

# IDD-HUMANIST NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the  
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disorders (AAIDD) Humanist Action Group  
September 2011 , v5 issue 3  
This newsletter expresses the opinion of members of this subgroup and not necessarily of AAIDD

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*All data presented are opinions and alternative opinions may be printed in later issues. Send feedback and submissions to [jrmullin@verizon.net](mailto:jrmullin@verizon.net)*

## We've changed servers!

As I discussed in the last issue, the Verizon server we were formerly using was no longer suitable for our needs. I found another at Zymic webmaster resources, [www.zymic.com](http://www.zymic.com), which may meet our needs. Hopefully you will notice nothing different. I also took the opportunity to fix several small glitches when I transferred the files to the new server. For you that haven't read the last issue, a server is a commercial computer site that holds a number of websites where they can be accessed by everyone else, usually for money but sometimes they offer limited service for free.

The second web address, Humidd.org, (short for **HUMAN**ist with **IDD**) is in place now. It should be much easier to remember and quicker to type in. As always, I could use assistance in managing this website and making content for it. I was happy to see that 7 people made 14 visits to the site last month (9/11). Thanks to Google Analytics for those figures.

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## Group Response to AAIDD position statements.

The AAIDD leadership asked for comments on 5 of the organization's position statement in early September. These positions are on: aversive procedures, caring at end of life, environmental health, growth attenuation, and professional conduct. They can be found through [http://www.aaid.org/content\\_54.cfm?navID=11](http://www.aaid.org/content_54.cfm?navID=11) . My comments, partially copied below, might make more sense if these were read before or during your review of the following. In general these positions were sound and well thought out however I questioned some wording that might unnecessarily exclude humanists. I hadn't intended to discuss this in this newsletter when I wrote it and sent it off but after some reflection, I realized that the hesitancy and worry that I felt when sending it off would be a common experience to anyone who tried to do something similar.

Dear Dr. Gomez

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the 5 position statements: Aversive Procedures, Caring At End Of Life, Environmental Health, Growth Attenuation, and Professional Conduct. I am the chair of the Humanist Action Group in our organization and was initially looking at these from the perspective of that group. I had a couple of other, personal, comments I would also like to mention.

Basically, my "Humanist" comments were addressed towards sections that did not appear to give a non-religious option. In the End of life statement I questioned Principle D.3 in which religious rationales for end of life strategies were discussed. I would like to point out that to some Humanists the internal debate over continuing life is also complicated and can be just as important to them as religious beliefs can be to those who have them. Generally the internal debate would either be over quality of life v. length of life or else is it ethical to shorten someone's life at all when life is such a wonderful and irreplaceable phenomenon.

In Principle E.3. a mention is given of spiritual or pastoral counseling. There are both humanist celebrants and Unitarian-Universalist ministers that could be supportive at the end of one's life if one is non-religious. I expect that most people would see those as forms of spiritual counseling as I do. However I have known people who would not see it that way and might try to exclude them.

In the statement on Guidelines for professions, Guideline 0. it mentions discrimination based on *religion*. It is more common to say discrimination based on *religious beliefs* which is commonly accepted as including non-religious beliefs. . .

I go on to present some personal comments to the effect that the standards sometimes refer to accepted practice as if this were non-controversial and that there needs to be some list of acceptable practices. It should also be expected that this list will change over time.

Time will tell if the IAIDD will incorporate these suggestions. This exercise does act as an example of quietly advocating against what is often unintentional discrimination (or opening the door to later unintentional discrimination) against humanists. You may want to try a similar effort towards rewording documents that you see in the course of the day.

This raises the question of how public you or a humanist with IDD want to be in these efforts. Religious people get away with it all the time however we live in a society with a religious majority. You may want to look at small changes initially or else seek forums where a humanist view is not belittled. Such forums might include internet blogs, small groups of strangers, humanist groups, and some religious organizations like Unitarian-Universalist Churches. The first two suggestions may be fierce in their response (or maybe not) but at least they can be avoided in the future with little effort. Blogs which might be more sympathetic than most would be the ones on the Huffington Post, [www.HuffingtonPost.com](http://www.HuffingtonPost.com). Note that in some blogs it is common to delete comments that are not in agreement with the opinions of the blogger. Conservative bloggers do this the most in my experience.

This is not easy. I remember well when I spoke up at AA and questioned the need for religious steps in the 12 step programs (see the discussion on sobriety groups elsewhere in the AAIDD-Humanists website) Some people were supportive but just as many just rolled their eyes or looked at me like I was ready to hit the bottle tomorrow. This summer I reached my 27<sup>th</sup> year of sobriety so I think their specific concern was unwarranted. I hope my old friends are doing as well but we drifted apart after that talk so I no longer know what they are up to. In another situation, I had a friend ask me to stop sending her my postings on Facebook because I referred to a visit by Jehovah's Witnesses as a waste of time. Regardless of these problems, when asked I will tell people what I think about 12-step groups (and supernatural events) in general. What are your experiences? Have you had any great successes? Are there issues that you would be willing to debate or to encourage your loved one with IDD to debate? Write!!

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Jim Mullin

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