

## CELA 2011

CELA 2010, was our first opportunity to participate as consumer advocates in preparing, presenting and educating the legislative bodies about the need for a separate category within Medicare for Complex Rehabilitation Technology, CRT. At the 2010 Conference in April, Jeramy and I had modest knowledge about the topic, the people running the show, the people attending and the format. What we did know was that we would be visiting with and potentially talking to Senators, Representatives and/or their aides in their offices on Capitol Hill.

The preparations and content of the first day of the 2010 Conference, meeting the key players from NRRTS, the manufacturers, equipment dealers, physical and occupational therapists and other consumer advocates was an important bonding experience. Because of the excellent materials, webinars and a full day of presentations made by the CELA organizers, we understood where the process of creating the particular piece of legislation stood and the necessary talking points when visiting Capitol Hill offices.

The four meetings Jeramy and I attended in 2010 were successful both personally and educationally. Each meeting found us expanding our understanding of the receptivity of our targets and our delivery became more polished as we moved from one office to the next. At the end of the day when we were “down-loading” our experience to the collected conferencees, it was clear we would participate again in a heartbeat.

A invitation to the 2011 CELA Conference found us well prepared and looking forward to how we could move the CRT Legislation forward. The conference calls that we participated in during the weeks before the conference brought us up-to-date regarding the legislation, allowing questions to be answered and listening to other folk's comments. Once again, the day on site in Crystal City was spent re-engaging participants from the prior year and fine-tuning the content of our message as each speaker provided useful information.

Armed with the knowledge that two important changes had occurred during the year: the precedent setting inclusion of a separate benefit category for prosthetics and orthotics and the removal of CRT from the competitive

bidding process, enabled Jeramy and I to have more powerful and compelling conversations within our assigned meetings. We both felt well received and clear that our meetings had positive outcomes in relationship to a CRT separate category. We addressed the savings that would be generated from creating a separate category, which is not the way legislators tend to think when they approach a new bill. They look at “costs” only and, yet, were swayed by the cost effectiveness in relationship to backing or co-sponsoring the legislation.

We spent a few days in Washington D.C. after the conference with family who have been involved on-in Capitol Hill for decades and received some great coaching and suggested names for continuing getting the backing this legislation needs. Returning home, we have found ourselves talking to both able-bodied and compromise-bodied folks about this legislation and it's importance. I have been emailing all my support group members, the folks I mentor, and any and all people and non-profits that have an investment in this legislation, encouraging their education in this arena and their participation in it's future.

We are both looking forward to what 2012 brings and would be delighted to continue our advocacy on Capitol Hill.

Lovely day,

Molly and Jeramy Hale