



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

WR - Disability
Office of the Secretary
Administration on Aging

Washington, D.C. 20201

MEMORANDUM

December 16, 1993

TO: David Ellwood
Mary Jo Bane
Bruce Reed
Co-chairs, Welfare Reform Working Group

FR: Fernando M. Torres-Gil
Assistant Secretary for Aging

RE: Meeting with leaders of the disability community
December 9, 1993

I appreciated the opportunity to participate in last week's meeting with the disability community. I felt it was one of the most substantive and impressive meetings I have thus far attended. While many of the issues discussed are issues the Working Group has highlighted in previous discussions, I would like to draw your attention to a couple of recurring and important points brought forth at the meeting:

- The term "disability" is rather broad. We must remember to design policies for persons with disabilities with the understanding that this group is very heterogeneous.
- The issue of exemptions and extensions was a critical topic of discussion. We must walk a fine line as we develop this component of the plan. In the past, participants have been excluded from participation in the JOBS program simply because they were identified as "disabled." We should reframe our thinking and develop a system whereby persons with disabilities should be assessed to determine their individual needs and ability to participate in various training and education programs instead of developing a system where we automatically exclude them from participating.
- Our focus on a case management approach will serve us well with regard to assessing persons with disabilities in the various programs. However, this clearly gives us cause to focus attention on the training and education needed by those who work in the welfare system.

- We should review language from the ADA and the 1990 Rehabilitation Act as we construct our plan.
- We must realize that a person with a disability may not ever be able to work 40 hours a week. However, on the other hand, a person may be able to work a regular work week providing he/she has the necessary support services.
- The coordination of services and information at the state and local levels will be critical to the success of our efforts.
- We need to understand and possibly make allowances for the fact that, due to an individual's disability or the disability of a child, some recipients may need to return to the welfare system throughout his/her life.
- The access to information is critical. Audio, braille, building accommodations, translators, etc. all are necessary (and probably mandated by law) for persons with disabilities as they attempt to access the welfare system.
- We should realize that the cost of living is higher for a person with a disability. Equipment, transportation, etc. probably cost more for a person with a disability. Therefore, monthly allowance checks will be stretched even further.

Again, thank you for inviting me to this very important meeting. I hope we engage in further dialogues with these groups as we develop the President's plan. Please contact me should you want to discuss any of these issues further.