

THE BULLETIN

NEWS FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

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DHS ANNOUNCES ELIGIBILITY CHANGES, BEGINS SERVICE REASSESSMENTS FOR JANUARY 2010

The Department of Human Services (DHS) began mailing out notices of the upcoming service updates and reassessments that will take place beginning in January 2010 through July 2010. This news was neither a trick, nor a treat for the thousands of Minnesotans who receive PCA services. **Due to a drastic change in the Home Care ratings system, many individual's are going to see on average, a reduction of fifteen minutes per day-** doesn't sound like much, but

when you consider this is a loss of nearly 2.5 hours a week, 10 hours a month and 130 hours a year, you can see that this savings measure for the State is causing some very real problems for the consumers who use their PCA services to remain independent in their home, communities and even at work .

Staff in the PAS program have been working with the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (www.mnccd.org) and

other focus groups to ensure that consumers receive the information and resources necessary to understand these changes and to make informed choices about their services.

One of the changes that isn't getting communicated very well, is that **when consumers are reassessed prior to their actual service renewal date, those consumers will lose any banked hours that they had, as the service update or re-**

STANDARDIZED TRAINING ON ITS WAY FOR 2010

Starting January 01, 2010 any new hire that is working with a PCA agency will be expected to go through a new standardized training program developed by DHS. New hire's will have seven days from the date of hire to complete and successfully pass this training. The good news is, once the DSP completes the training, they are good for a year, if they wish to work for multi-

ple agencies. DSPs that are already employed by an agency will have one year from January 01, 2010 to take the test and pass. DHS is considering allowing for a competency test-out option for staff that have been working successfully in the field for many years.

Currently the recommended core competencies are under review

with a focus group that PAS staff Brigette Menger-Anderson and Sarah Murphy attend and have input in. MCIL will revise their current training materials to include the standardized core materials, and will make the new training a prerequisite before processing any new hires after January 01, 2010. More information to come.

Congratulations
2009 Outstanding
DSP Recipients:
Craig Johnson
Rebecca Whitman
Bridget Siljander

REASSESSMENT CONT.

assessment will create a revision in their current service agreement, and as a result, consumers can't use the hours that were banked and agencies can't bill for those banked hours either; the service agreement revision will not include those banked hours in the new allocation.

PAS staff are going through DHS sponsored training to better understand these changes. We will then schedule time to meet with consumers to discuss these changes and to assist consumers with preparing for a possible reduction in their services.

PAS staff will also have

access to the knowledge and resources of the Disability Linkage Line staff and MCIL advocates. While PAS staff cannot assist consumers with the appeal process, should this become a desired option, **the PAS staff can get consumers connected to staff at MCIL at no cost to the consumer.**

The PAS team has also recently revised the Consumer Care Plan and have begun to schedule appointments with consumers to develop a new Consumer Support Plan. We are confident that this new Plan will capture with more detail, the level of

supports that the consumer needs to meet their goals of independent living. The new support plan includes a section on consumer-directed standard operating procedures, or "house rules." It is our hope that having guidelines and rules about expectations, breaks, smoking, visitors, etc., will limit the need for agency involvement and intervention. The plan also includes a section where all new hires will sign-off on the Support Plan, review a statement of acknowledgment about PCA billing and Medical Assistance fraud and their responsibility to keep their

contact information current with the consumer and agency at all times, and a place to document their contact information. This will also assist consumers with tracking dates of hire, and having contact information readily available.

We encourage consumers to start scheduling appointments with Sarah Murphy, the PAS Consumer Supports Coordinator and Qualified Professional, starting in December.

Sarah can be reached at 651.603.2039 or sarahm@mcil-mn.org

AN INTERVIEW WITH DSP ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Bridget Siljander has been a direct support professional (DSP) since completing high school. In college Bridget graduated Suma Cum Laude, which is impressive in itself, but considering she was also a single mother to her daughter, Imani who has cerebral palsy, you might already think of her as super woman, before you learn another thing about her!

She is currently involved with DSPAM as the Board President; College of Direct Support as a curriculum author; Direct Care Alliance as the

Voices Institute Coordinator; she is self-employed as a private home health aide (10 years for the same consumer), has worked as DSP with MCIL and is a DSP representative for the Alliance for Full Participation.

The following page is excerpts from an interview between the PAS Program Manager, Brigette Menger-Anderson and Bridget Siljander.

We must remember that one determined person can make a significant difference, and that a small group of determined people can change the course of history."

Sonia Johnson

DSP ADVOCATE, CONT.

Tell us how you got started as a DSP- what attracted you about the position and what were its drawbacks? I wanted to work directly with people in the health care field. I have enjoyed care giving my entire life. I am the eldest of 13 children and helped to manage the household while my parents worked and went to school. People have always told me that I am good and caring about others and the work is a great fit for me. I have worked with so many different people over the years and have found my job to be incredibly fulfilling- it's a lot of fun. The drawbacks are the low pay and the split shifts. I think that this has a tremendous affect on the turnover rates we see in this field.

In the 12 years that you have provided DSP supports, how have you seen this field evolve? I have seen a lot more concern about the experience of the staff doing direct support work and much more advocacy for our workforce. I think that our communities are gaining more appreciation for what we contribute to the well-being of others and employers seem to be more interested in creating a good place for DSPs to work. I feel that our status is rising.

What do you believe is holding back a more organized, informed and progressive DSP work force movement? I think that it comes down to a lack of awareness about what is happening in the larger system in which we operate. I have been doing direct support work for 12 years and only got engaged beyond my role as a PCA in the last 2 years. I just didn't know what was happening in terms of workforce development, professionalization, and advocacy; I wasn't connected or plugged-in. We often do isolating work and lack a shared space where we can connect with our col-

leagues. Communicating with staff in the field is critical to organizing, informing, and building a progressive DSP workforce movement.



Some consumers criticize the effort to "professionalize" DSPs. What can be gained from this effort? For consumers, the benefits of a professional DSP would be a greater assurance of receiving services from someone who is trained and capable of performing the necessary tasks that a person needs, such as being able to transfer a particular person, knowledge of how to do a bowel program, being educated

in handling emergency situations, etc. A professional will have a set of expectations to live up to. They also need to be appropriate expectations.

What has motivated you to become an advocate not only for the disability community, but more so for the working DSPs? I was motivated by my frustration with not feeling respected by the larger community for what I do as a career. I have always believed in the importance of what I have done every day, but, I haven't felt that I have been valued or recognized like I should. Consumers have been my strongest allies, I must add. They have given me more appreciation than anyone.

For the DSPs reading this, what advice can you give them to challenge those that are apathetic to the unfair work conditions and inadequate wages and benefits? I would challenge everyone who wants better working conditions to do something about it. Continuing to be unhappy and inaction will not help you. It is very liberating to speak up and to share your experiences- good and bad. There are not enough DSPs doing that and it gives the impression that we are fine with the status quo. Nothing changes when you don't change something. Nobody but you cares as much about the issues you deal with as you do. They're not you, so how can

they? If you simply start to get involved, you will be surprised at the opportunities there are to turn things around. **There's a quote by Sonia Johnson, "We must remember that one determined person can make a significant difference, and that a small group of determined people can change the course of history."**

When you were notified that you were being honored with this award, you were speechless, yet sincerely grateful for the recognition. What can consumers, agencies and the general community do to ensure that DSPs are recognized for their commitments and contributions?

Consumers can show appreciation by letting DSPs know that what they do matters to them and that they appreciate their service. They can recognize DSPs by introducing them to others with an air of respect toward the DSP. They can do so much to make the DSP feel good about what they do. Saying, "Thank You", goes a long way and treating a DSP as a professional is important to their feeling like a professional and embracing the work with a professional attitude. Agencies can do a lot to recognize DSPs. They can offer the most competitive wages possible, create a culture where DSPs feel valued, respected and a part of the overall organization. Agencies can keep DSPs informed about issues affecting them so that they know that their agency wants them to be educated and aware of the bigger system, not cut off from it. The general community can do a great deal to promote the recognition of DSPs, such as treating DSPs like they would any other profession, for example, a nurse, a fire-fighter, a teacher, or another professional who delivers great value to our communities



Next year MCIL will nominate a new DSP Advocate of the year, and I have already seen some surprising energy and interest in DSPs. What advice would you give to encourage DSPs to successfully become leaders of tomorrow?

My advice is to trust yourself and the importance of your role and just put yourself out into the mix within the larger community and field you are a part of. Often, I don't feel prepared for what I get involved with, but I go for it and I find that a lot of people want to support me. Being a leader doesn't mean that you have to have experience as a leader or even feel confident about your own leadership potential. When I first got involved, I was not self-confident or knowledgeable. But, I was enthusiastic about using my voice and representing my field. I was game for anything whether or not I felt capable of accomplishing whatever I was attempting. So, get in touch with someone that can support your leadership, join DSPAM as a volunteer, reach out to another leader, and take the first step. That's the hardest. You will grow and develop and you will do a lot of good for your profession. It's very exciting!

Anything else you would like to share with us? I want to make a plea to other DSPs out there. We need you to represent and to get involved. The DSP movement can be huge; just look at how many of us there are- 45,000 just in MN and over 3 million in the U.S.! When enough of us get together and have our own unified voice, amplified by each one of us, we will be incredibly powerful and carry a lot of influence. But, first, we need to join forces- DSP to DSP. Get involved and leave your mark on the direction of the DSP movement!

Congratulations Bridget Siljander, DSP Advocate of the year!

PAS ANNOUNCES H1N1 GUIDELINES FOR CONSUMERS AND DSPS

MCIL's Personal Assistant Services Department does not require Direct Support Professionals to receive H1N1 or other Influenza vaccinations- however the following guidelines have been outlined to ensure proactive measures are supported:

- Consumers who wish to require the H1N1 and/or other Influenza vaccinations are obligated to cover all fees associated with the vaccination.

Employers cannot compel an employee to cover costs of mandated items that affect employment retention.

- If a consumer mandates that DSPs working in their home are required to get vaccinated and a DSP refuses there will be no direct effect on employment.

PAS staff will assist the DSP in applying for a more suitable position.

- As the director of their cares, the Consumer or Responsible Party is authorized to determine the length of leave given to any DSP showing signs/symptoms of the flu.
- Any DSP who is given a "stop work" notice by a physician must have a "return to work" authorization (by a physician) prior to returning to the workplace.
- DSPs working in homes where Consumers' or others have become infected have the choice to continue to work in that

home or take a leave of absence until the infection has passed.

Guidelines for contagiousness are outlined by the US Department of Health (see resources listed to the right).

- Any DSP who misses work due to H1N1 or other Influenza infections (whether due to their own illness or that of their consumers) may use any Paid Time Off they have available.

DSPs can contact PAS HR at 651.603.2033 to check PTO availability.

Additional Resources:

Emergency Preparedness for people with disabilities:

www.state.mn.us/portal/mn/jsp/content.do?id=-536892421&agency=MSCOD

Centers for Disease control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU/

Minute Clinic Locator:

www.minuteclinic.com/en/USA/MN/Clinics.aspx

Flu Prevention:

www.healthline.com



DSPAM is seeking BOARD MEMBERS for 2010!

If you are a current direct support staff, a consumer receiving PCA services and/or work in the home care field
WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

MinnesotaDSPAM@yahoo.com ✦ nadsp.org/membership/mn5.asp

EVENTS HAPPENING AT MCIL



MCIL Social Night! November 17th, December 15th, January 26th.

You are invited to an evening of fun! MCIL is opening its' doors for anyone who would like a place to come socialize, use our computer, watch a movie, eat, gather information, find an outlet or just chill. This monthly event will begin at 4 pm and go until 6 pm. You are welcome to stay the whole time, come for an hour or just stop in for a few minutes. We look forward to seeing you!

The Weekenders November 21st, December 12th & January 23rd.

Are you sick of sitting home all weekend? Do you see fun activities and wish you had someone to do them with? Do you find yourself wanting someone to talk to? Well, this is the group for you. Come meet other people who share your interests and want someone to hang out with. We will meet once a month from 1-3 pm to share, talk, plan, do activities or outings throughout the month. Guests are welcome and encouraged!

GLBT Support Group Dec 1st & Jan 12th.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) with disabilities Support Group meets on the first Tuesday of the month at the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living MCIL, 1600 University Ave W., Suite #16, St Paul, MN. 55104 from 6-7:30 pm (Please note location change!).

Organization #101 December 1st: 10am-12pm: Do you have piles that are taking your space? Do you wish you didn't waste time looking for things you know you have? Come learn techniques that will help you to tackle the piles and find keys. Come join us for an introductory lesson in organization.

Cooking Classes November 17th, December 15th & January 26th, 1-4pm: Hungry? Don't know how or what to make? Come to one or all of our cooking classes. Together we'll learn to make quick and easy recipes that you can incorporate into your daily life. Space is limited; please RSVP at least 5 days before the designated day.

Bus & Light Rail Training November 18th 9am-3pm: Have some fun and increase your understanding and experience with Metro Transit the public bus line and light rail. This will be your chance to expand beyond Metro Mobility. Many options and more freedom will be opened to you. Join us for a trip from MCIL to the Mall of America. We will eat lunch, do a little shopping and return. Please call if you are interested in a lesson. We also have Mentors available that can work one on one with you to achieve independence on the bus and light rail!



American Sign Language Classes (ASL) November 16th & 30th, December 7th & 14th, January 11th & 25th. "Let your HANDS do the Talking." Basic American Sign Language (ASL) class will meet at MCIL on Mondays from 1 -2 pm, RSVP 651-603-2027 or e-mail sheilaf@mcil-mn.org

Open Technology Lab Wednesday's from 1-4 pm: Please take this opportunity to **learn** about the computer including programs like Word, Excel, Dragon Naturally Speaking, check/set up emails, learn to safely surf the Internet, how to access games and more. *Hourly time slots are available for the four computers that are available, so please call ahead.



To confirm your participation, please RSVP for events at: 651-603-2028 or email corbettl@mcil-mn.org.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT SERVICES

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www.pas.mcil-mn.org

**“YOU NEED TO HEAR ME”
HOTLINE**

To assist consumers, DSPs, advocates and concerned citizens with expressing their concerns, frustrations and comments regarding recent legislative changes to the PCA program, MCIL launched the “You need to hear me” hotline. Incoming calls are anonymous. A volunteer checks the messages on a weekly basis, transcribes the messages and prepares for review by CIL staff and then they are forwarded to DHS policy staff, The State Commissioner and Representatives.

Frustrated with the wait time to process DSP background Checks and assign individual Provider numbers? Upset with the Home Care Rating changes and decreased hours for consumers? Afraid the next legislative session will take back even more in DSP wages and benefits?

Please call the hotline today!

651.603.2009