



January 14, 2015

Dear AAIDD Colleagues,

With the kick off of 2015 I thought it would be a good time to share with members what our organization is doing to achieve its mission of “promoting progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities”

As you know there is much change occurring in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. An increased number of states are moving toward managed care models of service delivery, the federal government is more actively ensuring that people have opportunities to live and work in the most integrated settings and states are scrambling to meet increasing demands within tighter budgets and in political environments demanding greater for outcomes and increased accountability. AAIDD and its members are active in this change throughout the United States and internationally and are working to make a difference through research, policy, practice and the support of universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

As an organization, we are so fortunate to have a remarkable Executive Director and staff that has the vision and capacity to keep AAIDD moving forward and evolving in ways that ensure we are living our mission. Our financial health is good and we continue to look for ways to diversify revenue that are value added to the field. I am excited about the future of AAIDD and thrilled to be a part of its leadership. In 2015 you will see a few new and exciting contributions to the field. We expect to launch the Diagnostic Adaptive Behavior Scale (DABS); this tool is much needed in the field and will provide a new assessment with an on-line interface for scoring. Additionally, we anticipate the roll out of the SIS-A, the SIS-C and the development of a SIS–short version. I am confident that these new products will not only be extremely useful in the field but they will also add to the sustainability AAIDD. Our members make the development of these new tools and products possible.

AAIDD members are also active throughout the world in changing policy, practice and lives through their work. I was recently in the country of Malawi working to train village volunteers on very basic human rights and interventions for children with various intellectual and developmental disabilities. Maggie Nygren recently lead an international delegation to the country of Poland which is involved in rapid systems change as it fulfills its obligations to align with the requirements of European Union membership—AAIDD delegates saw first hand what such changes are bringing to the country. Delegates also observed that the people who work in disability services in Poland share the same values and passions as the delegates themselves.

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The 2015 annual meeting and conference is going to be exciting and an excellent program. President-elect Susan Palmer has put together a remarkable local arrangements committee and we received over 250 submissions for this conference. The theme is: *Making a Difference Through Research, Practice and Policy* and the conference will be held June 1-4 in Louisville, KY. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

AAIDD is strong but it is only as strong as its members. You generate the ideas, input and enthusiasm for this organization and we need more people like you to become members. Please commit to securing one new AAIDD member as a personal goal for 2015. I also encourage you to get involved in a professional interest group or state/regional chapter; these groups provide on-going professional networking opportunities with people who are passionate about improving the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through effective policies, practices, research and equal rights. You can learn more about these groups by going to the AAIDD website: www.aaid.org.

I am humbled and appreciative of the opportunity to be a part of this organization. It has a remarkable history and a strong future ahead. I hope that you will reach out to me if you have any questions or want to share your ideas and thoughts.

Happy New Year and Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy S. Hewitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "A".

Amy Hewitt, PhD, FAAIDD
President, AAIDD Board of Directors

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