

HISTORY AND GOALS of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations controlled by Texans with disabilities who represent cross-disability issues and concerns and who are working together to eliminate all barriers to equal and full participation in life.

CTD is one of the oldest and strongest independent cross-disability coalitions in the United States, and the only cross-disability consumer advocacy coalition in Texas controlled by people with disabilities. CTD emerged in 1978 when disabled leaders came together to discuss strategies to secure their basic rights and fight the discrimination they experienced. To address these concerns these leaders decided to form a statewide coalition and began working with their groups to organize persons with physical, mental and/or sensory disabilities.

CTD works to develop leadership in people with disabilities so they can be involved in changing public policy and securing basic civil rights to equal opportunity and independence.

HOW IS CTD STRUCTURED?

CTD is a membership organization comprised of more than 500 individual members and 80 member organizations. CTD's structure allows both organizations and individuals to vote to determine the direction of the Coalition and the composition of the Board of Directors. Member organizations and individuals can submit resolutions and make nominations for the board of directors which are considered and voted on by the full membership at the Annual Convention. Resolutions passed by the members form the basis of CTD's future action campaigns and initiatives.

During the interim between conventions, the Board of Directors governs the organization in keeping with the philosophy and direction expressed by the membership. Over 90% of the board of directors are persons with disabilities. The Board strives for equal representation according to geographic region, disability, racial, income levels and gender considerations.

their homes and get personal assistance services, home health durable medical equipment and any other type of support instead. This effort started years ago and culminated in a six month intense statewide cross-disability campaign. We made calls to state leaders, visits with board members of the Texas Department of Human Services, turned out disabled individuals to testify six times before the board of directors of the Texas Department of Human Services, conducted a petition campaign where we got 20,000 signatures and held three press conferences. We almost couldn't believe it when we won.

CTD has developed leadership in the disability community through organizing many conferences, trainings, and actions and securing the appointment of disabled consumers to a of statewide boards and commissions.

Our grass-roots organizing project is known as the TEXAS DISABILITY RIGHTS NETWORK. The goal of this project is to build a network of persons with disabilities organized to win and maintain systematic change in their local communities. This project has two staff.

Our PERSONAL ATTENDANT SERVICES TASK FORCE (PASTF) is working to promote the development of a comprehensive statewide system of community-based attendant services for people with disabilities and their families. It has two staff and we are looking for a policy analyst.

CTD is successful only because of volunteer effort. There are still many unrealized dreams, many struggles ahead. Seventeen years ago five major issues were identified: Transportation, Housing, Employment, Access Barriers, Improved Funding for State Agencies, Public Awareness and Acceptance Improved Services, Recreational Opportunities and Cultural Experiences. I would argue the issues have not changed much. We have come a long way but as Justin Dart always says: "We have miles to go and promises to keep." CTD wants to work in coalition with you to keep the promises.

WHO DO WE REPRESENT?

There are over 2.8 million Texans with physical, mental, and/or sensory disabilities and we cross all socioeconomic and ethnic boundaries. The disability community represents the broadest range of society; but more than 500,000 Texans with disabilities live below the poverty level. The unemployment rate among working age people with disabilities, as revealed in a Lou Harris poll, stands at 72%. Even for those employed and officially living above poverty, additional disability related expenses such as support services (attendants, readers, interpreters), medication, equipment, and modifications have placed many working disabled persons into functional poverty. The Coalition estimates its membership to be 60% low income, 20% minority, and 60% women.

HOW DOES CTD RAISE ITS FUNDS?

The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities is an independent, private, nonprofit organization which receives no local, state, or federal funds, and is classified as a 501 (c) (3). Our board and membership are active in fundraising. CTD obtains funding from a variety of sources including membership dues, Fun*Run and other events, convention registration fees, individual and corporate contributions, and private foundations. Private foundations contribute funding for specific projects, specifically for our leadership development process and the Personal Attendant Services Task Force. Generally we feel that diversified funding keeps our members in control of CTD's direction and agenda.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOALS

CTD has been responsible for many concrete changes that directly affect people with disabilities, including the passage of statewide voting accessibility legislation, and the creation of the "Disabled and Able to Vote" campaign which was adopted nationally. CTD worked hard with our deaf members for creation of RELAY TEXAS. By developing a statewide "ADA" network, the Coalition played a significant role in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In November 1993, CTD secured an agreement with the Texas Lottery Commission wherein they will inspect the 15,000 lottery retailers for compliance with the ADA; and if found out of compliance they will be given 60 days to make changes or their license will be suspended or revoked. This was a two year effort to convince the Lottery Commission and the State of Texas that the Lottery was covered under Title II of the ADA and that they had the legal obligation to make sure the lottery retailers were accessible. This was a major ADA victory. The inspections began January, this year 1994.

On January 21 this year, CTD won a another major victory -- state approval and immediate implementation of the Nursing Facility Waiver program. This program will let 8,000 Texans who have disabilities and older Texans, who "qualify for nursing home care" stay in