



# SPIN NEWS

The Newsletter for Parents of Children with Special Needs

SPECIAL  
PARENT  
INFORMATION  
NETWORK

**February 2015**

**Volume XXXI, No. 3**

SPIN is co-sponsored by the Disability & Communication Access Board and the Department of Education. Services include a phone line for information referral and support, a quarterly newsletter, an annual conference and community workshops. SPIN is guided by an Advisory Committee made up of parents, teachers and people with disabilities.

## SPIN

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Honolulu, Hawaii 96814



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## Scrub In for 'Operation SPIN'

Dr. Seuss said "To the world, you may be one person; but to one person, you may be the world." For many families with special needs children, this statement is truer than true. The good doctor would definitely prescribe a dose of our 29th Annual SPIN Conference--'Operation SPIN' --to learn how to be a better advocate, find support and information about your child's education and health, and meet other families and professionals in our community.

The conference will be held Saturday May 2nd at the University of Hawaii Campus Center in Manoa. We hope you'll make an appointment to join us for a great day, and take advantage of the many benefits we can offer:



**First class speakers.** Local experts and families are teaming up to present the latest best practice information.

**An Examination Room of displays.** Check out the Campus Center 2nd floor for over 50 agencies, support organizations and related services who want to connect with you.

**Grand Rounds.** One of the best things about the SPIN Conference is the networking and talk story that happens between workshops. It's a great feeling to make connections and to know you are not alone.

### Awards and recognition.

Nominate a parent whose advocacy

helps other families, a professional who is working to make the system better and a professional who works with our special needs keiki and has made a difference in your life. Our awards luncheon may showcase their accomplishments so everyone will know how special they are!

### Affordability and accessibility.

Our \$25 parent registration fee is the best deal in town. There are still airfare scholarships available for our neighbor island families, so apply today!

**Better than cafeteria food.** An ono catered lunch and breakfast snacks are provided with your registration.

### Wholesome prizes.

Thanks to generous sponsors, we'll have a variety of goodies for the whole family to enjoy.

What are you doing in the waiting room? Examine page 7 to view our Pre-Op schedule of workshops and send in your registration today!

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# Transition Planning: Diploma or Certificate?

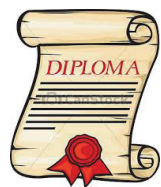
## What is transition planning?

Moving from high school to the adult world can be challenging for all students, especially students with disabilities who may lack the skills or knowledge to move smoothly into college, jobs or independent living. Transition planning is the process outlined in special education law that is designed to help prepare students who have IEPs with the necessary skills and services to make progress toward their goals for the future.

## When does it begin?

The process starts no later than age 14, when the IEP team must begin to look at what courses will be needed for a student to pursue his goals. By age 16, the IEP also must include these postsecondary (after graduation) goals and the services needed to reach them. For some students, transition planning will trigger an IEP discussion about whether the student is on a **diploma track** or a **certificate track**.

## What is the difference between a diploma track and a certificate track?



A diploma track means that the student is aiming on completing and passing the required courses needed for graduating with a high school diploma. Currently, that means 24 credits in a specific set of subject areas.



A certificate track means that the student is working on IEP goals and

will end their high school career with a certificate of completion, rather than a regular diploma, because the student is unable to meet the requirements for the diploma. This option, for students who have not received the grades necessary to obtain a regular diploma, demonstrates that the student completed a set number of classes or that the student qualifies for a certificate because of sufficient attendance in a set period of time.

## What questions should parents ask if a certificate track is suggested?

Given that the high school diploma offers more opportunities when it comes to college and work, it is important for families and IEP teams to consider the student's potential for reaching academic goals. If the certificate track is suggested to you by IEP team members, it is a good idea to ask the following questions:

*What supports and accommodations might help my child achieve academically?*

*Can my child complete the requirements for the regular diploma, if he or she received IEP supports up to age 22?*

*How would the certificate track improve my child's independence?*

## Can a student who has graduated with a certificate return for a diploma?

Yes. IDEA states that a student can receive services until age 22, if the student requires specially designed



instruction and has a disability that affects his or her ability to benefit from education. Once a student obtains a regular high school diploma, his or her eligibility for special education services ends.

## Can students who graduate with a certificate attend college?

Community colleges in Hawaii accept students without diplomas, if they are age 18 or older. Four year colleges, like UH Manoa or Chaminade, require a diploma in addition to other requirements.

## What is important to consider when choosing a path for a student with a disability?

Actually there are 3 key steps:

### 1) Have high expectations.

Research has shown that having high hopes for a student's ability is linked with student success. It is also true that spending time in a college setting, even for one semester, can result in academic and functional gains for students with disabilities.

2) **Start early.** Begin thinking about what your child wants to do after high school while he or she is still in elementary school.



3) **Educate yourself.** Know your rights and responsibilities when it comes to transition planning. Ask questions. Consider coming to the SPIN Conference workshop on transition planning (page 7) and visiting the various agencies in the 2nd Floor display area.

# The ABLE Act Passes Congress

December 19, 2014 was a red letter day for individuals with disabilities and their families. That's the day that President Obama signed into law the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. The ABLE Act provides folks with disabilities the same types of flexible savings tools that all other Americans have through college savings accounts, health savings accounts, and individual retirement accounts.

Millions of individuals with disabilities and their families depend on a variety of public benefits for health care, income, housing assistance and food. In order to be eligible for these benefits, children and adults with disabilities have had to show limited income and no more than \$2000 in savings. To keep these basic benefits, they have had to remain well below the poverty line.

Most parents of children with disabilities are advised soon after their birth not to put assets in their child's name, because it could make them ineligible for government benefits. Once these children are old enough to work, they may end up unemployed or in low paying jobs, so as not to risk losing Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Soon, however, parents and other folks can create tax-free savings accounts (529-ABLE Plans) for their children or other individuals with disabilities and put up to \$14,000 a year into them for those extra living costs like:

- ✓ education (books, tutors, community college tuition etc.)
- ✓ health and wellness (therapies, dental services, respite care, etc.)
- ✓ assistive technology,

- ✓ transportation
- ✓ housing (for a primary residence),
- ✓ job support, and
- ✓ other miscellaneous expenses.

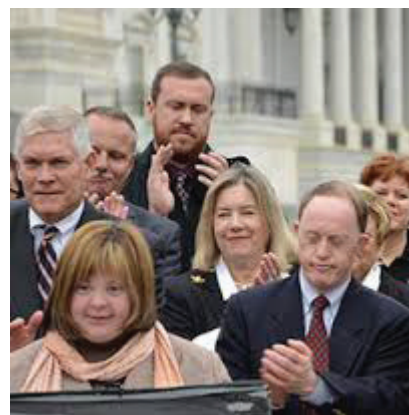
## Eligibility requirements

To qualify to be a beneficiary of a 529-ABLE Plan an individual must be receiving or be eligible for SSI or SSDI benefits OR have a medically determined physical or mental impairment which results in "marked and severe functional limitations." In addition, the disability must have occurred before age 26.

## Effective date for ABLE Plans

Now that the federal ABLE Act allows for ABLE accounts, each state must put rules in place, so that financial institutions can make the new offering available. Hawaii's House of Representatives drafted HB 119 "to establish a qualified tax exempt savings program to encourage and assist individuals and families to save private funds to support individuals with disabilities." The bill has passed the Health Committee and been referred to the Finance Committee. Hopefully the bill will become law this session, so that 529-ABLE Plans can be set up in 2015.

In the meantime, families are encouraged NOT to exceed the current savings restriction of \$2000, if their child is receiving government benefits. Parents may also want to check with an estate planning attorney to find out how the new 529-ABLE Plan differs from a Special Needs Trust. One difference is that some monies in an ABLE Plan account may have to be refunded to Medicaid, if the beneficiary dies and has been receiving Medicaid benefits.



National Down Syndrome Congress advocates Sara Wolff and Chris Burke (from 'Life Goes On') celebrating the passage of the ABLE Act

*"The ABLE Act is so much more to people with Down Syndrome and other disabilities than just a savings account. It puts a stake in the ground so people can live independently, work, go to college. It's time to move into the 21st century and allow individuals with disabilities to be self-determined, and not let these laws hold them back."*

--Washington Post, Mar. 6, 2014

For more information on the ABLE Act and the progress of local legislation, visit the SPIN website--[www.spinhawaii.org](http://www.spinhawaii.org)--and type "ABLE Act" in the search box.



## SPIN and the Hawai'i Neurotrauma Registry Project – A Great Combination

*By Violet Horwath, Ph.D.*

*Director, Pacific Basin Rehabilitation Research and Training Center*

As parents of children and young adults with disabilities, you want your sons and daughters to receive the services and supports they need to have happy, healthy, and productive lives. The Hawaii Department of Health, Developmental Disabilities Division, Outcomes and Compliance Branch also wants that. That's one reason they contracted with Pacific Basin Rehabilitation Research and Training Center to administer the Hawai'i Neurotrauma Registry Project.

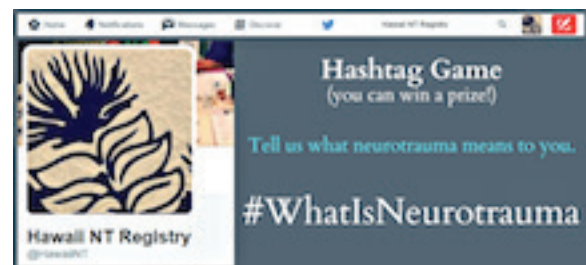
The Hawai'i Neurotrauma Registry is for Hawaii residents of all ages who have had a neurotraumatic injury (traumatic brain injury, stroke, and/or spinal cord injury). It does not matter when the injury occurred. Taking part is voluntary (parent or guardian consent required), and all information is confidential. It will not be shared with your child's teacher, school, the Department of Education, or anyone else. No one outside of the study will know your son or daughter took part unless you tell them.

Why is this information needed? Much is known about children and young adults who have had a stroke, spinal cord injury, or traumatic brain injury while they are in the hospital or rehabilitation facility. But what happens once they get home? What problems are they having? What kind of help do they need? This information will help the Hawaii Department of Health identify needed community supports and services, educate service providers, and develop safety and prevention plans and policies.



To achieve these goals, we need many more people to take part, especially children and young adults and those from the Neighbor Islands. Please consider providing information about your child if she or he has had a stroke, spinal cord injury, and/or traumatic brain injury. Upon completion of the survey, parents receive an insulated lunch bag containing school supplies (about a \$25 value). We also provide personalized information and referrals to residents who have had these injuries, regardless of whether they are in the Hawai'i Neurotrauma Registry or not.

You can fill out the confidential survey online at [www.HNTRsurvey.com](http://www.HNTRsurvey.com). You may also call us 808-692-1375 (1-866-447-9023 toll-free from Neighbor Islands) or e-mail



[HawaiiNT@hawaii.edu](mailto:HawaiiNT@hawaii.edu). We can schedule an appointment with you in person (on Oahu) or over the phone to help you fill out the survey, or we can mail you a copy. With your help, the Hawai'i Neurotrauma Registry will be a success.

Mahalo.

**Do you know someone with a head injury, stroke or spinal cord injury?**



The **Hawai'i Neurotrauma Registry** wants to understand the needs of Hawai'i residents who have had these injuries. Please contact us:  
[www.HNTRsurvey.com](http://www.HNTRsurvey.com)  
808.692.1375 or toll free 866.447.9023



# SSIP Progress Report

SPIN is working to keep our readers updated on the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) process—a wide-ranging plan to improve academic performance for Hawaii students with disabilities. Since our December issue two activities have occurred:

1) All special education stakeholders were invited in January to provide feedback on the comments around infrastructure strengths and weaknesses and improvement strategies compiled at the December 12th Stakeholder Meeting. Common themes for improvement included:

- Professional development and technical assistance for quality instruction to improve reading;
- Strategies to improve student & parent engagement;
- Improvements for intervening early;
- Data improvements to identify student supports necessary to improve reading; and
- Fiscal improvements to adequately fund improvement strategies.

2) A smaller subgroup of DOE and community stakeholders met on February 5th to narrow the target for reading achievement (called the State-identified Measurable Result or SiMR) and work on a Theory of Action. The Theory of Action describes the changes in our state and school-level practices that must occur in order to achieve the SiMR.

## What are the next steps?

✓ The Department's leadership will make a final decision on the SiMR. We know that this will probably be elementary school students, but we don't know if certain eligibility groups or geographic locations will be more narrowly targeted.

✓ Hawaii submits its SSIP to the Office of Special Education Programs by April 1, 2015.



## E.R.K v. Hawaii DOE

### Update on the Class Action and 9th Circuit Court Decision

In December 2013, SPIN reported on a 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decision earlier that summer having a big impact in Hawaii. The plaintiffs who filed the original appeal were four students who formed a class representing all students entitled to services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) but denied special education after the last day of the school year in which they turned twenty years old.



The Court found that Hawaii was discriminating against these students, because it limited their eligibility to special education services at the same time it allowed non-disabled students who were twenty and older to pursue a diploma free of charge through Hawaii's Adult Community School program. The Court's ruling required the Department of Education and the plaintiff attorneys to work out a solution that 1) extended special education services to current and future students to their 22nd birthday, and 2) offered compensatory educational services to students who left school after July 2010 without a diploma.

The plaintiff attorneys, the Special Education Advisory Council, and others have advocated that these services be provided in a variety of settings, including in the community.

### Update from the plaintiff attorneys:

*Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) and the law firm of Alston Hunt Floyd & Ing (AHFI) continue to negotiate with the Department of Education (DOE) over the terms of compensatory education services to be offered to older class members and search for class members eligible to receive compensatory education. In general, this includes former special education students who left the DOE without receiving a regular diploma and are now ages 21-26 (possibly younger). The first group of class members to receive services has been identified and we are working with the DOE to have them assessed so that appropriate services can begin, with the other groups to be contacted later.*

*As a follow-up to the yellow letters sent last year, calls were made by Ward Research to phone numbers of class members provided by DOE. Unfortunately, many of the phone numbers were invalid and we have not been able to contact several hundred class members who may be entitled to additional services from the DOE. The DOE has not released any phone numbers directly to HDRC or AHFI. If you or your child may be a member of the class, please contact HDRC at (808) 949-2922 or AHFI at (808) 441-6268. More information about the class and the case may be found at <http://www.hawaiiclassaction.com/ERK>.*

# 2015 SPIN Awards

How many times have you thanked your lucky stars for a special person in your life who has made the journey with your child with special needs a little lighter, a little sweeter? Maybe it's a teacher, or a principal, or a doctor or therapist. Or maybe it's another parent who has gone out of his or her way to advocate for your family. Now, how many times have you wished for a way to shine light on this wonderful and helpful person?

Well, here's the thing. Every year, SPIN publicly celebrates key parents and professionals whose efforts make a positive difference in the lives of our keiki with disabilities and their families. Our SPIN Advisory Committee carefully sifts through the nominations that people like you send in, and we select five to seven individuals to honor at the annual SPIN Conference. Trust us, they get the royal treatment! And it's not just to thank them for their shared gifts. It's also to model to folks in the community the qualities and deeds that we families so appreciate in others.

We are asking for your help in identifying candidates for a SPIN award--Parent of the Year, Professional of the Year, and the Family Choice Award. Below are the descriptions of each award.

♥ **The Parent of the Year Award** is given to a parent of a child or young adult with a disability whose actions and advocacy have benefited other families.

♥ **The Professional of the Year Award** is given to a professional who has had a significant impact in improving services for children and/or young adults with a disability and their families.

♥ **The Family Choice Award** is given to a professional who has been particularly helpful to families as they sort out services for their child with a disability. This individual may not have an impact on the larger system, but is recognized in his or her community as an extraordinary professional.

We encourage you to share your aloha and nominate one or more very special people for any or all of the awards. You can go to our SPIN website at [www.spinhawaii.org](http://www.spinhawaii.org) and click on the SPIN Conference tab at the top of the page to download a submission form. If you don't have access to a computer, give us a call at 586-8126 and we'll be happy to mail you a copy. **Nominations can be sent by mail, fax or email and are due by April 1st.**



## Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity May 18th and 19th Hawaii Convention Center

GOT PACRIM? Get ready to forge new alliances, discover new solutions to burning challenges in the disability field and fill your mind, body and spirit with over 200 breakouts, workshops and presentations at the 2015 Pac Rim Conference titled "Deep Impact."

The Conference promises to draw people from all over the world, including family members and persons with disabilities, to share innovative practices and current research on a wide variety of topics including:

- ✓ Effective strategies for students on the Autism spectrum;
- ✓ Early childhood education and research;
- ✓ Educate to innovate: science, technology, engineering and math;
- ✓ Equality for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities;
- ✓ Re-imagining transition trajectories;
- ✓ Removing roadblocks to an accessible world;
- ✓ Education for all; and
- ✓ Lifting youth up.

Some of the noted speakers include **Dr. Margaret Nygren**, the Executive Director of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; **Dr. Frank DeRuyter**, Chief of Speech Pathology and Audiology at Duke University Medical Center, and **Dr. Lucille Zeph**, a special educator from the University of Maine.



Interested individuals can find registration forms online at [www.pacrim.hawaii.edu](http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu). Kama'aina and students get reduced rates, and there is a one day registration rate,

as well. To date, SPIN has no information about scholarships to PacRim, but folks can ask about them by calling 956-8816 or emailing [prreg@hawaii.edu](mailto:prreg@hawaii.edu).





# "OPERATION SPIN"

Saturday, May 2, 2015 at the UH Campus Center Ballroom

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Registration/Networking/Displays

9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. - Keynote Presentation

9:45 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. - View Displays

## OPERATING SUITE 1 10:20 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.

<i>This is Going to Sting a Little</i>	<i>Sports Therapy</i>	<i>Stitching a Safety Net</i>	<i>Gizmos &amp; Gadgets</i>	<i>Child Life Services</i>	<i>Respite-ory Therapy</i>
Health Insurance	Sports Injuries & Concussions	Guardianship & Alternatives	Assistive Technology	Transition from Early Intervention to Pre-K	Respite & Stress Management

11:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon

View Displays

12:00 noon - 1:15 p.m.

\* Buffet in the Ballroom \* Awards Presentation \*

## OPERATING SUITE 2 1:20 p.m. - 2:20 p.m.

<i>Anatomy of Transition</i>	<i>Trachs, Vents &amp; Whatumacallits</i>	<i>Sink Your Teeth into Dental Care</i>	<i>Code Black and Blue</i>	<i>A Spoonful of Sugar. . .</i>	<i>Dr. Ruth's Power Hour</i>
Transition Planning for Adulthood	Medically Fragile Children's Issues	Dental Care for Kids	How to Handle Bullying	Managing Medications	Healthy Sexuality

## OPERATING SUITE 3 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

<i>Autism Strategies Discussed</i>	<i>Invisible Wounds</i>	<i>A Double Dose</i>	<i>Advocates Without Borders</i>
Autism Spectrum Disorders	Traumatic Brain Injuries	Intellectual Disabilities & Mental Health Diagnosis	Advocacy Skills

## WORKSHOP SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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### REGISTRATION FORM

Please print clearly

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ School/Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Family member of a child with a disability    ☐ Professional    ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Please register me for the May 2, 2015 SPIN Conference. Enclosed is my payment (\$25 per parent or \$40 for two adult family members; \$40 per professional). Make checks payable to the Special Parent Information Network (SPIN).
- ☐ I would like:    ☐ a Neighbor Island parent airfare scholarship (Based on availability and upon completion of SPIN's Airfare Scholarship Form)
- ☐ I would like:    ☐ materials in an alternate format\*    ☐ a sign language interpreter\*  
☐ map of accessible parking stalls

**\*Accommodation requests must be submitted by April 3, 2015.**

Send this form with your payment to: SPIN, 919 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 101,  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814 or Fax: 586-8129

**REGISTER EARLY TO GUARANTEE A SEAT!**





3/7 **K.E.L.I.I. Foundation 2nd Annual Special Abilities Social Event & Craft Fair**  
 Saturday, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.  
 SECOH Founders, 708 Palekaua Street  
 Free entertainment, games, snack.  
 Register at [www.Keliifoundation.webs.com](http://www.Keliifoundation.webs.com)

3/7 & **Access Surf Day at the Beach**  
 4/4 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at White Plains Beach  
 Ewa Beach. Register at [www.accessurf.org](http://www.accessurf.org)

3/28 **"Helping Struggling Students with Executive Function" Workshop** sponsored by the Hawaii International Dyslexia Association  
 8:30 - 11:30 a.m., Wayland Baptist University, Mililani \$10 for non-members  
 Email [mhiga@dyslexia-hawaii.org](mailto:mhiga@dyslexia-hawaii.org) to register.

4/25 **Honolulu Theater for Youth Sensory Friendly/ASL Performance**  
**"Where the Mountain Meets the Sea"**  
 1:30 p.m. Tickets at [www.htyweb.org](http://www.htyweb.org)  
 \$20 adult, \$10 youth (3-18)

5/2 **"Operation SPIN" 29th Annual SPIN Conference**  
 at the UH Campus Center.  
 Check out page 7 for our program and information on airfare scholarships.



5/18 **Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity**  
 -19 Hawaii Convention Center. For more information go to [www.pacrim.hawaii.edu](http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu) or contact Charmaine Crockett at 956-7539.



***Special Parent Information Network***  
 919 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 101  
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

***Providing a world of support to parents of children with special needs***