

ODP News

March 2017



Information, Upcoming Events, and Training

Draft Consolidated and P/FDS Rate Information Available

ODP is sharing [draft documents](#) regarding the department-established fee schedule rates and more.

Registration is Open for Autism Seminar for Professionals

ODP's Bureau of Autism Services has opened registration for [Autism Myths and Misconceptions: Evidence from Data, Research, and Experience](#), the Spring 2017 ASD Seminar for Professionals.

This training is appropriate for all professionals who want to increase their knowledge of and/or ability to support individuals with autism across the spectrum and lifespan.

Pre-registration is required, and space is limited.

See the [flyer](#) for details about locations, dates and how to register.



PA ABLE Savings Program Will Launch April 3

Enrollment for [Pennsylvania's Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\) Savings Program](#) will begin April 3. PA ABLE gives individuals with qualified disabilities and their families a tax-free way to save for disability related expenses, while maintaining government benefits. People can contribute up to \$14,000 each year.



The Pennsylvania Treasury will hold a kick-off event at 12:30 p.m. April 3 in the Capitol Rotunda. If you are interested in attending, send an email to info@PAABLE.gov with your name.

Representatives from PA ABLE Savings Program also can provide additional information at events, conferences or workshops in your area.

Governor Wolf Recognizes ID Awareness and Autism Acceptance Months in Pennsylvania

Governor Tom Wolf declared March 2017 as [Intellectual Disability \(ID\) Awareness Month in Pennsylvania](#), and April to be [Autism Awareness Month](#), noting that individuals with an intellectual disability or autism and their families are valued members of society striving for everyday lives like all other citizens.

He wrote about the importance of meaningful employment, support of families throughout the lifespan, early intervention, and education. He recognized ODP initiatives including the Supporting Families Initiative, ASERT, and #ASDNext.

Northeastern PA Health Care Quality Unit of The Advocacy Alliance Forms Beneficial Partnership with Medical College

Four years ago [Northeastern PA Health Care Quality Unit](#) (HCQU) and Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine found that by collaborating they could improve behavioral and physical health for individuals with dual diagnoses.



Through this collaboration, the second-year medical students can interact with individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or behavioral health challenges, learning about some of the medical and personal challenges they face. The HCQU benefits by tapping into the college’s medical expertise. The medical students do qualitative research for the HCQU and review its quality plan.

For one project, the HCQU and the college partnered with the Luzerne-Wyoming Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Program Quality Council directed by Gina Galli to:

- Provide literature/education supporting psychotropic medication evaluations
- Share strategies and tools for documenting behavioral health status, and
- Develop best practice procedures to support activities related to psychiatric evaluation correlation.

This resulted in teaching materials for the ID system and a conceptual model for medical students. Qualitative results have supported the goal that caregivers felt more empowered, were better able to recognize adverse effects of the medications, and were able to report this information to a physician. This could improve the quality of care and quality of life of their consumers.

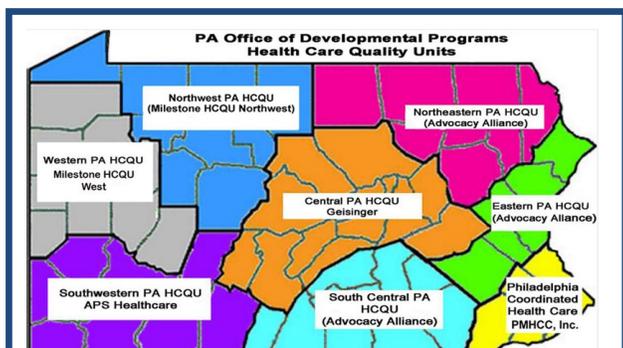
One caregiver shared that the project helped an individual who was going to be admitted to a nursing home because she had been increasingly lethargic and had a significant decline in function. After reviewing the module, the caretaker

noticed her behavior might be caused by medication side effects, and she brought it to the physician’s attention. The individual was taken off a drug and has dramatically improved activity and functioning.

The collaboration also researched what is an appropriate communication system for an individual with a dual diagnosis and who is in pain and nonverbal. The communication system needed to effectively identify and measure pain relief and patient satisfaction.

“The HCQU has been using iPads to aid communication for individuals who are nonverbal, but people wondered whether iPads were the best approach,” said Sharon Falzone, director of the HCQU. Students researched and conducted interviews, finding mixed results because iPad use did cut down on eye contact between the doctor and patient.

The medical students have presented their findings at conferences, and it’s wonderful to watch their understanding of individuals with complex needs to blossom, Falzone said. “You got chills up your spine because they got that these people just want to be like anyone else.”



What are Health Care Quality Units?

[Health Care Quality Units](#) (HCQUs) are responsible to county mental health/developmental disabilities programs for monitoring the overall health status of persons who have developmental disabilities who are receiving services. The HCQUs support and improve the developmental disabilities systems by building capacity and competency to meet the physical and behavioral health care needs.

Young Leader With a Disability Could Receive \$10K in Funding

The [Advocates in Disability Award \(ADA\) Program](#) is seeking the next Disability Advocate Leader. Young leaders with a disability are encouraged to apply for up to \$10,000 in funding. Deadline is 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 12, 2017.

The ADA is a national awards program that seeks applications from young adults with a disability, between the ages of 14 and 26, who are dedicated to positively affecting the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. The program also supports an innovative project developed by the recipient to serve and empower individuals with disabilities.

Additional questions, please contact Jessica Queener at 202.454.1258 or jqueener@cscn.org.

Technical Assistance Workshops Offered for Adult Autism Program Providers

Registration is open for BAS Program Providers to attend [technical workshops](#) with information such as Periodic Risk Evaluations and Goal Attainment Scaling. Workshops will be throughout the state in April and May. Space is limited.

The Halstead Family Adopts Tayron

The summer that Tayron Davis was in Sara Halstead's classroom, he started calling her "Mom," just like Sara's daughters did when they visited the class. The girls had always wanted a brother, and Sara felt every child should have a home. After two years of careful consideration and preparation, Sara and Rob Halstead invited Tayron to officially join their family.

The day they visited Tayron to ask if he wanted to live with them, they showed him photographs of their house and the bedroom they had built for him.



Sara, Tayron, and Rob before the prom

Tayron was stunned. His response was, "Wow, my house! Wow, my room! Wow, my dog!"

Rob and Sara took six months of training to learn how to care for Tayron's ventilator and feeding tube. Their daughters also got certified in CPR and learned to care for Tayron. "They were so excited," Sara said. "Throughout the whole training process they were right there."

These days, the girls hang out with Tayron after school, drawing and listening to music. "The girls bring their friends over. That's wonderful too because it opens up the world to other people," Sara said.

"It's been fantastic. It's joyful," Rob said of the adoption. "Even though it's work, it's joyful. I think everybody involved feels good." Tayron's a gregarious, loving, and happy person with a dry sense of humor, Rob said.

The family wants to do whatever they can to promote the adoption of children with a disability.

"I think it's daunting, but I don't think people really understand how much these kids bring," Rob said. "He's so positive. It's something like an emotional reset button every day."

MyODP

Training & Resource Center



Visit MyODP for the Latest Information

On MyODP.org, make your way to the [Resources](#) section for updates on [waiver renewals](#) and [implementation](#) as well as discovering [autism general information](#).

CESP Exam Offered in April in Wyomissing

The [National Certified Employment Support Professionals examination](#) will be presented Wednesday April 19, 2017 at Berks Technical Institute Room 004, 2205 Ridgewood Road, Wyomissing.

There will be two sessions 9 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-4 p.m. Cost is \$159.

Please send suggestions, success stories, or questions for ODP News to RA-PWODP_OUTREACH@pa.gov



David Steppe, Wilmalea Nearhood, and Patricia Knapp

Lifesharing Success: “You Are a Part of My Family Now”

When Patricia Knapp of Williamsport learned about Lifesharing, she loved the idea of opening her empty nest home to individuals with a disability. She crunched the numbers and realized if she and her husband, Wayne, hosted two individuals they could afford for her to quit her job and stay at home with their grandchildren. [Lifesharing](#) supports individuals with intellectual disabilities to live with qualified unrelated adults who provide support in their home. Lifesharing is both a close personal relationship and a place to live.

Lifesharing comes naturally to Patricia, who grew up in a big family. She says the most important quality in a lifesharer is a willingness to make people feel at home.

“It’s not, ‘You are renting a room in my home,’ but ‘You are a part of my family now,’” she said. “It’s just family. It’s always Patty, Wayne, David, and Wilmalea.”

David Steppe needed a home for one weekend 17 years ago and has lived with Patricia and Wayne Knapp ever since.

“I like living with them. They treat me nice,” David said. He likes Pat’s cooking and enjoys singing in the church choir. They’ve traveled together to Disneyworld three times, to the Florida Keys, Chicago, and Maryland.

David is Patricia’s right-hand man, she said. “If I am doing laundry he wants to help me. If I’m raking leaves, he wants to help me. If I get my granddaughter out of the car, he says, ‘Do you want me to carry her?’”

Wilmalea has lived with the family for 14 years. Her sense of humor is a great addition to the family, Patty said.

On a typical day, on Wayne’s way to work he drops David off at his job at a snack food company then picks him up on his way home. During the day Wilma and Patty run errands and visit Patty’s mother.

Patty says the best part of Lifesharing is that she gets to provide love and care for David and Wilmalea. “I added to my family,” she said.