

Breaking Barriers Together

The Newsletter for
the Delta Center for
Independent
Living

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“My Advocacy Experience At the State Capitol”

By Ruth Reid, Consumer Advocate

“This was my second time to go to Jefferson City, only this time I was not going to see the city and Capitol as a tourist. This time I was going to observe the function of our state government and influence the law-makers.

“Each of us who went on this trip had an agenda that we wanted to express to the different representatives and senators that we were able to see. By sharing our personal experience with these chosen leaders, we hoped to influence the making of a bill or their choosing to vote for one that was already in process.

“Personally, I shared about how my Medicaid spend down amount had increased, my housing (rent) went up and my food stamps went down when I found a part-time secular job not under the Title V program, even though I was

making the same amount of money as I had on a previous job.

“I came to the realization that these government officials were normal every day people, just like us, who had been elected by us to do a job of running our state government. By being an advocate seeking to influence these leaders, we were carrying out the acts of our democracy. They responded by taking time to listen to us. We hope that we made a difference by going there.

“It caused me to call my U.S. Senator, Todd Akin, to question him about the upcoming changes of our Medicare benefits that were mentioned by our president in a speech on television. I would never have done that before.

“Getting to know the other people who came on this trip was great. We all had different problems and disabilities that we each have had to learn to deal with. It caused me to become aware of other peoples’ needs for friendship and encouragement.

“I am glad that Delta Center arranged for each of us to be able to participate in this advocacy group. By them taking care of the expense and the arrangements for our transportation, it made it possible for us to go. I appreciate what they have done. Thank you.”

Editor’s Note: The Advocacy Network travels to the State Capitol in Jefferson City at least once per month when the Legislature is in session, from January through May.

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Your Advocacy Network

Consumers are encouraged to meet quarterly to discuss issues affecting individuals with disabilities in Saint Charles, Lincoln and Warren counties. DCIL Advocates will then put together plans to remove those barriers to provide full inclusion and community participation for individuals with disabilities.

If you are interested in being a part of the Network, taking part in teleconferences, learning more on the Advocacy Network, or if you want to keep informed via email, contact Kyle at 636-926-8761 x241 or kyletate@dcil.org.



Information on Consumers Accessing Attendant Surveys

Each year agencies which provide Consumer Directed attendant Services (CDS), such as the Delta Center, must survey the consumers who access it as a requirement of Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS).

Questions like these will be asked of CDS participants throughout the state:

- *Since having an attendant, my quality of life has improved;*

- *My attendant observes changes in my health condition and assists me in reporting them;*
- *My attendant knows what my emergency plan is;*
- *Since getting my attendant, I feel more hopeful/optimistic about the future;*
- *Delta Center staff is helpful to me if I have any problems with my attendant.*

As part of the Strategic Plan, Delta Center's Board of Directors requested that all consumer surveys include the following True / False question: *"I have access to the community resources and supports I need and want, when I need and want them."*

For consumers who indicated they did *not* have access to necessary and desired community resources, this follow up question was asked: *"What would you need in order to answer, I have access all of the time?"*

In response to comments made by consumers, Delta Center staff will:

- Develop a resource guide to address the most common needs specific to each county we serve;
- Ask prospective attendants to list references and past employers on applications so that consumer employers can follow up;
- Mail consumer employers explanations of timesheet requirements as established by Medicaid (Missouri HealthNet) and;
- Continue to look for ways to help consumers submit timesheets without errors and with all necessary information included, so that attendants are paid on time.

To get a copy of the survey summary, contact Danielle Carter at 636-926-8761x241 or daniellecarter@dcil.org.



Tour the World Wide Web!

The Saint Charles County Library System offers a course in "Internet Basics" for those new to the Internet and provides a "hands-on" exploration of the Internet. You'll learn basic mouse control, computer jargon, and basic internet searching. Class size is limited. Registration is required. To register, contact Willy or Leslie directly at 636-441-6454.

Delta Center can provide transportation to the training. Contact Vito Lucido at 636-926-8761 x246 or vitolucido@dcil.org at least one week in advance.

Re-Boot Your Life with Free Computers

Have you ever wanted to directly communicate via e-mail with your elected officials? Or, write a "Letter to the Editor" of your local newspaper? Would you like to gain a greater level of independence by learning skills that are valuable in today's society? Have you ever wanted to find a peer support network and "talk" on the Internet with others facing similar challenges due to their disability?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you may want to know about the Delta Center's "Reboot A Life" program. We recognize the critical role

computers play in linking individuals with disabilities to the rest of the world.

In exchange for receiving a refurbished computer through Delta Center, you will be asked to take part in our Advocacy Network for 12 months in the capacity most comfortable for you.

While Delta Center can help you in adapting the computer to meet your needs, the cost of internet access or peripheral devices will be the responsibility of the consumer.

If you are new to computers or the Internet, have no fear! We have people standing by to train you. In addition, free training programs are offered through the Saint Charles County Library System.



If you'd like to sign up to be on our list and start the training process, please call Kyle Tate at 636-926-8761 x241 or kyletate@dcil.org.

Home computers are being called upon to perform many new functions, including the consumption of homework formerly eaten by the dog.

~ From Doug Larson, American Cartoonist

Update on the Missouri Quality Homecare Council

"Proposition B," passed by voters on the November 2008 ballot, established the Missouri Quality Home Care Council. It was advertised as a means by which individuals with physical disabilities could remain in their homes and access attendant services.

Governor Nixon is in the process of appointing members to the Council. Then, the state Legislature must decide whether to fund it. Once members have been appointed and, if funded, the Council will make recommendations to the state government on issues dealing with wage rates and possible attendant benefits.

The Council would also recognize the right of personal care attendants providing Consumer Directed Services (CDS) to choose representation by a union. Additionally, they would create a list of eligible personal care attendants available to work.

What does NOT change under proposition B? Consumer Directed Services and Centers for Independent Living like Delta Center will remain the same:

- The attendant/consumer employer relationship remains the same: attendants will work for consumers, and consumer employers retain the right to supervise, hire and fire attendants.
- Your relationship with Delta Center for Independent Living does not change. We will continue to process time sheets, and all other current services.

All Missouri Centers have been asked to provide information on attendants in the CDS program during 2008 in accordance with "The Sunshine Law", which requires release of public documents. As such,

Delta Center was obligated to release this information.

The request came from two unions, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); they are now contacting attendants to discuss joining a union.



Union representatives will ask attendants to sign a petition or otherwise confirm *in writing* that they want an election to take place to decide if they will join a union. Attendants do *NOT* have to talk to union representatives, but they may do if interested.

However, consumer employers do *NOT* have to allow union representatives into their homes.

If 10% of attendants say they want an election about unions, there will be an election. If over 50% of eligible attendants vote "yes" in that election, then attendants will be "unionized."

If attendants choose to be represented by a union, all attendants will be required to pay the union, even if they voted "no" in the election. The cost is usually about 2% of every paycheck.

However, attendants will *NOT* have the right to go on strike.

Funds Available to Move from Nursing Homes

Because most residents of nursing homes and similar institutions have given up their homes, furnishings and much of their financial resources, moving back into the community can be costly. Finding the necessary resources can be challenging, if not impossible.

“Money Follows the Person” (MFP) is a grant program established to assist people living in nursing homes or habilitation centers who want to move to the community. Its purpose is:

- to provide a choice of where individuals live and receive services;
- allow people living in nursing facilities or habilitation centers to move to the community; and
- promote a system that is person-centered, based on needs, and ensures high-quality services in both the community and care facilities.

Once funds are approved, the one-year program will help consumers transition back into the community by purchasing needed items such as furniture, bedding, cookware, etc., even helping with security deposits for housing or utilities.



To qualify to use the program, the individual must:

- have lived in a habilitation center or nursing facility for a period of at least six months; be Missouri HealthNet (Medicaid) eligible in the care facility for at least one month;
- be able to transition to housing that is either leased or owned by the participant or participant's family, or move to residential housing with no more than four additional individuals living in that home.

After that one year period ends, the consumer will continue to receive home services and community supports through the regular Missouri HealthNet program, as long as they continue to be eligible for those services.

Delta Center is currently working with two people in nursing homes who are in the process of transitioning back into their communities through the MFP program.

If you know of someone who may be interested in learning more about this program, please have them call Kathy Spiers at 636-926-8761 x241 or kathy Spiers@dcil.org.

Help with Utility Bills

If you need help paying utility bills, there may financial assistance available because Missouri funds two programs:

- Energy Assistance / Regular Heating (EA) begins in October and runs through the month of March, or, for as long as the funds are available.
- Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) has two seasons: Winter (October through May or as long as funds are available) and Summer (i.e., June through September), or as long as funds are available.

Eligibility for assistance in is based on household income, the size of your family size, and the type of fuel that is used.

For information on eligibility, contact your Family Support Division Caseworker, or, your Independent Living Specialist at Delta Center.



Ask Your Independent Living Specialist...

Q: How do I continue to qualify for Medicaid (MO Healthnet) after I receive a one-time settlement such as an inheritance?

A: Today, Delta Center's Petra Williams, responds: "We spoke with our good friend Alex Daskalakis with the Family Support Division of Lincoln County. He

stated, "While anyone can apply for Medicaid, problems can occur in regard to what is considered income."

"A person with a disability may qualify for Missouri Healthnet (Medicaid) if household net income does not exceed \$737 a month for an individual or \$992 a month for a couple. Any amount over this must be spent on medical-related expenses in order to keep Missouri Healthnet coverage.

"In considering eligibility, assets do not include the person's primary residence, one vehicle, household goods or property valued under a specified amount.

"So, it is possible to keep large settlements or an inheritance through the creation of a trust, something given into one's care for the benefit or interest of another."

The Midwest Special Needs Trust (MSNT) is a financial service that will help people with an unexpected "windfall" or monetary settlement set up a way to plan for the future needs of a person with a disability without jeopardizing their Social Security Income or Missouri Healthnet eligibility.

"These trusts are often referred to as Medicaid Payback Trusts. For example, someone with a disability who receives an inheritance may place those funds into a special needs trust and still be eligible for SSI and Medicaid benefits. This is a terrific advantage for Medicaid recipients who otherwise must 'spend-down' resources to meet the resource guidelines for eligibility.

"Funds held in a special needs trust may be used in accordance with SSI and Medicaid regulations to supplement monthly income from benefits." (Information excerpted from the website www.midwestspecialneedstrust.org)

“Where Are They Now?”

Catching up with former Delta Center staff

Nita Slover was an employee of Delta Center for over three years. She first worked part time for the Delta Center as a Personal Attendant Services (PAS) payroll specialist, verifying the accuracy of attendant time sheets and tracking consumer eligibility for services.

Nita then changed job positions, and began providing Information and Referral assistance on a full-time basis to individuals living in St. Charles, Lincoln and Warren counties. In that role, she handled consumer assistance funds and support groups referrals, and arranged for transportation so that consumers could go to medical appointments and do essential shopping. She also helped many consumers who were having difficulties using their home phones to obtain adaptive telephones tailored to their disability-specific needs.

Nita resigned in 2007 due to health reasons, but remained active with the Center by conducting the annual consumer satisfaction surveys.

Although she was diagnosed with juvenile arthritis at an early age, she has not let it keep her from pursuing her goals, such as her degree in Social Work from the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

In July of 2008, she created “Slover Disability Consultants”, her own business serving as a consultant for people with disabilities in all aspects of dealing with a disability. She consults on ADA issues and service dogs, and takes speaking engagements on disability awareness topics.

Nita was recently appointed to the board of directors of Delta Center where she will participate in development of policies to fulfill on the delivery of Delta Center’s mission and strategic plan.

Nita lives with her husband Max, service dog Elliot and her cat Boo.

Nita is a terrific example of what an individual with a disability can accomplish.

Parting Thoughts

The Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself.

~Benjamin Franklin

Don't get discouraged. It's often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock.

~Author Unknown

When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.

~Franklin D. Roosevelt

Never do anything that you don't want to explain to the paramedics.

~Author Unknown

The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them.

~ George Bernard Shaw, Irish Playwright



The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking places.

~ Author Unknown



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Spring 2009 Newsletter

**Our Mission: "Delta Center
for Independent Living partners
with people with disabilities and
their communities to remove
barriers and promote positive
changes leading to greater
independence for all."**