

## PARENTS AS ADVOCATES

*Advancing the rights of children and young adults with learning disabilities*

The **National Center for Learning Disabilities** (NCLD) announces the *Parents as Advocates* initiative, a new program to develop and support a national cadre of parents to advocate for the nation's school-age children with learning disabilities (LD). NCLD is the leading LD organization engaged in public policy efforts to support the rights of school-age children with LD and to improve the way they are served under the nation's education laws. NCLD also brings the "LD point of view" into the public policy work of other disability organizations as well as to general education groups, ensuring that the needs of this large and important group of children are not overlooked.

To strengthen the national voice for children with LD and their families on Capitol Hill, the *Parents as Advocates* initiative will offer personal and up-close opportunities to understand the impact of policy and practice to key policy makers and the media. The *Parents as Advocates* team will serve in an advisory capacity to NCLD, giving input and feedback on prevailing and emerging issues that stand in the way of children receiving the support they need to succeed. These Parent Advocates will also help plan, develop and review NCLD informational resources to ensure that they address parents' ongoing needs.

Directed by Laura Kaloi, NCLD's Public Policy Director, this new initiative will equip parents to effectively advocate for positive change in federal education and special education legislation critical to students with LD. Participants' skills and knowledge will be elevated to a new and exciting level both via expert training provided and experiences made available to them through close contact with experienced public policy leaders.

The *Parents as Advocates* initiative will involve parents who:

- have a demonstrated commitment to making change and bettering the lives of children with learning disabilities through systemic advocacy;
- have a working knowledge of education and special education law and regulations;
- will commit to making time available to devote to project goals and responsibilities (including travel) thru December of 2010.

Beginning in February 2010, the first *Parents as Advocates* team will be trained on media relations, policy-making support/response and public speaking. Training activities will be delivered both in person and online. The new team will play an integral role in identifying and shaping essential information and resources (e.g. online guides, education and decision-making tools, articles, podcasts, webinars, personal stories,). Travel expenses and limited compensation will be provided.

*The Parents as Advocates program is made possible by a grant from the Oak Foundation.*

The **National Center for Learning Disabilities**

believes in:

- **full participation and equal accountability** for students with learning disabilities in the nation's federal education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently No Child Left Behind)
- **access to individualized, specially designed instruction and related services** through the nation's special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- **freedom from discrimination on the basis of disability** through protections in the nation's non-discrimination laws, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.