



Connecticut Disability Advocacy Collaborative Bulletin

“Enhancing the effectiveness of disability activism by organizing and empowering individuals, families, groups and organizations”

Disability Rights is a Civil Rights Issue

March – April 2006

Need this newsletter in an alternative format?

Please let us know.

This Bulletin is supported by a grant that the Disability Advocacy Collaborative has received from the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities. In addition, in-kind support is being provided by the UConn Center on Disability, and Communitas, Inc. serves as the project’s fiscal agent. To all three we extend our appreciation.

**Please Note: The Calendar is a separate attachment.
For archived Bulletins go to kleinmanconsulting.com.**

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Update on Collaborative Activities

There is lots going on with the Collaborative. Here is a quick update of regional activity:

- A meeting was held in Greenwich on February 24 with fifteen advocates present. Carol Kana of Greenwich has agreed to take on a leadership role in southwestern Connecticut. A follow up meeting is set for March 24 in at Bertucci's in Westport. Contact Carol at pkana@snet.net for more information.
- The southeastern advocacy network is sponsoring a two part advocacy training workshop on March 21 and April 4 (6:30 – 8:30 pm both days) at UCP of Eastern Connecticut in Quaker Hill. Katie Martin from One Connecticut will present on advocacy skill development in Part 1, and a panel of individuals who have had success at self-advocacy will present at Part 2. Call Cheryl at 1-860-443-3800 to sign up.
- Michelle Duprey has taken on a leadership role in south central Connecticut and will be organizing an event designed to promote involvement in political campaigns by people with disabilities and families for the spring.
- Northwest Activists for Disability Rights (NADR) in Naugatuck is working with VISTA Volunteer Larry Robinson on sponsoring an advocacy training workshop in the Greater Waterbury area. Contact Chera Ann Simpson (203-729-3299 (v), 203-729-1281 (TDD) for more information.
- Larry is also working with Pat Tomka, new Executive Director at WeCAHR in Danbury, to pull together a cross-disability network in the Greater Danbury area
- Other advocacy networks are in various stages of development in the Greater Bridgeport area (Disability Resource Center in Stratford taking the lead role), the Greater Hartford area, the northwestern corner of the state, and the Mansfield area.

In addition, work will soon begin on the development of a web site for the Collaborative, and three MSW grad students have come aboard to help with targeted outreach activities. Contacts have been made with the campaign staff of several of Connecticut's gubernatorial candidates, who will be invited to speak at the September 16 Disability Convention. The Collaborative is pleased to announce that the State Independent Living Council is lending its support to the Candidates' Forum part of the Convention. Finally, an invitation will soon be going out to vendors and agencies asking them to sign up to show their wares at the Convention.

More about these and other activities of the Collaborative in the next edition of the Bulletin.

State Legislative Activity

The period of time since the last "Bulletin" was published in early February has been filled with public hearings on dozens of bills that affect people with disabilities. It is impossible to keep up with the outcomes of the public hearings, and the many committee deadlines will be concluded this week (week of 3/13/06). Bulletin readers are encouraged

to follow up with organizations that have either proposed or are on top of specific legislative initiatives:

- A pilot program has been proposed to provide a coordinated system of supports and services for adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) without mental retardation. Contact Lois Rosenwald at the **Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center (ASRC)** 203-248-5222 or by email ct-asrc@sbcglobal.net.
- Proposals have been submitted by the state **Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities** that:
 - would ensure that public school students (K-12) with print disabilities receive their instructional materials at the same time as other students;
 - would allow the Executive Director of P&A to create an Accessibility Access Board to advise the Director on accessibility matters including those related to government programs and services, transportation and housing;
 - would require the Department of Correction to report all suicides of inmates and prisoners to P&A;
 - would put the Fatality Review Board, which was created by former Governor Rowland's Executive Order 25, into the P&A statute. Contact Beth Leslie at 860-297-4300.
- Proposals submitted by the **Long Term Care Advisory Committee** seek to:
 - obtain funding for a comprehensive analysis of the state's long term care needs that would 1) assess consumers' long term care needs, desires, and preferences, and 2) plan for optimal use of public and private long term care funding;
 - create a state-funded home care pilot for persons under age 65 not eligible for existing PCA waivers (also submitted by the MS Society and Alzheimer's Association – the pilot would be limited to 50 adults and not cost more than \$250,000);
 - expand the statewide respite care program by increasing funding and eliminating the restriction that makes people under 65 who are on Medicaid ineligible;
 - mandate criminal background checks on all direct care workers who provide long term care services; For more information, contact Julie-Evans Starr, Co-Chair of the Long Term Care Advisory Council at 860-240-5201, or by e-mail at coa@cga.ct.gov .

The Arc of Connecticut seeks to:

- support funding for the Waiting List of the Department of Mental Retardation;
- support wage increases for employees of private community agencies, who are paid approximately 40% less than State employees doing comparable work;

- change the name of the Department of Mental Retardation to the Department of Developmental Disabilities; he Arc has joined with People First of Connecticut to seek statutory changes for all references to DMR, and is also seeking legislation requiring the use of respectful and people-first language (PFL) in all Connecticut statutes and regulations;
 - support mandatory audio or visual taping of interrogations in capital cases (people with intellectual disabilities can easily misunderstand or be misled into making false confessions to serious crimes);
 - support establishment of a Trust fund to hold proceeds from the sale or lease of properties formerly used to house or care for people with intellectual disabilities;
 - support repeal of the law that provides a financial incentive to school districts planning to construct segregated educational facilities;
 - ensure adequate funding to implement the Federal District Court-approved Settlement in the “P.J. v. Board of Education” case; contact Peg Dignoti at 860-953-8335.
- **The Connecticut Legal Rights Project** and other disability activists are fighting attempts to limit the housing choices available to people with disabilities by restricting their access to state funded elderly housing. To find out more, contact Jan VanTassel at 860-262-5042 or jvantassel@clrp.org.
 - **NAMI-CT (National Alliance on Mental Illness – CT Chapter)** seeks proposals designed to:
 - maximize federal revenue for mental health services and reinvest money “saved” back into the mental health system
 - decriminalize youth and adults with serious mental illness
 - reduce the number of people with serious mental illness being placed in nursing homes and provide the services needed to sustain community living
 - raise the age of adulthood in Connecticut to 18 years old. Follow up with Alicia Woodsby at 1-800-215-3021 or by e-mail at publicpolicy@namict.org

Beth Leslie, OP&A’s wonderful legislative liaison, suggests that interested readers may obtain information about these and other legislative proposals by visiting the General Assembly’s Internet site at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/> Bills are listed by committee. As the deadlines pass to take action on bills, bills that have "died in committee" will be removed from the list. Each legislative committee is listed, even if there are no bills to list.

ALERT for people on Medicare/Medicaid and on ConnPace

Effective March 8, 2006 the Connecticut Department of Social Services is no longer providing emergency back-up to pharmacies for medication co-pays for people with both Medicare and Medicaid and ConnPACE recipients.

A broad coalition concerned about the impact of Medicare Part D on individuals in this situation have put together a card template for broad distribution. One side of the card concerns the impropriety of people ever being charged a co-pay and the other side is about the availability of DSS coverage for drugs not on a Part D formulary-- both for people on both Medicare and Medicaid and ConnPACE recipients. The cards cites the governing state statute as well as the specific DSS bulletins explaining how this is supposed to work.

For those in helping roles, you can assist by making up the cards yourself. You also can distribute them to pharmacists willing to provide them to their customers, at clinic waiting rooms, etc. Also, Spanish versions of the card will soon be available. For copies in pdf format to make them wallet sized contact Vicki Veltri (vveltri@ghla.org). For greater understanding of the issues involved contact Attorney Sheldon Toubman at stoubman@nhlegal.org .

Mental Health Care Reform

On Feb. 14th members of the Community Mental Health Cabinet held a press conference at the State Capitol calling for mental health care reform. Lieutenant Governor Kevin Sullivan and Michael Allen, Senior Staff Attorney at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law in Washington, DC spoke. They highlighted the recent lawsuit filed by the State Office of Protection and Advocacy against the state of Connecticut challenging the widespread practice of warehousing adults and young adults with mental illness in nursing homes. Sullivan and the Community Mental Health Cabinet are urging legislative action to implement a federal Medicaid-financed home and community-based pilot waiver. Under the waiver, Medicaid funding would be redirected to discharge and divert people with mental illness to less costly and more effective health care services.

Kennedy Center on the Move

The Kennedy Center is now located at 39 Lindeman Drive, Trumbull, CT 06611. Contact kmcep@yahoo.com for more information or go to the website to view their services, which include travel training on public transportation to all residents of the state who have a disability or are elderly (www.thekennedycenterinc.org/general/home.php) .

New Rental Assistance Program Certificates

According to a recent CABHN (Connecticut Association for Basic Human Needs) newsletter, the state Department of Social Services will have 300 new Rental Assistance Program certificates available in June.

Tax Info Available

Armand Legault, Retired Tax Audit Supervisor, Connecticut Dept of Revenue Services, is making his Power Point presentation on taxes and people with disabilities available to any interested individual or family. The presentation covers such topics as:

- * How to claim impairment-related work expenses for a person with disabilities
- * How to get tax breaks associated with age or disability
- * How to claim deductions for medical expenses
- * What are your tax obligations as a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) employer?
- * How to claim \$1000 property tax exemption
- * What deductions are possible for adapted vehicles?

Armand can be reached at freemepc@cox.net.

Tax Tips to Families of Children with Learning Disabilities

In a press release, the nonprofit group Schwab Learning announces it is offering a 2005 tax tips guide to help parents and guardians of disabled children become more savvy about medical expense deductions and other tax breaks. The IRS allows tuition to schools with special programs, tutoring from qualified teachers and related transportation costs to qualify as medical expenses. For more information go to www.schwablearning.org/ .

Connecticut Gets “B” Grade for Mental Health Services

In the first state-by-state analysis of the nation’s mental health care system in over 15 years, Connecticut receives a B grade, NAMI-CT, the state chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) announced earlier this month. The national average is a D, confirming what a presidential commission has called “a system in shambles.” Only four other states received grades in the B range: Maine, Ohio, South Carolina and Wisconsin.

According to *Grading the States: A Report on America’s Health Care System for Serious Mental Illnesses*, 17 states and the District of Columbia received Cs, 19 states received Ds, and 8 states received Fs. Two states, Colorado and New York, declined to respond to an October- November 2005 survey on which the report is based.

For a full copy of the report, including state narratives, see www.nami.org/grades.

UConn Center Offers Forum on Disability Issues

The University of Connecticut Center on Disabilities is hosting a forum on Wednesday, April 5, 2006 in order to find out how individuals and organizations/agencies can work with the UCEDD to improve the lives of people with disabilities. The event will be held from 9 am to 2 pm at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, 100 Berlin Road Cromwell, Connecticut. For more information or to request accommodations or alternate formats contact Gabriela Freyre-Calish at freyre@nso2.uhc.edu or 860.679.1563 (TTY 860.679.1502). Sign language interpreters will be provided upon request.

Registrations must be received by March 17, 2006. Registrations will not be accepted at the door.

2006 ASCONN Mini-Grant Program Announced

The Autism Society of Connecticut (ASCONN) has announced that applications for the 2006 mini-grant program will be accepted from February 15, 2006 through June 1, 2006. With generous support from the Doug Flutie, Jr., Foundation for Autism, ASCONN is able to increase both the amount and the number of grants to be awarded in 2006.

Grants will be accepted for up to \$1,000 per grant for parents, family members, persons with autism or anyone working with persons on the autism spectrum. Funds must be used to purchase items or services that directly relate to the safety and security of persons with autism or their families within Connecticut. Examples of appropriate items, activities or services include purchasing of safety equipment; purchasing of specialty car seats, strollers, head gear and other equipment; training of personnel (within the home or other community places serving persons with autism) in proper physical management techniques; training of community responders about autism.

Grant applications can be downloaded from www.autismsocietyofct.org or call 888-453-4975 to be sent an application

Transitions for Students with Disabilities

LEARN and EASTCONN (regional educational service centers) are cooperating with Quinnebaug Valley Community College in the presentation of "Moving Forward III – A Transition Conference for Students with Disabilities and Their Families." The event will take place Wednesday, March 15, 2006 from 6-8 pm at Quinnebaug Valley Community College in Danielson.

The conference is open to parents of children between 14-21 years of age. It will explore options that are available to students with disabilities. Exhibitors from various agencies and programs will be present. Topics that will be discussed will include self-advocacy,

assistive technology, services available from the state Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the state Department of Mental Retardation, and college/voc tech options.

Admission is free and refreshments will be served. For more information call 860-434-4800, ext. 134 or 860-455-0707. For directions go to www.qvcc.commnet.edu .

Important AHEAD Conference

The Connecticut Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) is offering an important conference on “Creating Campus Change for Students with a Psychiatric Disability” featuring as Guest Speaker Barbara Blacklock, M.A., LISW who teaches at the University of Minnesota.

The event will take place Friday, April 7, 2006 with registration at 8:30 am and the presentation from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. It will take place at the University of Hartford (Main Campus), Konover Campus Center. Registration for this seminar is free, but space is limited so register early!

For questions regarding the event please contact Lila Coddington (860) 832-0078 coddingtonl@ccsu.edu .

Registration Deadline: Friday, March 24, 2006

Stem Cell Research Workshop

The Jewish Community Relations Council and Women’s Philanthropy are sponsoring a community health forum on “Stem Cell Research: Lifelines for the Future” on Thursday, March 30, 2006. The event will begin at 7 pm at the Beth El Temple, 2626 Albany Avenue in West Hartford, Connecticut and Israel are on the cutting edge of medical technology’s new frontier. Find out what the promise of stem cell research means for people with disabilities.

Autism Society Annual Conference

The Autism Society of Connecticut is proud to announce registration is open for the 16th Annual Statewide Conference on Autism to be held on Saturday, April 29, at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. Keynote speakers include Temple Grandin, PhD and Brenda Smith-Myles.

More information and a downloadable registration form are available at www.autismsocietyofct.org .

Friendly Visitor Program Begins

Interfaith Volunteer Care Givers is collaborating with the Elderly Task Force to bring a Friendly Visitor Program to Meriden. Volunteers visit, assist with shopping or errands, provide rides to medical appointments, read mail, provide telephone support, sort and organize belongings, and give one or two hours of respite to families in the city. For more information contact John Hogarth at the Meriden Senior Center 203-237-0066 or Barbara Barlok at 230-8994.

Mitchell College Celebrates 25th!

In celebration of the 25th anniversary year of the Mitchell College Learning Resource Center, the College will present Dr. Rick Lavoie, award-winning author and expert in the field of Learning Disabilities in a morning workshop and luncheon on Saturday, March 18, 2006.

Dr. Lavoie has delivered his message to over 500,000 parents and professionals throughout North America, so space is expected to be limited for the Mitchell College workshop titled, "Learning Disorders through the Lifespan: Finding True Success in The Classroom, The Workplace and The Community."

The cost for a student to attend the workshop is \$15 (with a valid student ID). There is also a Meet the Author Luncheon in the Weller Center Conference Room after his presentation for an additional \$25 per person. Participants also have the option to have lunch in the College Dining Hall for the normal lunch rate of \$6.50. Staff from Mitchell's Learning Resource Center will also offer a presentation on the LRC program in the afternoon. There will be opportunities to tour the Center and meet with learning specialists and admissions counselors. For more information or to register, call (860) 701-5141 or register online at www.mitchell.edu.

Self-Help Directory

The Self-Help Directory: A Guide to Connecticut and National Support Groups is available by calling 203-624-6982. There are numerous support groups in CT. You can also contact your statewide organization to find the dates, locations and times that might be helpful to you.

Workshop on Parents with Cognitive Limitations

The Connecticut Parents with Cognitive Limitations Workgroup is pleased to announce a free "Identifying and Working with Parents with Cognitive Limitations" training, set for Monday, March 27, 2006 from 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM at the Burroughs Community Center, 2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport 06605. Training topics Include:

- Implications of limitations in functioning
- Behavior and assessment

- The impact on children
- Ways to help families

Register online at www.ctclearinghouse.org/registration/ or by calling Connecticut Clearinghouse at 800-232-4424. Please register early for these free workshops as space is limited! Priority will be given to staff from agencies in Bridgeport. NASW CECs will be available. Lunch will be on your own.

Benefit Concert for Communitas

A benefit concert for Communitas, Inc., featuring Tim Tierney, will be held Sunday, April 23, 2006 from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Cadillac Ranch on Jude Lane in Southington. A donation of \$10.00 per person is requested, and children under 10 years old get in free.

Enjoy an afternoon of great Country music, raffles, food and an auction to benefit Communitas – a non-profit organization that assists people with disabilities. A highlight of the auction will be an autographed Charlie Daniels Fiddle with certificate of authenticity and sheet music (also autographed) to “The Devil Went Down To Georgia”.

FOR TICKETS: Please send self-addressed stamped envelope to: Donna & Phil - 241 Unionville Avenue - Plainville, CT 06062, or call: (860) 747-3827 (2:00 – 9:00 pm). Tickets will also be available at the door.

Connecticut’s Nursing Facilities Transition Program to be Highlighted

The Nursing Facilities Transitions Program, initially funded by the federal government and now funded by the state, will be the focus of a number of publications and activities over the next month:

- A Policy Brief highlighting Connecticut will be published by Rutgers Center for State Health Policy on March 21.
- Connecticut's program will be the highlight of The Forum for State Health Policy Leadership sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures on March 21. The topic will be sustaining Nursing Facility Transition Programs.
- Connecticut is the highlight of the first issue (March) of the HCBS news CLIPS.
- Connecticut was invited to present at the CMS conference (April) in the areas of coalition building (the MIG) and factors leading to systemic change (the NF).

Housing Day at the State Capitol

The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the Connecticut Housing Coalition, the Connecticut AIDS Resource Center, the Reaching Home Campaign and One Connecticut have joined forces to sponsor “a day” at the State Capitol in order to provide an

opportunity for citizens to make their voices heard in support of affordable housing, including supportive housing, and other programs to end homelessness. The event will be held on March 22 from 12:00 - 3:00 p.m. in Room 310, Capitol Building, 210 Capitol Avenue.

Please RSVP by to Tabitha Harkin, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, phone: (860) 721-7876, fax: (860) 257-1148 or tabitha@cceh.org. A flyer with more details, including information about scheduling meetings with your local representatives and a schedule for the afternoon, is available.

Aging and People with Down Syndrome

The Kennedy Center in Bridgeport is offering a workshop on aging and people with Down Syndrome on Tuesday, May 2, 2006 from 6-8 pm at 30 Lindeman Drive in Trumbull. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Gerald Kerins, M.D., Section Chief of Geriatrics at the Hospital of St. Raphael and Faculty Member at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and Yale University School of Medicine.

For further information e-mail Ginger at gfiore@kennedyctr.org or call at (203) 332-4535 x 245.

Effective Education for Children with Autism

Four organizations have combined to offer a workshop on innovative strategies for teaching children with autism and related disabilities. Connecticut Families for Effective Treatment of Autism (FEAT), the Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA), the River Street Autism Program, and the UConn College of Continuing Studies will host the event, set for Saturday, April 8, 2006 at the University of Connecticut Waterbury Campus. The workshop will feature Andy Bondy, Ph.D. from Pyramid Education Consultants, Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., from the River Street Autism Program, with special guest speaker Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of the University of Massachusetts.

Registration is \$65 per person, includes lunch and dessert reception. CEUs are available. A conference brochure, registration form and directions to UConn are available by contacting Roberta Daversa online at RoDaversa@aol.com, or by calling the CT FEAT Telephone Information Hotline at (860) 571-3888.

Free Tax Guide for Parents

The parent(s) of a child with a disability is entitled to many income tax deductions as Medical Expenses, provided the expenses are made to alleviate their child's mental or physical condition. Information on allowable deductions is available in the 2005 edition of Tax Guide for Parents. This guide can assist parents in understanding how expenses

such as tutoring, medical treatments, evaluations, transportation, equipment and supplies can be deducted.

The Tax Guide for Parents is available on the Connecticut Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities' (CACLD) website under Info and Resources. It can also be obtained by sending a 39-cent stamped, self-addressed #10 envelope to: CACLD/ Tax Guide, 25 Van Zant Street, Suite 15-5, E. Norwalk, CT 06855.

SAMHSA Issues Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery

On February 25 the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) unveiled a consensus statement outlining principles necessary to achieve mental health recovery. The consensus statement was developed through deliberations by over 110 expert panelists representing mental health consumers, families, providers, advocates, researchers, managed care organizations, state and local public officials and others.

"Recovery must be the common, recognized outcome of the services we support," SAMHSA Administrator Charles Curie said. "This consensus statement on mental health recovery provides essential guidance that helps us move towards operationalizing recovery from a public policy and public financing standpoint. Individuals, families, communities, providers, organizations, and systems can use these principles to build resilience and facilitate recovery."

The 10 Fundamental Components of Recovery include: Self-Direction, Individualized and Person-Centered Programming, Empowerment, Non Linear, Holistic, Strengths-Based, Peer Support, Respect, Responsibility, and Hope.

Recovery provides the essential and motivating message of the National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery and is available at SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center at www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov or 1-800-789-2647.

Federal Officials to Join ADAPT in Nashville

ADAPT reports that in a virtually unprecedented national forum sponsored by ADAPT, officials from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the National Council on Disability (NCD), the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), ADAWatch, and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) will hear firsthand testimony documenting the institutional bias in America's long-term care system. The hearing will be held in Nashville's Hilton Hotel Volunteer Ballroom on Sunday, March 19, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

As many as one hundred people with disabilities who have been or are currently in nursing homes, developmental disability facilities, or residential hospital facilities will be

testifying on life in an institutional setting. Their testimony is also expected to share details of how they managed to leave the institutional environment, and what life is like living in their own homes in the community. People who are still trying to move into the community from a facility will be testifying about why they want to leave and the barriers they have encountered.

One of the people expected to testify at the hearing is Lois Curtis, subject of a landmark case, often referred to as the "Olmstead Case" in which the U.S. Supreme Court decided that forcing people to stay in institutions was tantamount to discrimination, and was therefore illegal. Curtis now lives in the community and has become a celebrated artist. In addition to being heard by federal officials, the testimony on Medicaid's institutional bias will be recorded for later distribution as a written report, a film, and as a photographic essay, and will be webcast live at <http://www.ilru.org/> , beginning at 1 p.m. EST. Individuals interested in joining the web cast should RSVP to help with planning to: rsvp_webcast@mcil.org with the word "rsvp" in the subject line.

For more information on ADAPT visit <http://www.adapt.org/>

Block Grant Cuts Feared

In his fiscal 2007 budget, President Bush has proposed cutting about 20 percent from the popular, 31-year-old Community Development Block Grant program - which already has been cut significantly this year. Connecticut is getting about \$42.6 million this year, down from \$48.2 million in 2005, for a program that state and local officials have long viewed as one of Washington's effective ways of improving neighborhoods. Many municipalities have used block grant funds to remove architectural barriers and provide curb cuts on city streets.

The city of Hartford expects to receive \$7.6 million in grant money this year, down 8.7 percent from 2005. It uses the funds for projects that include finishing construction of the Boys and Girls Club on Asylum Hill and setting up an after-school program there, helping house people with AIDS in the area, training small business owners at the University of Hartford and developing Hartford's Riverfront Recapture program.

Other Connecticut cities and towns have used the money for similarly diverse projects, including repairing sidewalks, demolishing decaying buildings, rehabilitating housing, planting trees and shrubs - and helping to provide medical and dental care in senior centers.

Medicare Beneficiaries and Phone Scams

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is warning seniors and people with disabilities to be aware of a scheme that asks Medicare beneficiaries for money and checking account information to help them enroll in a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan.

This scheme is called the “\$299 Ring” for the typical amount of money Medicare beneficiaries are talked into withdrawing from their checking accounts to pay for a non-existent prescription drug plan. Consumers can report these cases to their local law enforcement agencies or call 1-877-772-3379.

No Medicare drug plan can ask a person with Medicare for bank account or other personal information over the telephone. No beneficiary should ever provide that kind of information to a caller. They should contact their local police department if they believe someone is trying to take money or information from them illegally.

People with Medicare should also remember that they should be on the lookout for anyone trying to take advantage of them and take steps to protect themselves by remembering:

- No one can come into your home uninvited.
- No one can ask you for personal information during their marketing activities.
- Always keep all personal information, such as your Medicare number, safe, just as you would a credit card or a bank account number.
- Whenever you have a question or concern about any activity regarding Medicare, call 1-800-MEDICARE.

In addition, legitimate Medicare drug plans will not ask for payment over the telephone or the Internet. They must bill the beneficiary for the monthly premium. Typically, that amount is set up as an automatic withdrawal from the beneficiary’s monthly Social Security check. Beneficiaries may also opt to pay the monthly premiums in other ways such as writing a check or setting up automatic payments from their checking accounts.

Abilities Expo

The 2006 version of Abilities Expo/ NY Metro area will take place on April 21-23, 2006 at the New Jersey Convention and Expo Center in Edison, New Jersey. Friday and Saturday hours are April 21, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm and Sunday from 11:00 am - 5:00 pm.

For more information go to www.abilitesexpo.com .

The Medicare Prescription Drug Plan - Medicare Part D Help!

Anyone with questions or concerns about any aspect of Medicare, including the Part D drug plan, should contact the Center for Medicare Advocacy, P.O. Box 350, Willimantic, CT 06226, 860-456-7790, or go to their website at medicareadvocacy.org. A few of their “Hot Topics” include “Help Assess Medicare Part D,” “Prescription Drugs Cost more under Medicare than under Medicaid,” and “Medicare Part D Plans by State.”

In addition, the AARP website (AARP.org) offers a step-by-step guide: “Medicare Drug Plan Finder.” You can also contact them at 601 E Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20049, or you can call toll free: 1-888-687-2277.

Bill Proposed to Overhaul Medicare Rx Benefit

Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) have introduced a bill that would alter the Medicare prescription drug benefit to allow Medicare beneficiaries to obtain drug coverage directly from Medicare itself. The legislation also would eliminate the so-called "doughnut hole" coverage gap -- or the gap in coverage under which Medicare beneficiaries are responsible for annual drug costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100. --and allow HHS to negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies. Under the new bill, co-sponsored by Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), Medicare beneficiaries will no longer have to rely on a bewildering array of private plans to meet their need for drugs.

Please relay this Bulletin to your membership including those who do not have e-mail access. Suggest your membership go to the library and go onto www.Kleinmanconsulting.com to view or print a copy. If you would like to see previous issues of the Bulletin, read about the background of the Collaborative or if you would like to be added to the mailing list, you may also go to www.KleinmanConsulting.com.

If you want something to appear in the next edition please send it to us - jayne@kleinmanconsulting.com or skoslosk03@comcast.net — or Jayne Kleinman, 55 Corrigan Ave., Meriden, CT 06451, 203-631-4800.

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How can you find your federal Representatives and Senators? Go to www.congress.org and find the box under the heading “Write Elected Officials.” Type in your Zip Code and press the “Enter” key. Then, when the names of your elected officials come on the screen, click on the word “Info” under the name of the elected official you want to contact. The telephone number will be listed on the page that comes up next. You may also call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 1-888-818-6641. The best way to contact your Member of Congress is via phone (or ideally in person). The best time to call either in CT or in Washington, D.C. is early in the morning.