



at the University of Delaware

For Immediate Release

For further information contact:

Steven M. Eidelman
University of Delaware
H. Rodney Sharp Professor of Human Services Policy and Leadership
Department of Human Development and Family Studies
302-831-8536
sme@udel.edu

Newark, Delaware -- The National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware announced today the establishment of the **Jewish Leadership Institute on Disability and Inclusion** sponsored by the Ruderman Family Foundation.

The National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities has been providing leadership development for professionals in the intellectual/developmental disabilities field since 2006. This consortium of eleven national disability organizations has provided leadership development programs for over 425 people from the US, Canada and over a dozen other countries.

The newly established Jewish Leadership Institute on Disability and Inclusion will provide leadership development focused on supporting leaders of Jewish Community Centers, Family Service Agencies, Employment and Vocational Services Agencies, Jewish Federations, Synagogues and Jewish Day Schools to provide progressive person centered supports to people with disabilities and their families and to assure that they are fully included in community and Jewish communal life. The first Jewish Leadership Institute on Disability and Inclusion will be held in Baltimore in early December, 2013. Additional institutes will follow and dates and locations to be determined.

“Inclusion of people with disabilities is part law, part values and attitudes, and part skill. The Ruderman Family Foundation has provided support to offer an experiential learning opportunity that combines proven executive development techniques with the transmission of the values, knowledge base, history and successful strategies needed to include people with disabilities in their communities. The goal of this two-year effort is to increase the capacity of the Jewish Communal Services field to support and include both children and adults with disabilities and their families.”, said Steven M. Eidelman, the Institute’s Faculty Director.

The goal of the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities is to make quality lives for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities available on a large scale by assuring a rich supply of skilled leaders who are passionate about quality and have a solid commitment to progressive values. This goal is well matched to that of the Ruderman Family Foundation who strive to raise awareness about the needs and interests of people with disabilities so they can be treated as equal members of our society.

“The establishment of this institute ensures that Jewish leaders will be engaged in the vital discussion of how to include people with disabilities into our communities,” said Jay Ruderman, President of the Ruderman Family Foundation. “The full inclusion of all community members is critical for the survival of the Jewish people. Our foundation is proud to work in tandem with the nationally recognized Leadership Consortium and further our ultimate goal of raising awareness and creating a fully inclusive Jewish society.”

Interest in, and the commitment to value and include people with disabilities in Jewish life has been growing. In 2012 over 120 people from communities across North American, Great Britain and Israel participated in the Disability Inclusion Initiative Conference following the Jewish Federations of North America’s General Assembly in Baltimore. Attendees participated in a day of presentation, discussion and exercises to introduce them to best practices in both Jewish and secular communities and help them see inclusion through the lens of Judaism. Recently, the Jewish Funders Network published *A Guide to Funding Disabilities and Special Needs*, edited by Professor Eidelman, which provides context and best practices in all areas of life that affect Jews with disabilities and their families (<http://www.jfunders.org/disabilityguide>). An increasing number of community organizations are participating in Jewish Disability Awareness Month which raises awareness about the needs and interests of people with disabilities and their families.

Nancy Weiss, who directs the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware and Shelly Christensen, Co-founder of Jewish Disability Awareness Month and author of the Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities, will join Eidelman in developing the Jewish Leadership Institute on Disability and Inclusion.

For more information, please contact Steve Eidelman at sme@udel.edu or Shelly Christensen at shelly@inclusioninnovations.com

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