

Monday, December 4, 2017

From: Jason Parsons

To: Arizona State Legislature, Office of the Arizona Governor and the media outlets of Phoenix, AZ.

Subject: Vo-Rehab not giving me copies of documentation of their assessments of myself.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was diagnosed with a condition that qualified me for Social Security Disability Insurance back in 2009 by a psychologist by the Social Security Administration. I assume that I was diagnosed with Asperger's, but getting them to send me the official documentation required me to battle with a bureaucracy that was irresponsible to the needs of its clients. Because it served on purpose for me at the time then to satisfy my curiosity, I gave up.

In 2015, I gave Vo-Rehab a try and found it to be mostly a waste of time and tax payers' money for "higher functioning" Autistics like myself. Nevertheless, the one thing they did do that was beneficial for me was to have a psychologist give me an assessment that not only gave me a more current diagnosis,* but gave me a full assessment of my strengths and weakness. This has the potential to not only be a valuable tool in me finding employment, but also helping me to be a more constructive member of society. However, they refused to give me a copy of my paper work because the state of Arizona paid for it, it is therefore property of the state. They said they could give me a summation, but my attempts to ride them to give me what they said they would proved to be just as fruitless as getting the SSA to provide me with this same information.

On November 18th of this year, I met a fellow Autistic at the Autism meeting that I host at my church, Lutheran Church of the Master. He told me about a company that hires people with disabilities, Peckham, Inc. Intake/Eligibility Specialist, Jacqueline Snowden, told me that my SSDI eligibility letter was not sufficient documentation that I have a disability. When I went back to the Voc-Rehab office that gave me my most recent diagnosis back in 2015 on November 21st, I concluded that either the rules have changed in the past two and a half years, or no one is in agreement as to what the rules are. As I stood there tying up their lobby phone talking to them while they barricaded themselves in back, I could over hear one of them say that the summation that I specifically requested two and a half years ago still has not been written.

When someone finally came out to the lobby, she had with her a request for information form, something that I was never told I needed to sign back in 2015. She told me that it would take about a month to process, something that would not be unreasonable if I had not lost all faith in them. After all, if what they are going to give me is the summation that still has not been written in the two and a half years since I first requested it, why should I assume that it is all of the suddenly going to be important enough to the psychologist to finally write something about someone that he might now vaguely remember. Furthermore, I know for a fact that they have the full version of my assessment on their computers and therefore could have printed out a copy for me at that time.

This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the frustrations that Autistics have deal with when it comes to "the system." That includes my thrall assessment as to why Voc-Rehab is useless for "higher functioning" Autistics like myself. What is even worse, when we to express our grievances about how those who are supposed to be helping us, including the Autism organizations that have appointed themselves as our representatives (without our consultation or consent), we are dismissed as if Autism is a mental illness like schizophrenia.

* The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, which provide the diagnostic criteria for all mental health issues, was up dated to version 5 in 2013. At that time, those who were previously diagnosed with Asperger's were switched to Autism Spectrum Disorder, level 1, which is my new diagnosis.

However, Autism is a mental health issue, not a mental illness. Yes, the Autistic who shot up Sandy Hook was also a schizophrenic, but that issue was a separate from is Autism. As far as me being able to accurately assess what is going on around me, as well as how people treat me, I am sane as anyone else. The assessment the psychologist who was hired by Voc-Rehab bares that out. In fact, I do recall that one of the things he told me was that I should be supported in my Autistic Self-Advocacy endeavors. I cannot say for sure if he actually wrote that in the full report, but he did state it to me in front of my Voc-Rehab councilor.

So I am asking for someone, anyone, to assist me in getting Voc-Rehab to give me documentation that I have been told by many that I have the right to have, and that Voc-Rehab has no right to deny me for the following reasons:

1. It will give me what I have wanted since the day I was first diagnosed back in 2009, the restoration of my dignity by liberating me from all public assistance within nine months of me starting this new job.
2. Documentation that show that I, as well as my fellow Autistic Self-Advocates, should be given the same due consideration as anyone else when expressing our grievances. This could lead to reforms that could help Autistics develop the knowledge and self-confidence to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on taxpayer funded programs, saving taxpayers \$100s millions.

Sincerely,

Jason Parsons
[Address & phone number redacted from this
social media version.]
aacphoenix@outlook.com

Version that I printed up and hand delivered to the Office of the Arizona Governor and State legislature was co-signed by my mom more than 2 dozen members of my church.