Pacific Basin Centers for Excellence in developmental disabilities(PBUCE)

PBUCE Nenewsletter 2021

Project Overview

The purpose of the Pacific Basin UCEDD (PBUCE) is to support, enhance and improve the quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities as a technical assistance center for the American Samoa (AS) UCEDD and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) UCEDD.

The goal of the PBUCE is to strengthen governance within and across sites (Northern Marianas College and American Samoa Community College) through regional and national partnerships, while building local capacity for interdisciplinary preservice and community outreach training to include consumers and family members.

History

PBUCE was funded as a supplemental program of the Hawaii UCEDD for a second, three-year cycle in 1997 with sites at Northern Marianas College (NMC) and American Samoa Community College (ASCC). Each site features unique approaches to community development and cultural diversity for improved practices and programs for families and persons with disabilities. Similarities in the sites include the response of the entire community working together to develop interagency linkages, to build local capacity, and to use outside technical assistance effectively.

The UCEDD held a seminar on employment and disability with guest speaker Mr. Jared Galeai from CDS.

UCEDD Ambassador/Trainee program

The PBUCE Ambassador and Trainee program is a 10-months interdisciplinary program to help train professionals and students to gain skills and knowledge necessary to work with individuals with disabilities and become leaders in various fields. Ambassadors are those who are professionals who hold at least a Bachelor's degree and have been working in various fields. Trainees are students who are pursuing Associate's, Bachelor's, and/or Master's degree. Common to both Ambassadors and Trainees are that they have a common desire to continue learning about, supporting, and working with individuals with disabilities, with special attention to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. As part of the program, they received a scholarship to take an undergraduate course from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. They take an intensive 6-weeks summer online course offered from the Center on Disability Studies (DIS 380: Foundations in Disability & Diversity). The ambassadors and trainees will then use what they have learned to explore issues in their own communities and engage in seminars, research, and service activities.

For moe information about PBUCE UCEDD Ambassador and Trainee Program, please contact Dr. Kiriko Takahashi, kiriko@hawaii.edu

American Samoa State director's voice

Tafaimamao L. Tua-Tupuola, MEd

State Director

1) What have you accomplished?

I think what we accomplished is...Tafa has been working at UCEDD since 1994. The UCEDD was established in 1993 then later launched the Department of Health and Human Services on campus in 1996. UCEDD was formerly known as a university-affiliated program. Since we opened our doors in the early 90's, we have opened the eyes of the community to the idea of people with disabilities going to school/college, as it was something new at the time. The ADA was still unknown to us. We did not know about measurement, bathroom, accessibility that met specific code requirements. At that time, we only understood that it was just about ramps and parking. We didn't understand the deep meaning behind ADA access nor how it protects people with disabilities at work. Again, we thought they just needed access like an elevator that was going to the workplace.

What happened was that we went on TV. Three adults with disabilities who were living in a nursing home wanted to go to college. They picked up art, and they were known as mouth painters in American Samoa. They decided to take art classes at ASCC. One of them wanted to learn architectural drafting. He graduated with a 3.97 GPA and was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society. This opened the door for him to see a very different life for people with disabilities. At the time, they shed a lot of light on the UCEDD. Furthermore, we developed courses, integrated various degree programs such as American Sign Language (ASL), and accomplished a lot of housing design in early 2000.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we became aware of local emergency preparedness and activities, including those for people with disabilities, and contributions to policies and reference materials for emergency preparedness and disaster response.

Over the past five years, UCEDD has shifted its focus from special education and employment issues to protecting the human security of people with disabilities. We focused so much on disaster preparedness but ignored the management side where policies guide decision-making and operations. Again, like ADA, it's more than emergency kits and household plans. Many other factors can affect the lives of people with disabilities below the equator vulnerable to disaster and foreign influences. So, living on an island, you're groomed to wear many hats, the teacher, the preacher, the mayor, and more. Being the only college and UCEDD, we adopt the same concept. We focus on safeguarding people with disabilities to address economic security, food security, community and personal security, health security, environmental security, etc.

2) What are you looking forward to for the future of UCEDD?

I enjoy networking and learning from others. I look forward to seeing UCEDD spread across the South Pacific.

Trainee's voices

Sandy Samoa Trainee

1) Please Introduce yourself

My name is Sandra Scanlan. I have 8 children, 14 cats and 3 dogs, all rescue animals. (We are the local humane society of our village!) I am a parent of a child with developmental disabilities, Jasmine, age 16, with Angelman Syndrome. I have committed my life to disability beginning physical therapy when I was 16 in a work study program with high school. I graduated from physical therapy in 1983 and completed my doctorates in 2012. Having a child with developmental disabilities has made my world so much more real and I plan to retire from my work when she graduates from high school and commit my full time to helping my daughter and her friends continue their development and skills.

I founded the Parents of Children with Special Needs Network (PCSN) in 2015 which is a parent-to-parent support group. PCSN currently has a 3 day a week programming including Monday morning Champions Club, a youth group and enrichment program for children/adult children with disabilities. On Wednesdays we have a Fun Fitness program at our local Wellness Center followed with cooking skills. We also have a learn-to-swim program on Thursdays, but currently on hold as our pool is closed. On Monday evenings I host a mother/women caregiver support group/Bible study via Zoom. There are currently 4 of us becoming certified as special needs trainers and have just begun an adaptive athletics program incorporating healthy lifestyle, life skills, physical training, and cognitive development. We also support and collaborate with our Deaf program for their monthly Deaf night and ASL classes. PCSN also conducts workshops on IEP, Behavioral management, internet safety and training including access to Telehealth and Zoom, etc.

2) Please tell us how you plan to apply what you've experienced or learned in this class to your future.

I have met with some collaborating agencies recently to establish a formal Life Skills training, tapping into other programs and what they can offer for this plan. I became aware of Life Skills training through the recent UCEDD trainee program and felt it would be a perfect next step for PCSN Programming. Another program, Back on Track, working on Independent Living programming, will collaborate with PCSN for Life skills classes.

3) What has been the highlight for you in being the UCEDD Trainee?

So far, I have only taken the UH Course with the UCEDD program and found it to be very helpful and encouraging for initiating more programs with PCSN. American Samoa currently does not have any enrichment activities for our students once they graduate from SPED, and our vision is to have a enrichment center where programs will commence daily similar to an adult continuing special education program, but encompassing all areas of life. Many of our adult children are idle at home, yet we know that they are capable of much more learning after SPED.I would love to say that my commitment to adult children with disabilities is purely altruistic, but I must admit it is more selfish, as I desire for my own daughter to have as many life enriching experiences and friendships as she can have to be happy and fulfilled in this life. I believe God has given my daughter to me not just to bless me, but to drive me toward this new direction in my life of serving families of children with special needs and advocating for the lives of these children.

Trainee's voices

Heejung Sin
Trainee

1) Please introduce yourself

Hafa Adai, Tirow and Annyonghaseyo! My name is Heejung Sin, also known as Chloe. I am originally from South Korea, and my family and I moved to Saipan, CNMI in 2004. Since then, Saipan has been my second home. I worked as a flight attendant in Abu Dhabi, UAE for 8 years before coming back home in 2018 to pursue a bachelor's degree in Education to become an educator. I have always wanted to help and support children by providing good quality education, especially for those who are underserved and unserved because of their social/financial status. While in college, I was fortunate to work with UCEDD as a program assistant. As a UCEDD program assistant, I have learned a lot about developmental disabilities and disability issues and grown my passion and interest in social/behavioral health as well as special education. I recently graduated from Northern Marianas College and started working as a Project BEAM/program coordinator at UCEDD in June 2021.

I am grateful that I can support people with disabilities in the CNMI, and I am looking forward to pursuing a Master's degree in relevant fields in near future. In my spare time, I enjoy hiking with friends, scuba diving, reading a book on/by the beach—enjoy the island life!

2) Please tell us how you plan to apply what you've experienced or learned in this class to your future.

My prior experience and knowledge of disabilities are mostly relevant to topics in education such as IDEA, IEP, and UDL due to my major. Throughout the UCEDD trainee program, I have developed and widen my knowledge of disabilities and diversity. It has been a great learning opportunity for me to work on diverse topics in disabilities including different models of disability, discrimination within the disability community, ethical debate on Cochlear implant, UN CRPD, and more. The videos and reading materials were helpful to better understand the current/controversial issues in the disability community and the world. By gaining new knowledge of disabilities, I was highly interested in and motivated to learn more about disability laws and social issues relevant to disabilities for my personal/professional growth which would be beneficial to my work and studies. Also, this new knowledge will be used and applied to plan activities and set goals to support and serve people with disabilities in our community. In addition, whenever any opportunity is available during my employment with UCEDD, I would like to present and share what I have learned from the course with students at NMC, and with people in our community to raise disability awareness and promote inclusion in the CNMI.

3) What has been the highlight for you in being the UCEDD Trainee?

The diverse/wide-ranging topics being covered during the course have developed my knowledge of disabilities, learning not just about the ADA or Section 504 but also international disability laws and available services/programs in other countries. The prompts and topics for discussion assignments highly motivated me to learn and research more about social/disability issues as well. In addition, by interacting with other trainees through discussion, I have learned more about American Samoa such as the culture, diversity, policies/programs for the disability community, and more—It was interesting! I hope that we do have more interactive opportunities and collaborations with professionals and trainees from American Samoa to conduct joint/collaborative projects for the Pacific region.