

9/2010

## History of Parent Mentor Projects

by Margaret Burley

On January 12, 1991, in Columbus, Ohio, the idea for Parent Mentor Projects was born. About 160 parents from across the state gathered to decide how to implement Goal #7 of the Ohio Department of Education's Special Education Action Plan. Goal #7 was the Parent Involvement in Education part of this innovative plan to restructure education for children with disabilities. The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities convened this meeting of the Statewide Parent Task Force to ask parent leaders what they believed would help to involve more parents in their child's educational program. The OCECD had been given the task of shaping the activities which would implement Ohio's Action Plan around Goal #7. These goals had been developed by the State Superintendents Special Education Advisory Council, as required by P.L. 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975). Additionally, over 400 parents met in regional focus groups to review parents' needs and to shape the future of parent mentors in Ohio's schools. Through the diligent efforts of the OCECD director and co-director, working with staff from Ohio Department of Education, by December 1, 1991, ten (10) projects had been chosen to be funded by O.D.E. OCECD staff were reviewers for the nearly 40 proposals, representing 70 districts. Funds for these pilots came from federal IDEA funds.

During the state budget development for fiscal years 1994-95, the Coalition successfully persuaded Governor Voinovich to add \$500,000. to the state budget for parent mentor projects. An additional 20 projects began in January 1994. The Coalition has continued to support additional funding each year. Presently, 74 projects are funded.

The Coalition continues to provide training and support for Parent Mentors through Meaningful Parent Engagement project. This technical assistance can be shaped to meet the needs of individual projects.

# Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

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## Canton Office

Beach City, Ohio  
(800) 694-6399

August 12, 2004

## Central Office

Powell, Ohio  
(800) 461-1932

## History of Parent Mentor Projects

## Cleveland Office

Bay Village, Ohio  
(800) 694-6402

The Parent Mentor projects have a long history in Ohio, beginning as suggestions from the Statewide Parent Task Force, an activity of Goal #7 of Ohio's Special Education Action Plan, which was developed by the Futures Forum on Special Education of ODE led by Mr. Frank New, then director of the division of special education.

## Lake Shore Office

Newbury, Ohio  
(800) 694-6420

## Mid-Ohio Office

Mt. Gilead, Ohio  
(800) 946-9001

\*\*See attached letters explaining the process of funding the 1<sup>st</sup> Parent Mentors Projects starting from 1991.

## Northern Office

Parma, Ohio  
(800) 461-1928

The first 10 projects funded for the 1991-1992 school year were:

### By Special Education

- Chillicothe City Schools
- Columbus City Schools
- Preble County Schools
- Princeton City Schools
- Solon City Schools

## North Central Office

Alvada, Ohio  
(800) 694-6429

## Northeast Office

Sebring, Ohio  
(800) 694-6432

## Southern Office

Owensville, Ohio  
(800) 694-7903

### By Early Childhood

- Ashland City Schools
- Canton City Schools
- Findlay City Schools
- Sandusky County Schools
- Steubenville City Schools

## Southeast Office

Athens, Ohio  
(800) 694-6480

## Southwest Office

Cincinnati, Ohio  
(800) 694-6502

## West Central Office

Huntsville, Ohio  
(800) 694-6510

Dear

I am pleased to be able to invite you to a Subcommittee meeting of the Statewide Parent Task Force to discuss the parent Mentor concept which was suggested by the Statewide Task force. Dr. Ray Horn, Assistant Superintendent of the Ohio Department of Special Education, and Mr. Frank New, Director, Division of Special Education will be meeting with us at the Ohio School for the Deaf, (map enclosed) at 10:00 a.m. on April 10, 1991. As you know, many suggestions were made by parents at our first meeting on January 12 in Columbus, Ohio regarding needs of parents for supportive information and training from school districts. One of those suggestions,

for an experienced parent who would serve as a mentor to parents who were new to the special education program in a school district, is the topic we will be discussing at this meeting. This subcommittee can assist in brainstorming this concept so that a more complete outline of what a parent mentor program would look like might be discussed at our Task Force meeting on April 13.

One area of need which has surfaced is the parent who will be enrolling a child with special needs on their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

This family may not be familiar with school procedures and will probably not have the opportunity for an organized orientation since these youngsters will be coming to school whenever their birthday dictates. This is only one example, but I think an important one since beginning experiences are so important.

Please be thinking of how this concept could be put into place in your school district or how someone like this could have helped you when your child started school. Also, it may prove useful to spend some time thinking of the structures which would be needed to operate such as program, i.e. volunteers, paid parents on staff of school, a local

advocacy organization or some other mechanism. This is only one example, I am sure there are many other applications. Please come with many ideas for a full day's discussion as follows:

10:00	Introductions
10:15	Discussions of Parent Mentor
12:00	Lunch (provided)
12:45	Continue discussion
2:00	Adjourn

I am looking forward to seeing you at this exciting meeting which I feel sure will lead to some real change in the way parents are perceived by schools. Please let me know if you have any needs or questions.

Sincerely

Margaret Burley

# Ohio Coalition for the Education of Handicapped Children

Training Center  
933 High Street, Suite 106  
Worthington, Ohio 43085  
Telephone: 614-431-1307 (Voice/TDD)

Business Office  
1299 Campbell Road, Suite B  
Marion, Ohio 43302  
Telephone: 614-382-5452 (Voice/TDD)

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Statewide Parent Task Force  
**FROM:** Margaret Burley, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** Survey for Parent Involvement in Education Project  
**DATE:** November 19, 1991

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### Regional Focus Groups Completed

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Handicapped Children has completed the 11 Regional Focus Groups planned to discuss parents' needs. Many of you were able to attend the Focus Group meeting in your area and many of you helped in getting the meeting announcements out. Thank you for your assistance.

I have been very pleased with the response of parents to this activity. Over 400 parents attended these local meetings to complete the parents' needs survey and to share their concerns about special education. Several parents took copies of the survey to give to friends who were not able to attend and they have mailed their surveys to us.

### Parent Needs Surveys

Since some of you were not able to attend these meetings, you have not had the opportunity to complete the survey. A survey is enclosed for you to complete and mail back to us. We want your input on the survey, too. Since the Center for Special Needs Populations has agreed to calculate the results for us, we need to have the survey returned to us by December 1, 1991.

### Parent Mentor Proposals

The idea for the Parent Mentor pilot program emerged from the discussion of the Statewide Parent Task Force at its first meeting last January. The Division of Special Education issued RFPs to local school districts to fund three pilot programs as of January 1, 1992. Nearly 40 School Districts responded to the RFP to establish a Parent Mentor program to help parents of children with disabilities in their local district. A panel has reviewed the proposals and final decisions on grantees will be announced December 1.



JULY 27, 1993

UPDATE ON NEW PARENT MENTOR PROGRAMS

IN THE BUDGET BILL, THE SPECIAL EDUCATION LINE ITEM 504 WAS INCREASED TO INCLUDE \$500,000 PER YEAR FOR NEW PARENT MENTOR PROGRAMS. ALTHOUGH THE MONEY WAS LEFT IN, THE LANGUAGE WHICH ALLOWED THIS AMOUNT TO BE SPENT ON PARENT MENTOR PROGRAMS WAS MISTAKENLY REMOVED BY THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE. THE PLAN IS TO CORRECT THIS MISTAKE IN THE BUDGET LANGUAGE CORRECTION BILL TO BE OUT IN SEPTEMBER.

AS MANY AS 20 NEW PARENT MENTOR PROGRAMS COULD BE FUNDED WITH THIS NEW MONEY. TO PREPARE FOR THE PROGRAM'S EXPANSION AND TO SHOW THE DEPT OF EDUCATION THE STRONG INTEREST IN THE PROGRAM BY PARENTS AND EDUCATORS, THE GOAL #7 STEERING COMMITTEE WILL RECONVENE TO GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXPANDED PARENT MENTOR PROGRAM. THREE MEETINGS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED IN AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER.

- THIS GOAL #7 STEERING COMMITTEE WILL DEVELOP THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) THAT SCHOOL DISTRICTS MUST FOLLOW IN APPLYING FOR PARENT MENTOR PROJECTS AT THE AUGUST 11TH MEETING.

- ON SEPTEMBER 8TH THE COMMITTEE WILL REVIEW AND FINALIZE THE RFP WITH A BROAD-BASED GROUP OF REPRESENTATIVES OF PARENT AND ADVOCACY GROUPS.

- HOPEFULLY, IN SEPTEMBER THE RFP'S WILL BE SENT OUT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO THE SUPERINTENDENTS OF ALL SCHOOLS.

- AT THE NOVEMBER 17TH MEETING, THE GOAL #7 COMMITTEE WILL REVIEW PARENT MENTOR PROGRAM PROPOSALS AND SELECT THOSE TO RECOMMEND TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR FUNDING.

- THE NEW PARENT MENTOR PROGRAMS WOULD PROBABLY START UP JANUARY 1994.

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, DIRECT THEM TO ELLEN FRASCA AT THE DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION 614-466-2650.

**Parent Mentor Project:** *"to provide supportive services and training to families of children with handicaps. . . "*

Ohio Special Education Futures Forum  
Goal #7

The Parent Mentor Projects are a collaborative effort the Divisions of Special Education and Early Childhood Education in cooperation with the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Handicapped Children (OCEHC). They were created, in 1991, in response to Goal #7 of Ohio's Special Education Action Plan. The project reflects the work of 160 parents who served on a statewide taskforce. Parent mentors are parents of children with disabilities who have experience interacting effectively with schools and understand the system of services in their communities. These individuals assist and support families of children recently diagnosed as having a disability. The OCEHC Parent Involvement in Education Project provides training and on-going support to the mentors.

Ten pilot sites for Parent Mentor projects were selected from 37 applications representing more than 70 school districts. Each project received \$25,000 to employ a parent mentor. Division of Early Childhood Education support for FY 93-94 was \$132,771 through VI-B funding.

The effectiveness of mentors in guiding families through the maze of rules, regulations, and services needed is underscored by the lack of any parent or school district complaint to the Divisions of Special Education or Early Childhood Education from districts with projects. Interest in Parent Mentor projects continues to grow as communities across Ohio become aware of the value of their function. As a result the FY 94-95 biennium budget includes funding for an additional 20 projects.