

# Connie Garner Biography



As Executive Vice President for Public Policy at United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), Connie Garner focuses on public policy and advocacy for UCP, one that combines traditional federal-level advocacy with grassroots work at the state level and creating tools for self-advocates to have stronger voices in their own communities.

Prior to joining UCP, Garner worked at Foley Hoag, LLP, where she served as Policy Director in the Government Strategies Practice Group and as Executive Director of Advance CLASS, Inc., a position she still holds. For 17 years prior to her work at Foley Hoag, Garner was Policy Director, Disability and Special Populations, to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP), where she served Chairman Harkin, Senator Dodd, and the late Senator Kennedy. In that role, she was the lead Democratic Committee architect for the CLASS Act, the major long-term care legislation that is part of health care reform; enactment of the landmark Mental Health Parity Act 2008; the 2006 and 2009 reauthorizations of the \$2 billion Ryan White CARE Act; the Family Opportunity Act of 2006 and the 2005 reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Special Education Law; and the 1999 Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act.

Garner also served in the U.S. Department of Education, as Director of the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council for Children with Disabilities and the Secretary of Education's principal liaison on all interagency health care matters, including health care reform.

Prior to her work with the Federal government, Garner provided clinical nurse specialist services in both urban and rural public health settings as well as inpatient hospital settings, and managed several large maternal-child health inpatient hospital units in both Philadelphia and the Washington, DC area. She continues to work as a practicing nurse practitioner on a monthly basis.

Garner has a B.S. in Nursing (University of Pennsylvania, 1979) and M.S. in Nursing (George Mason University, 1982), an Ed.S. in Special Education (George Washington University, 2000), and her Doctoral work is in both Health and Education Public Policy (George Washington University, 2001). She is also certified as a Pediatric and Neonatal Nurse Practitioner, and is the mother of seven children –one of whom has an intellectual disability.