**PRDDC: 42 years at the service of the population with developmental disabilities in Puerto Rico**

The Puerto Rico Developmental Disabilities Council, since its creation in 1971, has been sponsoring, through federal funds, projects of private and public organizations to offer services to the population with developmental disabilities in Puerto Rico. The services have the purpose of improving the quality of life of this population and their families so they can achieve a full and productive life with an optimum development.

During its 42 years of service , the Council has funded hundreds of public and private organizations projects to achieve advocacy, independence, integration and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. The Council pursues to address the needs of these individuals.

A developmental disability is a severe or chronic condition due to a physical or mental disability or a combination of both. It manifests before the age of 22 and has an indefinite duration. It also affects three or more of daily living activities such as self-care, mobility, receptive and expressive language, learning, self-direction, capacity for independent living and/or economic self-sufficiency.

Some examples of these conditions are: intellectual disabilities, Down syndrome, espina bifida, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, and blindness, among others.

The Puerto Rico Planning Board is the Designated State Agency and the Council is created by Federal Public Law 106-402, as amended in 2000. The goal of the law is to improve the quality of life of the individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their families through activities related with advocacy, capacity building, and system change, which is consistent with achieving a significant and productive life.

The law also promotes for these individuals and their families, self-determination, independence, a productive life, integration and inclusion in all areas of community living.

The Council receives an annual grant from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Once it receives the grant it opens a cycle of proposals which begins with an activity in which the public and private organizations that attend receive a full orientation on how to submit a proposal and all the requirements this involves, in order for the proposal to be considered. The proposals are evaluated by the Proposals Evaluation Committee, they recommend approval or rejection, and then the full Council makes the final decision.

Sixty percent of the Council members are: persons with developmental disabilities and representatives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as parents or tutors. The remaining 40% of the members are representatives of Government agencies, and there’s a representative of an organization which offers or has offered residential services.

Currently, the Council has 30 members and they have a meeting every three months.. The members work through committees that collaborate to achieve the goals of the Council. These are: Proposals Evaluation Committee, Planning and Federal Affairs Committee, Outreach Committee, Public Policy Committee, and the Executive Committee.

The Council also has 5 administrative employees and three consultants that collaborate with different functions for the benefit of the Council contributing to improve the lives of the population with developmental disabilities in Puerto Rico.

The Council is located in Ponce de León Ave.. VIG Center Building #1225, Stop 18 in Santurce. Its web page address is: http://cedd.pr.gov