing the scheduling manually. The office isn't open on weekends. But the number, I can give it to you, it's -- I can write it down.

>>LEO: While she's taking out a pen. Let me clarify that the flex service works within the Woonsocket area if you're going to Woonsocket but if you're going outside of Woonsocket does.

>>ANNE LECLERC: It will bring you to a bus stop and if you can't use the regular bus, it can bring you to a RIDE bus.

>>LEO: So in order to use RIdE you need to be three quarters of a mile within.

>>ANNE LECLERC: RIdE is an umbrella program, it's more than one thing, RIdE is just the vehicles and it's one phone number to call but there are multiple programs. One is the American with disabilities act I had talked about before which is equivalent service to the fixed route so it has to be in the same area if there's no fixed route service there, would be no ADA service. If the fixed route does run, it would operate at the same times. So if there's no Sunday service on fixed route, there's no service. If there's service until one a.m., there's ADA service, so equivalent times and locations. Programs on RIdE will limit the purpose, RIdE can't limit the purpose. On a RIPTA bus, driver can't ask where you're going and say get off. ADA is just like that. They might ask for statistical purposes but doesn't affect getting the trip. Other programs like the department of elderly affairs to senior meal sites, adult day care, some medical trips some under 60 for dialysis or chemotherapy, for trips on RIdE under certain, like the Trudeau center, they'll pay for though as well. Those are limited to time, usually more so than the ADA program. ADA now is the only one that charges a fair and it's \$3 each way, the rest of the programs are free. But if you want to go shopping or movies, you can use either flex or if you're eligible for the ADA program, use that under RIdE.

>>MALE SPEAKER: You said ADA RIdE is the only one that charge a fee?

>>ANNE LECLERC: In the RIdE program. Flex is a separate program. The flex fare are just like the fixed route fares. Any passes work on flex just like the other RIPTA buses.

>>LEO: Phone number.

>>ANNE LECLERC: 877-906-3539. And it's instate, toll free.

>>CELESTE: If you called them up, you would tell them, like a pick up time and when you want to come back?

>>ANNE LECLERC: Yes. If you want to go to the movies, you would tell them what time it starts and ends and they'll get you there. Or any other reason. If you are a he going shopping or something social, and someone else wants to go to work, they may ask to you move your time. In flex we try to give work trips priority to be sure people get to work on time. But other than that we try to fit in all the trips we can. It is though first come, first serve. There are two-weeks in Woonsocket that operate 6:00 to 6:30 P.M., Monday through Friday but there are times it's packed full and they can't fit

another person on. So if it's something like a shopping trip they may ask you to go another time.

>>CELESTE: So they would take someone to work on a regular basis.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Yes we take people to work, if it's a parent with a child, we'll take the child to day care, the parent can get off the bus and get back on and continue to work. The bus usually waits in that case. If someone is paying cash, they don't have to pay to get back on the bus if they're getting off to take the child to day care, it's considered the same trip for them. And it is the same size vehicle that RIDE uses, it's the exact same vehicle actually only it's painted with the RIPTA colors and has overhead sign like the regular buses. 281, it says 281 Woonsocket flex, has a fare box inside. And our fare boxes will be changing July 30th, if anyone has question about that. If you show a pass, nothing will change right now but the cash product are changing, the rip particulars are changing, we're going to a different type of fare box.

>>EILEEN: Homestead Group in Woonsocket, I have an individual who uses RIDE, we've had several over the years use the RIDE program and we've had a lot of difficulty with dependability and if have you a person that's supposed to be picked up at three, it's four, we constantly get the busy signal, can't get through. Just a lot of problem with dependability and I've spoken with Bill Inlow before.

>>ANNE LECLERC: He is the ADA coordinator, you should file an official complaint with the RIDE program. That number is 461-9760. They don't have an official complaint, it's hard to follow up on. The trip shouldn't be late. And on RIDE, they give a half hour window, if they say 3:00, they could arrive any where between 2:45 and 3:15 is considered on time because of the type of service. It's hard to keep that one to the minute. Flex does operate to the minute. Or tries to. But if they're showing up at four instead of three, that is a problem we want to know about. Because either they're miss scheduling or the driver -- if it's happening regularly, there's a system problem that needs to be fixed. If it's one time, something could have happened on the road or something.

>>EILEEN: What's happened is I can't get a hold of RIDE because it's busy.

>>ANNE LECLERC: That will be changing, we're implementing a new phone system late fall, early winter, that happen should help that.

>>EILEEN: I've been calling the local cab company that provides the service because, you know, we have to make sure the person has a ride. Okay, thank you.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Please let us know if this is a habit that they're not getting the trip on time.

>>EILEEN: It's been very consistently not consistent, I don't know how else to put it.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Can I get the specific information after.

>>EILEEN: Yes.

>>LEO: There is a form that can be filled out and I believe it's online, or Bill can send it to you or fax it to you and you can send it back to document it. Also, I am part of a group of consumers with disabilities that sit as an advisory committee to RIPTA which we meet as a group quarterly with Al mess cola, down, so if there's an ongoing issue we should have it in this group and we can meet later for the particular to bring it up at the September or October meeting and address it that way.

>>ANNE LECLERC: RIPTA administers the RIdE program, pay for the ADA trips but also the ones you get when you call the call center, they're with RIPTA. We meet once a week to discuss how the RIdE program is doing. We need the official complaints in order to follow up on them. So, let me get that from you.

>>EILEEN: Thank you.

>>LEO: Harvey, do we have anyone else back there on your list registered to speak?

>>HARVEY: No.

>>LEO: Roger.

>>ROGER: I have another question, all together different. Probably for Susan Silva I just re-signed in with ORS, I'll just say, I'm not comfortable with the caseworker, can I get another one?

>>SUSAN: You should ask to speak to the supervisor.

>>ROGER: I know you're her supervisor.

>>SUSAN: I'm not that person's most likely.

>>ROGER: She said you were.

>>SUSAN: I'm a supervisor for the blind and visually impaired.

>>ROGER: I'll just call the office and ask.

>>SUSAN: Right, ask for that supervisor and you can discuss your concerns with that supervisor.

>>ROGER: The reason I bring it up, this probably happened to other people, I went there in April and I didn't hear from her until two weeks ago. And she blamed me because I didn't sign the application so I said, why couldn't

you call or send me a letter and I called her, Mr. Murphy, I think his name was and he said he couldn't find me in the system and then the next following day, she called, I went down there and she said the reason I wasn't in the system is I didn't sign the application back in April. That was kind of like dropping the ball I guess.

>>SUSAN: Well, whether it's on it's application or not, you filled out the application so you intended to apply so it should have been considered. Definitely if you have any concerns, you can always talk to the supervisor, if you're not happy with that, you always have the right to appeal. I'm sure my partner over here will be willing to help you. Usually things can be resolved at the supervisory level, if you can't talk to that caseworker and resolve the issues to your satisfaction.

>>ROGER: Thank you.

>>LEO: Harvey.

>>HARVEY: In the beginning you mentioned testimonies from previous forums in the past years, those are all available at our web site at GCD at RI.GOV and it goes back to the beginning of 2002 or something, 2001 that we've been holding the forum.

>>LEO: Because we have the CART service, it is, you can do either way, you can do the direct transcript and read it for yourself or this, I believe this is an abbreviated version of it that we have. We've come to the end of those who said they wanted to testify and I would like to open the floor now to see if there are any other questions or issues that anyone in the room would like to bring up. And you just didn't check that wanted to talk. I hope it up for the panel also.

>>JEANNE: My name is Jeanne representing Rhodes to Independence, and I would just like to announce we're having a job fair in October, the date is October 30th, it's scheduled right now, but will be the last week in October at the Sheraton airport plaza hotel and it will be in the convention center since there will be at least 30 representations of agencies throughout Rhode Island that will help you to get positions. There will also be a resource room set up to help with resumes and cover letters, et cetera, things you may need to get a position and we will also have a training and development and resource center where they will help people to get into different programs or advise them as to where they need to go for those programs. All of this will be advertised either through PSAs or in the newspaper or local agency newsletters so that will start, probably being advertised within the next month

or. So so just keep a look out for that information and hopefully you can join us. If you need to make your bus ride reservations, you need to plan in advance for October.

>>ARTHUR: Also mention, in case somebody has another question would you like answered or some testimony, you can write in your comments to the commission and e-mail it disabilities at GCD at RI.GOV? Right.

>>LEO: And to let you know that on September 21st, PARI, OSCIL and ORS and a whole variety of other organizations is sponsoring the 21st annual independent living conference at the Marriott in Providence which is, we do have scholarships available for consumers to attend. If you're interested, you can check out PARI's web site at PARI.LIC.org and it's already up there. It's an opportunity for anyone to come and learn about disability related issues and we have a whole host of thing that is we're doing this year. It's a day long forum from 8:30 in the morning until about 4:00 in the afternoon.

>>ROGER: For the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, in Rhode Island, I'm a driver with a disability. And in Rhode Island there are handicapped parking, however they're not friendly to drivers who are disabled, especially drivers in wheelchairs. I find, especially downtown Providence and I know parking stinks for everybody in downtown Providence, I hear it all the time. But the handicapped parking can be addressed, I think. As a driver with a wheelchair, I'm getting out in the street and that's too dangerous. Also, there's other parking spaces where the curb is so friggin high, I can't get my chair out. I wonder if the commission has any -- maybe somebody working on that? If not, I need a job.

>>LEO: Harvey.

>>HARVEY: The accessibility committee is responsible for disability parking in the state of Rhode Island now. The problem with on street parking in any community is that you cannot create what, you cannot create a parking spot that meets the standard for disability parking which we're requiring access isle for the chair to get out and sidewalks are minimal at best right now, about eight feet. And create on street disability parking that meets the standard that would reduce the additional sidewalks to three feet and we can't do that. There's a standard for new construction but in New England there's no new construction on city roads. They're all existing right now. So we're kind of stuck with what we have. There's no requirement by federal law for the communities to create on

street parking that doesn't meet the standard. However, we promote that, we promote the cities to create on street parking even if they don't meet the standard, it's better to have a parking spot than not. To get an access aisle so you're not getting out into traffic as the driver is going to be almost impossible any where in the eastern see board. If you go out west to New Mexico and Colorado where they had streets that were city streets that were 4 and 6 lanes wide, it was easy for them to create those kind of disability parking spaces but here in, on the east, it's impossible.

>>ROGER: So I have to move to Mexico?

>>HARVEY: Just to maintain the lousy parking spaces we have and try to create more.

>>ROGER: On that, too, Harvey, curb cuts. The community I grew up in, there is not -- in the community that I grew up in, there is not one curb cut. I just had a meeting there yesterday in one of the community centers. I had to go away from the community center, use someone's driveway to get on the sidewalk and then roll back half a block to the community center. I've brought this attention up to our city council many years ago. I know they have done renovations there. They've actually taken the curbs off the road, put in the new road and put the same curb back without making any curb cuts. Maybe the Governor's commission can look into that.

>>HARVEY: If you file a complaint with our office.

>>ROGER: I've done that.

>>HARVEY: While a road is under construction, we would make sure the curb cut ares put in. The difficult part is after the road is completed and they didn't put it in, then you have to go through the federal government. But before, or while it's under construction, we can take on that initiative and get it completed.

>>ROGER: What if they don't ever do construction in the neighborhoods. The neighborhood I grew up in, they haven't touched it in 40 years, I know this, I live there.

>>HARVEY: The court decisions have been that the communities only have to put in the curb cuts when they upgrade the roads.

>>LEO: But the thing is, when they upgrade one side of the street and do put in a curb cut, then they have to do the other corners across the way because you don't want one here and no place to go. But if they put in a curb cut, they have to do all four. If they don't, then ap complaint can be filed to do it. I have also -- you can petition the city or town to apply

for grants that would do those upgrades and they can apply for grants to do just that, to do the upgrades for accessibility purposes.

>>HARVEY: And that's difficult in local communities because we're not aware much when they pave or when they do a sidewalk project. The state, we are. And we make sure that all of the state roads, that gets completed when the state roads -- but local communities have no vehicle to notify us that they're doing the streets. So we need the citizens to tell us that. Even if they're doing it right, and you don't know that, you can call our office and we'll go in and look at the plans for the upgrading of that street.

>>MALE SPEAKER: Great.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: This is an issue with bus stops, as well.

>>LEO: One at a time, please, for the CART reporter. Anne.

>>ANNE LECLERC: With bus stops as well because people park illegally with bus stops and usually not ticketed or towed. And where he can't put a lift because we need to be on a curb or even if it's deployed in the street, the person can't get off the sidewalk to get to the bus. I don't know if there's any recourse for complaints around that kind of issue.

>>LEO: RIPTA does not own the bus stops. The city or town the bus stops are in own it's bus stop so it's the city or town's responsibility to maintain the bus stop including maintaining the shelter if there's a shelter there and especially for snow removal, it is the city and town's responsibility to be sure snow is removed in and around bus stops for accessibility purposes. Does anyone else have any other comments, questions, concerns, a joke, good limerick?

>>DOREEN: My name is Doreen and I'm hoping at each of the forums at least someone will be talking about accessible housing, universal design. I think when we're looking at folks with developmental disabilities cans folks with physical disabilities, there isn't a lot, there isn't enough housing and it's, for some of us it's reaching the critical stage. And I don't know -- talk being it in terms ever universal design and advocating for uniform designed homes in communities will help, but I think it's important to keep on the radar screen because the state is trying to get out of the business much creating living opportunities for folks which, you know, depending on how you look at it might not a bad thing if we're empowering individuals themselves to do this but we still need accessible housing.

>>JEANNE: Can I speak to that?

>>LEO: Go ahead.

>>JEANNE: We are actually looking into that, Rhodes, Elaina Goldstein can speak to that, she's out of town, she is on our web site, it's Elaina at URI.EDU and shell more than likely be at future forums. We are working on projects now, we have just hired someone who will be setting up a manual of sorts for moderations and living conditions. So it will be coming out, someone is doing something, it's just not complete yet.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: And the housing authority here in Woonsocket has been extremely responsive and the gentleman who is the director has been very helpful but we still have hundreds and hundreds of folks with disabilities that need good housing.

>>HARVEY: Elaina and the commission have proposed an amendment to new low cost housing mortgage money that would require that all units be developed as B units which are adaptable units but that didn't pass the legislature. However, that money now is being distributed with the requirement that five percent of the units be B units and so there will be some more accessible housing. The requirement for universal design isn't standard, isn't quite as high as B unit, and B unit is what we're trying to achieve in Rhode Island.

>>ANNE LECLERC: Anne from RIPTA again. I just would like people to keep in mind when talking about development of new housing, accessible housing, affordable housing to keep in mind that's often difficult to separate from transportation issues. A lot of people who live in either accessible and or affordable housing deposit pend on the bus at least part-time if not all and there are some communities in our state who think the development of affordable housing should not be seen so it's up a hill, it's someplace the people can't get to a bus, we don't have the budget to keep expanding services, so the coordination if not located on a current line is important for people to consider. Because finding someone is house they can never leach doesn't meet all the problems.

>>MALE SPEAKER: I just want to reiterate, I have brochures on the Rhode Island Disability Vote Project, information, and I also have registration forms if there is anyone in the room that is not registered, please feel free to take one, I'll be more than happy to bring it to the board of elections for them.

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: They have it ease year, too, if you have a license and not

registered, when you renew, you can register right there.

>>LEO: Any other issues, comments, that we need to discuss today?

>>JUDY: I just want to say one thing, Judy, I'm a commissioner, with the new change in state budget, many of the services that are targeted to help individuals with disabilities are under extreme scrutiny and I would use the word attack. And you folks are here because you're expressing concern about availability of services and the ride rights ever people you work with, if some of these programs are under funded in the way that's being discussed, access to services will further decline. So, we really need your support to be vocal because right now, folks are not being vocal, it's only those of us work not guilty these programs that are stepping up so we need grass root support from the community to let the Governor and the legislature know that these services need to continue in order to serve the needs of the people in Rhode Island.

>>LEO: If I could.

>>JUDY: I thought I'd put it out there because it's not well publicized.

>>LEO: And yesterday the Governor had a meeting with all of the heads of each department and talked about cutting 1,000 more state jobs. You need to understand, we talked a little bit today about how difficult it is to get services. I work quite closely with ORS and they're really under staffed at ORS and I'm sure the other organizations are, as well, cutting more state workers is just going to mean that the current state workers will be more stressed and less outcome is going to happen. So, you know, Roger, for your example, that sign thing, I'm not creating any excuses here but if we had talked about this maybe five years ago, that would not have been an issue and you would have gotten a phone call. Any technicality tends to put things off in any way and cutting more staff will not be an issue so definitely call to the governor's office if this is an issue for you, is something you would need to do. At this case, you do not call Brian at the lieu tenant governor's office. If you need to park, Brian is your man.

>>ROGER: All the more reason people with disabilities need to vote, they need to develop a voting block, someone with 185,000 votes has a lot of power.

>>LEO: We are, the panel, if they choose to stay, I personally am here until noontime. I know Harvey has to stay with me because I will call his boss and let him know that he left early.

And I have his -- I have Bob's number on my cell phone. But, I thank you in advance of 12:00 for being here. For those of you that need to connect up with the panelist, please do. So I thank the panelists for coming this morning all the way up to Woonsocket and thank you for your fine testimony and your feedback. And I guess we'll see you next year.

(APPLAUSE)

>>FEMALE SPEAKER: Have a nice one, everybody.

>>LEO: And thank you to the CART reporter for your busy hands.