



THE FAMILY FORUM

Volume 14, Issue 2
March/April 2003

Options!
Options!
Options!

**The Choice will be
YOURS**

by the MRS Supports Coordination Team

It has been some time since Family Forum addressed supports coordination (previously known as case management) and the changes being undertaken by Philadelphia Mental Retardation Services (MRS). At this time last year, a report on the results of the eleven focus group meetings was released. MRS convened the focus groups as a first step in the plan to reorganize supports coordination. The purpose of the focus groups was to hear from consumers, families, providers, supports coordinators and other interested parties about the strengths and weaknesses of the current supports coordination system in Philadelphia. Last September, MRS established a Supports Coordination Advisory Committee with significant representation from consumers and families to advise and assist us as we move forward with the reorganization.

Changes in the way supports coordination is provided are needed for several reasons. First, the Federal Government, which provides much of the

funding for community mental retardation services, found numerous problems with the way Pennsylvania is implementing its programs and has required that changes be made if Pennsylvania is to continue to receive Federal Waiver funding. Second, the State Office of Mental Retardation has mandated that supports coordination be provided

Ongoing supports coordination . . . will be consolidated . . . to three agencies.

by organizations that do not also provide direct mental retardation services. This is sometimes referred to as the “conflict free”

requirement. Philadelphia is one of only a few County MR programs that is not yet in compliance with this requirement. Because we have not been in compliance, the State has not permitted Philadelphia to expand community supports coordination services. Finally, there are too many organizations providing supports coordination services in Philadelphia. It is difficult to insure that

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Waiting List Lawsuit Dumped

The lawsuit filed last May by parents of children with mental retardation seeking an end to the Waiting List has been dismissed by U.S. District Judge Herbert Hutton.

HOT TOPICS

Judge Hutton wrote that Congress didn't give individuals or private parties the right to sue to enforce or implement Medicaid's social programs. The Court also found that the Medicaid requirement for a written plan of care for "each patient" did not confer individual rights, as claimed by the plaintiffs. The Court said that the written plan requirement was for the benefit of the government in order to prove the services were truly needed.

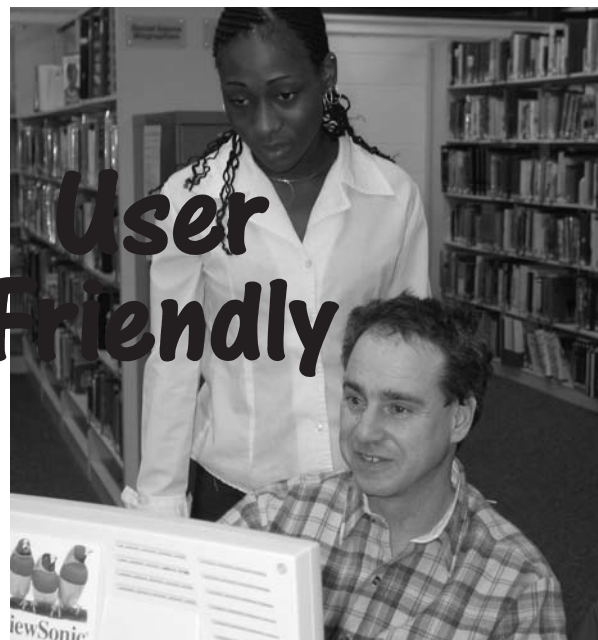
Because of Pennsylvania's budget deficit after the 9/11 tragedy, then Governor Mark Schweiker called for a thirty percent cut in spending on former Governor Ridge's waiting list initiative. The lawsuit was filed in an attempt to fully fund the promised \$853 million to expand residential and vocational services for the 21,000-plus people on the Waiting List in Pennsylvania. Judge Hutton further wrote that delays in funding were not grounds for a private lawsuit because of the diversity of disabilities among people with mental retardation. Because it might take varying times to match an individual to a proper placement, Judge Hutton wrote that neither Congress nor federal Medicaid officials have provided any "guidepost for the court."

Ilene Shane, director of the Disabilities Law Project in Philadelphia, who filed the lawsuit on behalf of four Pennsylvania groups representing about 21,000 people with mental retardation, said they will appeal as they did not agree with the judge's conclusions.

Information from Philadelphia Inquirer and Pennsylvania Community Providers Association.

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NHS (Knights Rd) FDSS Coordinator Loren Wilson helps Kevin Gillick access the Internet during MRS MyCityMyPlace.com training class. For internet training info, call Brenda Tingstrom at 215-686-2032.





SPOTLIGHT on APPRISE

Overwhelmed by health insurance? Need answers? Call Apprise. **800-783-7067**

With each passing day, health insurance becomes more complicated. For older Pennsylvanians, health insurance means mountains of paperwork, confusing claim forms and endlessly changing rules, regulations and policies. Fortunately, there is somewhere to go for straight answers and unbiased assistance. Apprise is a free federal program designed specifically to help Pennsylvanians 60 and older with all types of health insurance, including Medicare, Medicaid, and private policies like long-term care, managed care, and supplemental insurance. Counselors can answer your questions about benefits, provide you with easy-to-understand information, help you with those confusing insurance forms, refer you to appropriate government agencies and even show you how to protect yourself against fraud and abuse. To get help with your insurance questions, call Apprise toll-free at 800-783-7067 weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Volunteers can arrange for a one-to-one meeting with an Apprise counselor in your community.

The following information on prescription drug discounts is provided by Apprise.

▶ Premier Years - Prescription Assistance – Call 888-533-3777 to enroll, for which there is no charge. In 4 weeks, you'll get a card with your name, ID and a membership directory. On page 17 of the directory is a list of all participating pharmacies. There is a saving on most brand names, but ask what the selling price of the drug is before presenting your Premier Years' Card.

▶ Glaxosmithkline "Orange Card" – (Avandia, Paxil, Flovent) has created a national discount program for consumers over 65 whose annual incomes are at or below \$26,000 for an individual or \$35,000 per couple. They will receive a reduction of the price of its drugs by 25% or more. Persons eligible for Medicaid or prescription drug coverage through a private insurance plan are exempt. Call 888-672-6436.

▶ Novartis Care Card – 25% discount on RX's for those who are on Medicare with income at or below \$26,000 for a single person, \$35,000 for a couple with no other drug coverage. Call 866-974-2273 or visit the web site at www.novartis.com/carecard.

▶ Pfizer's "Share Card" – (Lipitor, Norvasc, Zoloff) provides 30 day supply of a Pfizer Prescription for \$15.

Available to Medicare recipients who have an annual gross income below \$18,000 or \$24,000 for couples. No enrollment fee. Call 800-717-6005 or go online at www.pfizerforliving.com.

▶ Lillyanswers – (Prozac, Evita) \$12 flat fee for a 30 day supply of prescription. Open to seniors with no drug coverage and annual income below \$18,000 for an individual or under \$24,000 for couples. Call 877-795-4559. Applications take 2-4 weeks. Card valid for one year. Can save \$52 per month or \$856 per year for one medication.

▶ Together Rx Card is a free card that provides discounts of at least 15% or more for medications from seven different pharmaceutical companies: Abbott labs, AstraZeneca, Aventis Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Bristol-Myers Squibb Co, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen Pharmaceutical Products, L.P., Novartis and Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical, Inc. This program is available for Medicare enrollees with annual income less than \$28,000 for individuals and \$38,000 for couples with no Rx

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The Choice will be Yours

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policies and procedures are uniform and that all people seeking services from the Philadelphia County MR system are treated in the same fashion when there are so many agencies.

Building on the results of the focus groups, our own internal analysis and direction from the Federal and State Programs, Philadelphia MRS is moving forward with the following changes:

- ❑ Registration for mental retardation services (intake, determination of eligibility, completion of necessary paperwork) will be managed by MRS directly. Even though the service will be centralized, MRS staff will be available to meet with families and consumers at their homes and other locations that are convenient, as well as at the office.
- ❑ Ongoing supports coordination services will be consolidated from contracts with the eleven Base Service Units to contracts with three agencies. These entities will be selected through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process that is now underway. The three entities will each serve the entire city so families and consumers will be able to choose any one of them. In addition to more consistency in services, we hope to decrease caseloads, increase salaries for supports coordinators and provide more responsive services to consumers and their families.

The development of the Request for Proposals has taken much longer than originally anticipated. It is clear that this is a major undertaking for the Philadelphia County Program and the process is being developed carefully to insure that the transition from the current system for supports coordination to the new one can proceed successfully.

In the meantime, a number of people have raised concerns or questions about the direction that MRS is taking and this article will attempt to address some of them.

What is the connection between transformation, HCSIS, the waiver, and supports coordination?

Transformation is the name of the process being undertaken by the State Office of Mental Retardation to reorganize the entire mental retardation system. Transformation is based partly on the work of the State's Planning Advisory Committee and partly on the recommendations of the Federal Government. Its fundamental principles include consumer and family choice, control over resources and the ability to live a satisfying life in the community.

HCSIS is the Internet-based information system that supports the transformation.

Waiver is a funding stream that was created by the Federal Government to support community services to individuals with mental retardation.

Supports Coordination is the process through which individuals are assisted to identify their needs, develop a plan to meet their needs, select services and supports that will assist them, and periodically review that supports and services are being delivered and that they continue to be what the consumer and family need.

What's going to happen to the current supports coordinators?

From the beginning, MRS has expressed its commitment that anyone who is working in the current system as a supports coordinator who wants to continue in that capacity will be offered opportunities for employment in the new system. Even if individuals don't have a college degree, which will be required in the new system, they will be able to be "grandfathered" into the new system. Consumers and families who want to remain with their current supports coordinator will be able to do so, if that person continues in the system.

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STORY STATION 2002

2002 My City My Place had an energetic Story Station. Folks were interviewed by several facilitators. Their answers were written-up right away and put on the wall. There was a loud speaker so the audience could hear what people were saying at Story Station and the audience could ask questions. Story Station was a lot of fun. Here are some of the participants and what they had to say.



David Jones - I like to work a job at Northeast Times. My sister is my friend and my brother, Mark. I play basketball and go to the restaurant. Rice is my favorite food. I like Wildwood. I like the beach.



Carol Henley - I like bowling. I like to eat. No, I don't cook. I'm scared of fire. I like to watch sports. I like basketball. My favorite movie is Annie. I used to work at SPIN. I

want to retire. I like to go swimming.

Aaron Richards - Hi, y'all. Hello! I moved to a new site. I got a new job. I work at the Gap. New suit, new jeans, new shirt. I made money! I'm going to use the money for my honeymoon. I got a girlfriend. I'm going on a trip.



Robert Hayes - I'm 38 years old. I live with a roommate. I have my own apartment. I like to clean. Vacuuming, cleaning. My best friend is Robert Gray. We clean together. I go to Catholic Church. I go to dinner everywhere. My favorite is Red Lobster.



My name is **Lena Fiorelli**. I live by myself. I cook. I like spaghetti and meatballs. I work at a workshop. I work two jobs. I make bags and cards to sell. I got a table over there [in the resource room]. A man taught me to make the bags and Carolyn helped me. I got an office job at PEP. I stuff envelopes. I get good pay. I buy food. I watch TV. I want to go on vacation next month, to New York.

The Choice will be Yours

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What's going to happen to Family Driven Support Services (FDSS)?

Management of FDSS services will be part of the responsibility of the new supports coordination entities. Families will continue to develop the FDSS plan with their supports coordinator. The supports coordinators at the base service units will develop the FDSS plans for the fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2003. Once the new entities are up and running, they will take over this responsibility.

What's going to happen to the Family Advisory Committees?

MRS is committed to having a structure that includes families and consumers in planning and oversight of the system. The RFP will include requirements that each entity develop an advisory committee composed of consumers and families. The FDSS Steering Committee will be expanded into a County Consumer/Family Steering Committee to work with MRS on overall service delivery issues.

What's going to happen to the neighborhood base of supports coordination?

One of the major strengths identified at the focus groups was that supports coordinators know and understand the resources in the neighborhoods where families and consumers live and work. MRS is committed to retaining this knowledge base, even though there will only be three entities. It is expected that the supports coordinators will be available to meet with people wherever is most convenient for them. Supports coordinators will be expected to know the resources and to assist consumers and families in using them.

Will supports coordinators still be able to advocate for families and consumers?


MRS fully expects that supports coordinators will advocate for their consumers and families. One of the essential elements of the new system is that families and consumers should have more choice about the supports and services that they need and how they will obtain them. One of the most important roles for the supports coordinator is to assist families in identifying their needs and in obtaining resources to meet them.

What is the timetable for the reorganization?

As noted above, the RFP process has taken much longer than originally anticipated. Right now, MRS hopes to begin to transition consumers from the base service units to

the new entities around September 2003. The transition will take several months. The State Office of Mental Retardation's deadline for "conflict free" supports coordination is July 2005. MRS hopes the new system will be in place by July 2004, so we can take additional time if it is needed to insure a smooth process.

MRS hopes to begin to transition consumers from the base service units to the new entities around September 2003.



Anyone who has additional questions or would like more information about changes in supports coordination in Philadelphia is encouraged to call or write Elayne Blender (215-686-0217) or Marianne Roche (215-686-0220). Your inquiries are welcomed.

Jumping into the Driver's Seat

By Amanda Freese
Jewish Employment and Vocational Service

These days, life is a lot different for Carl Burke and Mark Smith. Both in their mid-20s and consumers supported by the Jewish Employment and Vocational Service's (JEVS) Community Living and Home Supports (CLHS), they recently moved into their own apartment in Northeast Philadelphia and got janitorial maintenance jobs at a car dealership in Feasterville.

Because Carl and Mark have a dual diagnosis of mental retardation and mental health issues, they were considered difficult to serve within the mental retardation system. As a result, they were sent to AdvoServe in Bear, Delaware, a private licensed facility (PLF) where they had 24-hour supervision with restricted independent movement and lived with sixteen other people. Earlier this year, Clara Thompson, executive director of CLHS, joined three other agencies in Philadelphia in an initiative to move individuals out of private licensed facilities and back into their own communities.

With the reopening of a residence in June 2002, Thompson saw this as the perfect opportunity for Carl and Mark to move out of the PLF. They still have 24-hour staff support, but now they have the freedom to explore their surroundings and go to work every day. Through a personal connection at CLHS, Carl and Mark found jobs at Colonial Volkswagen Subaru a couple weeks after moving

into their apartment. "They are back in the city, closer to their families, and have jobs that give them stature in the community. With limited resources in the existing system, it is not often that service providers are able to craft services and explore a true exercise in self-determination, but we were able to support Carl and Mark's personal choice and help make it happen," said Thompson.



All smiles, Carl and Mark at work at "their" car dealership.

Mark Brooker is the team leader who provides job coaching supports and accompanies Carl and Mark to work from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. every day of the week. "I try to convey punctuality and a good work ethic," said Brooker. "I don't accept anything but their best, and they understand that. When I come in the morning, they are ready and waiting – with their lunch packed and everything."

Since they met three years ago, Carl and Mark have been nearly inseparable. They share the job duties at Colonial Volkswagen Subaru and work well as a team with the support of their job coach. They describe their responsibilities as mostly maintenance work, including cleaning showrooms, sweeping outside, vacuuming offices, and washing windows. Carl and Mark joke around a lot and often speak in unison.

Steve Schwartz, Sales Manager of Colonial Volkswagen Subaru, is very pleased with Carl and Mark's performance and values the support they receive on the job from JEVS: "They take a lot of

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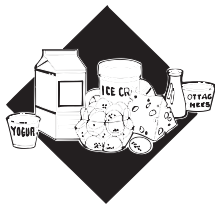
Jumping into the Driver's Seat

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pride in their work and make sure the whole place looks good.” When Schwartz met Carl and Mark, he was so impressed by their enthusiasm that he hired them on-the-spot. “They seemed so willing to work and it’s so tough to get people who really want to work today,” said Schwartz. “It’s a great experience for us because they seem really happy to be here, and we’re happy to have them.”

“As soon as they get their paychecks, they’re high-fiving everybody. They love it here and everybody likes them,” said Brooker. Although Carl and Mark worked at their former residence and Carl got some experience at a convenience store, they agree that working at Colonial Volkswagen Subaru is much better. “We are very proud of our job – we love it,” said Carl. In predicted unison, Carl and Mark mention, “We get paid every Friday!”

Based on their success, Thompson and the other members on the PLF project are currently working on designing a prototype model for the City to help others make successful transitions from locked facilities into their community. For more information about JEVS Community Living & Home Supports, call 215-848-7855, or visit www.jevs.org.



Cooking Made Easy is a cookbook of 88 recipes for people with developmental disabilities who can read. Recipes are

coded for level of difficulty, the print is large, and there are detailed easy-to-understand cooking steps. Cost is \$19.95, plus \$4.95 shipping. Quantity discounts are available.

Contact Eileen Laird at eileen@cookingmadeeasy.org, www.cookingmadeeasy.org, or write to P.O. Box 2117, Boone, NC 28607.

Let's Have a Word Dialogue

How we think of ourselves is important. Although the old adage, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me,” is basically a good one to stick by, the right choice of words can make a difference. The Family Forum would like to have a dialogue with readers about words that describe a person with a disability. What words do you like or dislike?

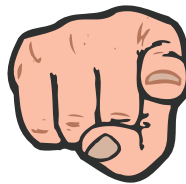
Charles Haley, Family Forum committee member, has volunteered to collect the dialogue and had gotten the discussion rolling by writing:

“In my opinion, the term “handicapped” does not make sense, but the term “handiable” does. Also I do not believe in the term “normal. As far as the term “normal,” everybody does not agree all the time and everybody has something they cannot do. When I do not use the term “handiable,” I say “considered normal” and “considered disabled.

I have asked people what they think of as normal. Ray Hester claimed that everybody in Ambassadors [a group of musically talented performers who have disabilities] is normal.

My sister, Edie Haley, claimed that crazy is normal.

Corey’s mom claimed that everybody who is “normal” has something they cannot do and everybody cannot agree. Corey is a Philadelphia Special Olympic tennis player and so am I.”



So, what do you have to say? Respond to Charles by calling 215-483-4486, by letter to 4327 Lauriston Street, Philadelphia, PA 19128-4939, or by email to charleslhaley2nd@att.net.

DID YOU



► **Utility Assistance** – There are several programs in place to help seniors with utilities bills: Philadelphia Water Revenue Bureau offers a 25% discount on each water bill for those 65 and older (maximum income \$23,700). The Philadelphia Gas works offers a 20% discount on each bill, with no income guidelines. For information, call PASS at 215-923-1900. Source: Polish-American newspaper.

► **Greater Philadelphia Book Bank** – at 5th and Luzerne, has over 2.5 million free books available to educators, nonprofit, and the public. It has a large selection of textbooks in most subjects for all grade levels and fictional and non-fictional work. The Book Bank is open to the public on the second Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. through June. Call 215-227-2570 for other hours during the weekday.

► **PA Parent Guide to Special Education for School Age Children** – is on the web at <http://www.pahoops.org/sped/parent.htm>. It is an on-line booklet that explains “the rules” so parents will feel comfortable and can better participate in the educational decision-making process for their child. Chapter One focuses upon how a child’s need for special education is determined. Chapter Two explains how a special education program plan is developed and what kinds of information it must include. Planning for the transition from school to adult living is discussed. Chapter Three deals with the responsibilities that a school district has to a child who is eligible for special education services and the child’s parents. Chapter Four outlines the actions that parents can take if they disagree with school officials about their child’s education program.

► **The Help America Vote Act** – has become law (PL 107-252). Each voting precinct across the country must have at least one accessible voting station. Protection and Advocacy Systems will receive funding to do training,

KNOW?

technical assistance, and oversight on the disability-related voting provisions. Source: The Arc Government Report

► **Seniors Medication Discount** – a “Pfizer Share Card” allows seniors with low incomes to buy a 30-day supply of any Pfizer prescription medication for \$15. It can be used at retail pharmacies, including CVS and Wal-Mart. For an application, call 800-717-6005. Source: Senator Shirley Kitchen’s newsletter.

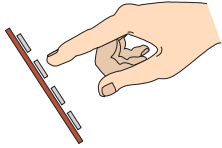
► **HMO Medication Denials** – If you have been denied a medication, call your HMO’s special needs unit. Most of the time the situation can be corrected through a phone call between the pharmacy department of your HMO and your pharmacy. You are entitled to a 72-hour supply of a new medication that is in question, or a 15-day supply of an existing medication being denied, if the pharmacist determines it is necessary. This allows resolution time. If further assistance is needed, call Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care at 888-546-0300, ext 3685, and ask to speak to a health care technical assistant. Source: PCHC newsletter.

► **Assistive Technology Help** – The PA Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) is a statewide financing program, founded in 1998, by the Institute on Disabilities at Temple. PATF’s mission is to provide financing opportunities for individuals with disabilities and older Pennsylvanians to purchase assistive technology. Visit their website – www.assistive-technology4pa.org – for funding information, applications, technology contacts, purchasing tips, and a list of local funding centers, or call PA’s Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT) at Temple, 888-204-7428, TTY 800-750-7428. Source: PATF newsletter.

Any websites noted in the Family Forum are provided for your information and are not rated or reviewed by the Family Forum. We welcome your input about useful sites you have visited. Email familyforum@phila.gov.

Using the Right Tool for the Job

Here are two very different innovative aids



The **Magic Wand Keyboard** is a miniature computer keyboard, with a built-in mouse, that allows people with limited or no hand/arm movement to fully access any computer. Using only the slightest hand or head

motion, the keyboard doesn't require any strength. The Magic Wand Keyboard helps students to succeed by increasing typing speed and reducing the physical strain of homework and class work. It lets students with disabilities work side-by-side with their classmates on the computer and the Internet. It is designed for people who have disabilities that include muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, neurological disorders, arthritis, Multiple Sclerosis, and severe repetitive stress injury. And it works instantly! For more information, visit: www.magicwandkeyboard.com.



Source: The Academy Times

An **Assistive Dining Device** that can be used by people who are both severely physically and cognitively limited is now on the market. The device is the result of research begun by The Arc-US in the 1980's. The Assistive Dining Device (ADD) has been tested with people who have severe physical and cognitive limitations who successfully learned to use the device. They have enjoyed having more choice in selection of foods, pace of eating and a feeling of being in control.

The ADD enables people to eat without using their arms or hands. The bowls containing the food rotate until the desired food is located under the spoon. The spoon then dips into the bowl, scoops up the food, and presents a rounded spoonful of food very near the lips of the user. The user must lean forward slightly and remove the food from the spoon. The ADD requires a small amount of neck

movement. Upper torso movement makes the device easier to access but is not essential.

It is easy to clean, bowls and spoons are dishwasher and microwave oven safe; weighs less than 16lbs, including the support arm); is battery powered for portable operation; and, serves an entire day's meals and snacks before requiring battery recharging. Versatile mounting methods include mounting on the Support Arm which is clamped to a table top, free standing on a table top, or mounted on legs which stand on a table top.

The ADD serves a wide variety of commonly accepted table foods that are normally eaten with a spoon or fork. Peas, mashed potatoes, breakfast cereal, pudding, fruit cocktail, and other similar foods are all easily served with the ADD. Larger foods like meats, pizza, cookies and salads are also easily served once they are cut into bite size pieces.

You can obtain more information about the Assistive Dining Device by going to www.mealtimepartners.com or by calling Catherine Wyatt, at 817-237-9991.



Drug Discounts

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coverage. Call 800-865-7211 or go to the website at www.Together-Rx.com.

▶ MatureRx is a free national prescription program for Medicare recipients who normally pay cash for prescription medications. It is a discount card program providing discounts (subsidized by Pharmaceutical manufacturers and/or participating pharmacy's usual retail price) on most brand name medications and all generics. Offers a mail order service through Wal-Mart Pharmacy Mail service. Online enrollment www.maturerx.com or call 800-511-1314.

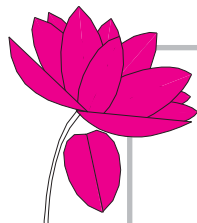
▶ MERCK has expanded its Patient Assistance Program to individuals earning less than \$18,000 per year or couples earning less than \$24,000 annually. For information, 800-727-5400; for application, 800-994-2111.

President Bush's FY 2004 budget includes a \$1.75 billion, five-year program to help Americans with disabilities move from institutions and nursing homes into regular community settings. Based on recommendations made in "Delivering on the Promise, a survey of federal policies that prevent people with disabilities from leading normal lives in community settings, you can read more about the survey at <http://hhs.gov/newfreedom/prelim>, or <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2003pres/200301123.html>. Source AAMR FYI email.

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Shirley Baxter, seniors' program staff at PDDC, submitted this idea for The Family Forum letters. Thanks, Shirley, for reading The Family Forum.



It is with great sadness that we share the news that Juanita Jacobs has passed away. Even with all her many illnesses and the loss of their daughter, she was always positive and helpful. Juanita was a joy to know and we will miss her. Condolences may be sent to Ed Jacobs at 2452 79th Avenue, Phila, PA 19150.

Think
Help
Entertainment

Friendly
Alive
Matters
Interested
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Young

Fun
Organize
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Utilize
Mothers

Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) provides healthcare coverage to workers with disabilities. Under this program you can receive Medicaid, while you work, even if your earnings increase above the limits for other Medicaid programs. Contact the Philadelphia County Assistance office at 215-560-2547 or DPW at 800-692-7462. Source: Senator Shirley Kitchen's newsletter.



Pennsylvania Protection and Advocacy, Inc., and the Pennsylvania Health Law Project have received a grant from the PA DD Council to identify and evaluate the transition services available to persons with developmental disabilities aged 14 to 21 years. PP&A has assembled an Advisory Committee and soon will begin surveying consumers, advocates, and state agencies and providers.

They are seeking 100 consumers who are going through or have recently been through the transition process. For more information: PP&A Larree Beilharz at 800-692-7443 or PHLP Lisa Halperin at 800-274-3258. Source: The Arc PA Hot Sheet

WHAT IS THE EARNED INCOME CREDIT?

The EARNED INCOME CREDIT (EIC) is a special tax benefit for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. Workers who qualify for the EIC and file a federal tax return can get back some or all of the federal income tax that was taken out of their pay during the year. They may also get extra cash back from the IRS. Even workers whose earnings are too small to have paid taxes can get the EIC. What's more, the EIC reduces any additional taxes workers may owe.

Who can get the EIC and how much is it worth?

Single or married people who worked full time or part time at some point in 2002 can qualify for the EIC, depending on their income.

- ❑ Workers who were raising one child in their home and had family income of less than \$29,201 (or \$30,201 for married workers) in 2002 can get an EIC of up to \$2,506.
- ❑ Workers who were raising more than one child in their home and had family income of less than \$33,178 (or \$34,178 for married workers) in 2002 can get an EIC of up to \$4,140.
- ❑ Workers who were not raising children in their home but were between ages 25 and 64 on December 31, 2002 and had income below \$11,060 (or \$12,060 for married workers) can get an EIC of up to \$376.

Which children qualify for the EIC?

“Qualifying children” include: sons, daughters, stepchildren, grandchildren and adopted children as long as they lived with the taxpayer for more than half the year. Also, brothers, sisters, stepbrothers, or stepsisters, as well as descendants of such relatives, if they were cared for as members of the family and other children may qualify as foster children, but only if they are placed with the worker by an authorized government or private placement agency.

As of 2002, a full year is no longer required for foster children.

“Qualifying children” must be under age 19, or under age 24 if they are full-time students. Totally and permanently disabled children of any age also are considered “qualifying children.” Child support payments a parent receives do not count as income when determining eligibility for the EIC or the amount of the EIC.

How do you get the EIC?

- ❑ Workers raising children in 2002 must file either Form 1040 or 1040A and MUST fill out and attach Schedule EIC. Workers with children cannot get the EIC if they file Form 1040EZ or fail to attach Schedule EIC. Married workers must file a joint return to get the EIC.
- ❑ Workers who were not raising children in 2002 can file any tax form – including the 1040EZ. These workers write “EIC” (or the dollar amount of their credit) on the Earned Income Credit line on the tax form. They do not file Schedule EIC.
- ❑ Workers don't have to calculate their own EIC; if they choose, the IRS will do it for them!



To get free assistance with filing a tax return, look for VITA (volunteer income tax assistance) sites in your area around tax time. The sites usually become active in late January or early February. Call 215-686-2599 for locations in the Philadelphia area or go to www.uwsepa.org.

For general tax help, call the IRS at 800-829-1040. This 24 hour line is often busy, so try to be patient. The TDD is 1-800-829-4059. For forms & publications call, 800-829-3676. Tele-tax recorded info for Philadelphia, 800-829-4477. Call 888-PATAXES for a copy of a form. On the web, www.revenue.state.pa.us (for forms and publications).

Thanks to Bernice Kaplan, DHS, for this readable tax information on Pages 12 & 13

PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE INCOME TAX - TAX BACK

What is tax back? Pennsylvania's taxpayers with low and moderate incomes could get their state income tax back.. The Tax Back/Tax Forgiveness program now includes many more working families than it used to, since child dependent allowances have increased.



Who qualifies? Clients can get all of their PA tax back depending on their family size and income. See if they qualify. If their 2001 income is:

- ❑ Single Person up to \$8,750
- ❑ Single Parent with One Child up to \$17,750
- ❑ Single Parent with Two children up to \$26,750
- ❑ Couple up to \$15,250
- ❑ Couple with One Child up to \$24,250
- ❑ Couple with two Children up to \$33,250
- ❑ For each additional child, add: \$9,000

What do they have to do? They must file the state income tax form PA-40 and include PA Schedule SP. Both forms must be filed before April 15, 2003. Call 888-PATAXES (888-728-2937) for special TAX BACK instructions or request to have the forms mailed or faxed to you. Use the Internet at www.revenue.state.pa.us and select [pa.direct.file](#). At that site, clients can file taxes directly and have the TAX BACK calculated for them.

What happens? Clients (or others who qualify) can get money back that was withheld from their paycheck. For example, a family earning \$31,000 could get an \$868 refund. Other families could get all or a part of their state taxes back.

Information provided by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children – State Fiscal Analysis Initiative

WHAT IS THE CHILD TAX CREDIT

The Child Tax Credit (CTC) is a federal tax credit, worth up to \$600 per child in 2002, for families with dependent children under age 17. The CTC is now *refundable*, meaning families can get the credit even if they owe no income tax. Eligible families can receive the CTC in a refund check from the IRS.

Who can claim the child tax credit refund? To be eligible for the Child Tax Credit refund, a single or married worker must:

- ❑ be able to claim an exemption for a dependent child under age 17 on his or her tax return
- ❑ have taxable earned income above \$10,350

Can a working family get both the child tax credit and the earned income credit? Yes! Most low-wage working families that qualify for the new CTC refund will also be eligible for the EIC. For many families that qualify for both credits, the EIC will be larger, but the CTC will still provide a significant income boost.

How do families get the new child tax credit refund? File a Federal Income Tax Return – Form 1040 or 1040A, but not 1040EZ. The instructions and worksheet included in the tax form packet will help tax filers figure their income tax and calculate their maximum possible CTC. Also, file Form 8812, “Additional Child Tax Credit,” which is used to find out if the family qualifies for a CTC refund and, if so, the amount of the refund. Form 8812 must be attached to the tax return for a family to receive the CTC refund.

Does the child tax credit affect public assistance benefits? The CTC refund does not count as income in determining eligibility for any federal, state or local program benefits.

REPEATABLES

These are regularly scheduled meetings. However, check before you go for time, location, or date changes.

SUNDAYS

- ☆ Central Library, Sundays on Stage at 2 pm, free, 1901 Vine St, Montgomery Aud.. Come at 1:30; 215-686-5372.

MONDAYS

- ☆ 1st Mon - 6:30-9pm, Speaking for Ourselves, St. Joes, McShane Hall, 5600 City Li, 610-825-4592

THURSDAYS

- ☆ 2nd Thurs - 1:30pm, SEPTA Advisory Com. on Accessible Transportation, 1234 Market, 11th fl, 215-580-7145
- ☆ 3rd Thurs - 12-2pm, Managed Care Coalition, Liberty Resources, 1341 N. Delaware, 215-634-2000 x240

FRIDAYS

- ☆ 1st Fri evening - visit Old City free open house, in all the art, ceramic, craft exhibits; Old City Arts Assn, 215-625-9200
- ☆ 1st & 3rd Fri - 7-9pm, Easter Seals Phila teen social club, 3975 Conshohocken Ave, Kendra Brooks, 610-565-2353 x231
- ☆ 3rd Fri - 1-3pm, Consumer Connection, Liberty Resources, 1341 N. Delaware, 215-634-2000 x320
- ☆ 3rd Fri - 11:30-3:30pm, Disability Rights Atty Steve Gold will discuss legal issues, Liberty Resources, 1341 N. Delaware, 215-634-2000 x320
- ☆ last Fri - 1-3pm, Support Group for people with disabilities, Liberty Resources, 1341 N. Delaware, 215-634-2000 x248

SATURDAYS

- ☆ 1st Sat - Frankford Friendly, free concerts, arts, food & things for sale, 4200-5000 Frankford Ave
- ☆ 2nd Sat - 1-4pm, Disabled in Action, American Friends Ctr, 1501 Cherry, 215-627-7255

FDSS MEETINGS

CALL for DATE

- ☆ NHS/Knights Rd, 11082 Knights Rd, Loren Wilson, 215-632-9040 x204

1st MON (Mar 3, Apr 7)

- ☆ 10-12pm - PATH., 8220 Castor Ave, Suite 204, Mary MacAvoy, 215-728-4660

2nd MON (Mar 10, Apr 14)

- ☆ 7 pm - COMHAR, 100 W. Lehigh, Lydia Barashango, 215-537-4822
- ☆ 10-12pm - Northeast, Roosevelt Blvd & Adams, Patty Caterina, 215-831-2883

1st TUES (Mar 4, Apr 1)

- ☆ 6:30pm - Community Council, 4900 Wyalusing, Sallie Lambert, 215-473-7033 x273
- ☆ 10am - CATCH, 2632 S. Broad, Diane Jordan-Adams, 215-755-9804

2nd TUES (Mar 11, Apr 8)

- ☆ 10am - Hall Mercer, 245 S. Eighth, Madeleine McMahan, 829-5276
- ☆ 5:30pm - NHS/Mt Airy, 27 E. Mt Airy Ave, Diane Howard, 215-248-6834

3rd WED (Mar 19, Apr 16)

- ☆ 7pm - Consortium, 26 S. 40th St, Darlene Gonzalez, 267-284-0050
- ☆ 6-8pm - JFK, 112 N. Broad, 2nd fl, Betty Harrigan, 215-568-0860 x3214

2nd THURS (Mar 13, Apr 10)

- ☆ Call for time - WES, 1315 Windrim Ave, Michelle Carey, 215-227-8985 x29

3rd THURS (Mar 20, Apr 17)

- ☆ 10am-12pm - FDSS Steering Com., 1441 Sansom St, Deborah Groom, 215-686-0224



- ☆ See Repeatables or FDSS Meetings for Details on Dates with asterisks

MAR - APR 11

- ☆ The Lion King, IMAX theatre, Franklin Institute, 20th St & BF Pkwy, \$10; 215-448-1200

MAR 1 11-4pm

- ☆ Travel Expo, Radisson Hotel, Valley Forge Conv Plaza, free, 610-825-6928

MAR 1

- ☆ Child Health & Safety Conference, \$15, Please Touch Museum, 215-963-0667

MAR 2 - 9

- ☆ Flower Show, PA Convention Center, 11th & Market, \$20; 215-988-8899

** see 1st Mon Repeatables/FDSS

MAR 5, 12, 19, & 26 -8:45pm

- ☆ Phila Museum of Art, music & movies, \$8; 215-763-8100

MAR 5 & 6

- ☆ PaTTAN Conference "Effective Special Education Programs," Harrisburg Hilton & Towers, 800-441-3215

MAR 6 9:30-4pm

- ☆ Overview of Assessments, see Networks

**see 1st Fri Repeatables/FDSS

MAR 7 9:30-4pm

- ☆ Tips for people who use wheelchairs & adaptive equipment, see Networks



MAR 7,14,28 1-4pm

- ☆ Using Accessible Public Transportation Skills Training Class, Liberty Resources, 215-634-2000, X309.

ONGOING: Contact for Dates

- ☆ C2P2 (Competence and Confidence: Partners in Policymaking) leadership training program for people with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, and college students, 215-204-1356 (voice/TTY), millerk@temple.edu
- ☆ Networks for Training, 123 S. Broad St, 23rd fl, annual course guide available, 215-546-4111 x3454, www.networksfortraining.org
- ☆ Vision for Equality, 718 Arch St, 6th fl N, 215-923-3349

MAR 9 2pm

☆ Voices of Africa - all female a cappella group, see Central Library

MAR 10 & 11 10 -1pm & 6-9pm

☆ "Understanding the MR System & the Waiver," see Vision for Equality

MAR 11 5:30-8pm

☆ Person to Person: Choosing & Evaluating Your Staff, see Networks

MAR 11 7-9pm

☆ JEVS hosts Rachel Simon, author of Riding the Bus with My Sister, book signing and reception, Arch Street Meeting House Conference Ctr, 4th and Arch Sts, free parking, 215-854-1788

****see 2nd Thurs Repeatables/FDSS**

MAR 13, 14, & 15

☆ 2003 DVAEYC Conference, Early Childhood Conference, PA Conv Center, \$110 for 2 days, 215-963-0094

MAR 14 7pm

☆ Dance Festival, Phila Rec Dept for the Performing Arts, \$5, Edison HS, Front & Luzerne, 215-685-0709



MAR 15

☆ Parents Involved Network Conference, Doubletree Hotel, Phila, 215-625-3663



MAR 16 12:30-4 pm

☆ St. Patrick's Day Parade, city parade route, 610-449-5489

MAR 18 1:30-4pm

☆ "Communication Supporters Group," see Networks



MAR 20 First Day of Spring

****see 3rd Thurs Repeatables/FDSS**

MAR 20 9:30-4pm

☆ Family Support at the Crossroads, family panel, see Networks

MAR 21 9:30-12pm

☆ Points of Transformation Awards, Independence Visitor Center, 2nd fl, 6th & Market Sts, Freda Egnal, 215-686-0253

****see 3rd Fri Repeatables/FDSS**

MAR 26-29 mall hours

☆ The Arc of Phila's Art & Crafts Competition & Exhibition,, Cheltenham Square Mall in the Center Court. 3-29 at 1pm The Arc Ambassadors will perform. 215-229-4550 x123

****see 4th Fri Repeatables/FDSS**

MAR 31 6-7pm

☆ Genealogy for Beginners, Skyline Room, 4th fl, Central Library, 1901 Vine Street, 215-686-5396



APR 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30 5-8:45pm

☆ Phila Museum of Art, music & movies, \$8; 215-763-8100

APR 4, 11, 25 1-4pm

☆ Using Accessible Public Transportation Skills Training Class, Liberty Resources, 215-634-2000, X309.

APR 6 Daylight Saving Time begins

APR 6 7pm

☆ Phila Youth Orchestra Chamber Music Concert, 1906 Rittenhouse Sq, free, 215-563-7308

APR 6 3pm

☆ Center in the Park, Jazz Concert, 5818 Germantown Ave, \$12, 215-848-7722

APR 7 - 11

☆ One Book, One Philadelphia, see Central Library, 215-567-7710

APR 8 & 9

☆ "In-Depth Intro to Outcomes," JEVS, 3005 School House Lane, Ann Marie Campbell, 215-686-9438

APR 8 5:30-8pm

☆ Person to Person: Hiring, Training, & Firing your Staff, see Networks

APR 11 6:30-9:30pm

☆ Spring Dance, Carousel House, \$5, 215-685-0160

APR 13 Palm Sunday

APR 13

☆ Japanese Cherry Blossom, Morris Arboretum, \$8, 215-247-5777



APR 14 1:30 pm

☆ Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities, 1401 JFK Blvd, 16th fl, Rm Z, 215-686-2798

APR 14 - 18 School Spring Recess



APR 20

APR 21

☆ Last day to register to vote

APR 22 1:30-4pm

☆ Protocol for supporting people at risk of behavioral health hospitalization, see Networks

APR 26

☆ "Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work Day," Michele Higinio, 215-665-2453

APR 26 9:30-1:30pm

☆ "Parenting Conference on Raising Children to Survive & Thrive," Germantown Women's Y & Chestnut Hill Hosp, free, 215-753-2000

APR 26 10-3pm

☆ Temple's Families First Training on "Basics of Early Intervention," free, Headstart Learning Tree/John Gloucester House, 21st & Manton, Mary Mikus, 215-204-1772

APR 28 & 29

☆ Freedom March in Harrisburg, Speaking for Ourselves, Debbie Robinson, 610-825-4592, 800-867-3330

APR 29 Holocaust Remembrance Day

APR 30 - MAY 4

☆ International Children's Festival, Annenberg Center, 3680 Walnut St, 215-898-3900



For Expanded Dates
Visit
**www.
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.Com**

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Let's hear from you!

Please submit articles to: Editor, Family Forum, Mental Retardation Services, 2nd fl, 1441 Sansom St., Philadelphia, PA 19102

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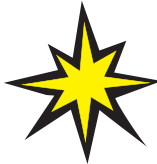
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 Email: familyforum@phila.gov
 MRS Internet Resource Directory
 www.mycitymyplace.com



MARCH is MENTAL RETARDATION AWARENESS MONTH

Join us!

Points of Transformation Awards



Friday, March 21 at 9:30 a.m.
Independence Visitor Center
6th and Market Streets, 2nd floor



If undeliverable, please return to:
Editor, The Family Forum
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