



Autism Acceptance Month

Governor Tom Wolf has issued an official proclamation declaring April as Autism Acceptance Month, emphasizing that children and adults with autism are our family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers; and each individual with autism is unique, with talents and qualities such as exceptional focus and dedication

Autism affects more than 3 million people in the United States; and more than 55,000 children and adults with autism are receiving services in the commonwealth.

The proclamation can be viewed [online](#). Please take the time to meet individuals on the spectrum; some are featured in this newsletter.



Click on image to view digital version

Getting Ready for Graduation

A significant number of individuals on the waiting list are individuals ages 18-21. To help these young adults better transition from school to work and adult life, ODP has prioritized high school graduates on the waiting list for services through the FY17-18 expansion. Since July 1, 2017, all graduates on the waiting list, including those on the Adult Autism Waiver list, have enrolled or are in the process of enrolling in one of ODP's waiver programs.

With capacity for 820 graduates and only 620 identified, the Administrative Entities have been able to start enrolling 200 students from the Class of 2018.

Governor Wolf's commitment to meeting the needs of people waiting for services continues as a priority for the next two years. With approval of the governor's proposed 2018-19 budget, 800 Class of 2018 high school graduates on the waiting list will receive services through ODP Community Living and P/FDS waivers, and 800 2019 high school graduates will receive services (beginning June 1, 2019). This is the first time that graduates and their families can have the confidence that their plans for life after high school will be supported with services.

Info, Events, & Training

Disability Policy Seminar Set

Register for The Arc US Disability Policy Seminar on April 23-25.

Join other advocates and professionals from all over the country to get up-to-date on the latest policy issues and legislation. Register at disabilitypolicyseminar.org.

DHS Block Grant Report Approved

The DHS Block Grant Legislative Report for SFY 2016-17 was approved by the Governor's Policy office. Block grant reports and county plans for all years can be found at dhs.pa.gov/publications/budgetinformation/HumanServices-BlockGrant/index.htm

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11th Annual Pa. Autism Training Conference Set for Professionals

The 11th Annual Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) for Professionals will take place **Tuesday-Thursday June 5-7** at the Eden Resort Inn & Suites, 222 Eden Road, Lancaster, PA. **Registration is now open!**

This conference is designed to provide professionals with the tools to support individuals with ASD. It will focus on “Delivering Autism Services in Pennsylvania: Practical Strategies & Tools,” addressing real-life situations faced by those who work directly with children and/or adults with autism. Who should attend: BAS Adult Autism Program Providers (Tues, Wed, Thurs, June 5, 6 & 7); Other Professionals Supporting Individuals with Autism (Wed & Thurs, June 6 & 7).



Log in or create an account on MyODP.org. (To create an account go to www.myodp.org/login/index.php and follow the instructions.) Once you are logged in, under the Trainings tab, choose All Autism Trainings. Then select PA Autism Training Conference (PATC) 2018. You can go directly to the registration page with this link: www.myodp.org/course/view.php?id=1077. Next, select “Enroll me,” then choose: “Click Here to Register.” This link will open a new window and take you to an external site. There you will be able to choose the days and the breakout sessions you want to attend, and pay by credit card, or indicate that you will be paying by check.

Spread the Word: ‘Rain Man Effect’

The documentary, “The Rain Man Effect,” hopes to expose the damage incurred by misconceptions and prevent autism stereotypes and stigmas, especially in the field of human resources and career fulfillment. The film was created and produced by members of Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) Inc., Allegheny County, PA, funded through the PA Developmental Disability Council, to expose discrimination in employment, and life, based on how society views individuals with autism.

View online at <http://yapinc.org/RainManEffect> or <https://vimeo.com/248084292>.

Info, Events, & Training

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Noted Online

- Buck County school teacher changes title from “school mom” to “Mom”:

https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/Bucks-County-Foster-Family-Helps-Teen-With-Special-Needs_Philadelphia-475473143.html

- YouTube: 50 Mums | 50 Kids | 1 Extra Chromosome. A celebration of love: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Biex1XRmpo&feature=youtu.be

- Apple considers adding 13 disability-inclusive emojis: themighty.com/2018/03/apple-proposes-new-emojis-disability/

Google’s Map platform to include “wheelchair accessible routes”:
www.disabilitycoop.com/2018/03/16/google-accessible-routes/24864/

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Kelsi hopes to work again, and find her own place

Kelsi Basehore, 27, volunteers at Free Geek, where she helps recycle retired electronic devices.

She also works out at Planet Fitness and Body Works Health Club, enjoys art, bike riding, and especially likes reading a good book (such as the Star Wars Black Fleet Crisis Trilogy).

“The autism waiver program has given Kelsi a life and connections,” says her mother, Kathi. “Without it, she would not have known about Free Geek or had any of the volunteer opportunities she has had. The waivers helped her to hold on to the two jobs she had; one for two years, the other about one year.”

“If you misunderstand us, ask us questions.”



autism awareness
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Through the waiver program, Kelsi attended dance and theater classes at Cavod Academy of the Arts in New Holland, Pa. She plans to take adult ballet in the fall. She learned about these opportunities from her behavior specialist. She’s made new friends and has joined Unending Promise, a group in Berks County that is branching out into more social things for folks with autism.

She is currently not employed, but wishes to be. She also hopes to have a place of her own. Autism acceptance can help her goal become a reality. “If you misunderstand us,” she says, “ask us questions. You need to express if you can’t understand.” She wishes people would show more respect toward people with autism. “Don’t judge,” she says.

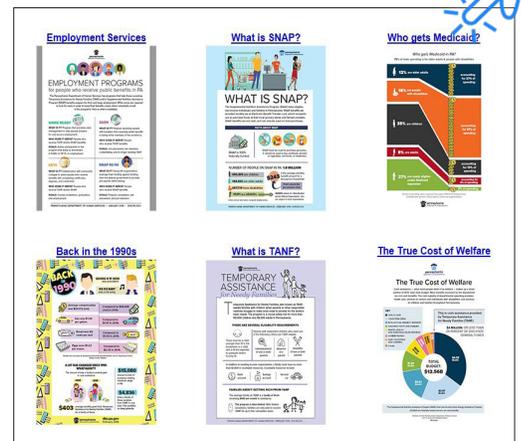


DHS external website feature stories, infographics

Please find time to visit the new [“Success Stories” page](#) at DHS.org, highlighting inspiring stories gathered from across the Department of Human Services. Visit online at www.dhs.pa.gov/learnaboutdhs/successstories/

The DHS digital media team plans to create social cards for these success stories so that they can be shared easily. By clicking to the website, people will be able to read their full stories.

There is also a new webpage featuring [infographics](#) to provide website visitors with helpful, visually appealing resources. Find online at www.dhs.pa.gov/publications/infographics/





Mike Wants to Help Others Find Housing

Mike Bomberger, 53, feels he could play an integral role in improving housing opportunities for individuals with special needs in Lancaster County.

He aspires to be a liaison between those who need low-income housing and those who can provide low-income housing, to better expose and explain the availability of funding for individuals through Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities.



Mike Bomberger of Lancaster would like to use his own experience trying to find low-income housing to advise others seeking the same.

View more profiles at
www.dhs.pa.gov/learn-aboutdhs/successstories



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“The paperwork can be stressful,” Mike says, so his experience in getting through it may help prevent individuals and landlords from becoming overwhelmed by it.

“I’ve spent a lot of time knitting my own safety net,” he adds, and with that comes insight he is willing to share with deed holders who are private owners. His hometown is Lancaster but Mike has lived in India, conducting volunteer work and attended

high school in Danbury, CT, and St. Louis, MO. He returned to his hometown of Lancaster, where he plans to continue his remaining years.

Mike is on the spectrum. He is a participant with the Adult Community Autism Program (ACAP), as well as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). He serves on ODP’s Information Sharing and Advisory Committee and is a member of Lancaster Friends Quaker Meeting.

Outside of advocacy, he enjoys caring for plants. “They have life, but they don’t have confusing spirits and souls.” He wants people to know that folks with ASD are not scary, and that he has skills he wishes to share to better society.

HCBS Website Helps Expand Payer Portfolios

The HCBS Business Acumen Resource Center launched a new website that is a resource center for community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve individuals with disabilities. The resource center provides tools, resources and examples of promising practices that promote the sustainability of disability-focused CBOs.

Find more information at HCBSBusinessAcumen.org.

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Art Show Celebrates People of All Abilities

More than 50 individuals joined in the opening celebration of “Philadelphia: A Spectrum of Experiences” art exhibition March 13, 2018, presented by The Philadelphia Autism Project and collaborators. Artists shared their experiences from living in their Philadelphia neighborhood, to what it means to be a sports fan in this city and other themes.

“While one of the goals of this exhibit and opening celebration was to recognize talented artists and raise awareness about autism, it was really an opportunity to gain insight and celebrate people of all abilities, backgrounds, and experiences,” said Pamela Piscitelli of the Philadelphia Autism Project. Learn more at Phillyautismproject.org/artshow. Artwork is on display through April 27, 2018.



Life Sharing Provider Spotlight: Central Region

We have been highlighting winners of the Excellence in Life Sharing Awards, featuring providers from our four regions.

This month we feature Jessica and Brian Walizer, LifeSharing providers to Susan, and nominated by Crystal Houser of Clinton County Community Connections.

Jessica and Brian accepted Susan into their home and family knowing she had Stage 5 chronic renal disease, among other health problems. Susan needed to go to Dialysis treatments three days a week for hours at a time, was on many medications, and had countless appointments. She was placed on a transplant list with no idea when or if she would get a call for a new kidney. Susan found a family with Jessica, Brian, and their daughter Emelia when she needed it the most.

The constant support of Jessica and Brian is what keeps Susan moving towards a healthy and fulfilling life. They are the true definition of a lifesharing provider.



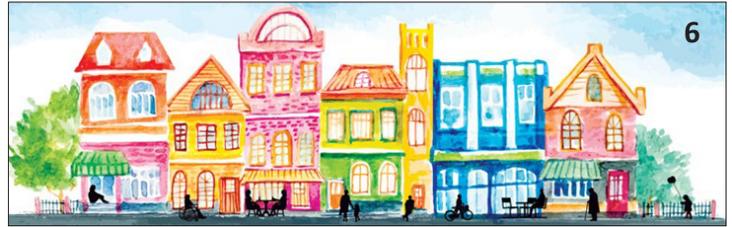
The Walizer of Clinton County welcome Susan into their family.

Electronic Visit Verification Survey Due April 20

The 21st Century Cures Act requires electronic visit verification (EVV) systems for Medicaid-funded personal care services and home health care services. Providers of ODP services are asked to complete the electronic visit verification survey by **Friday, April 20**, to inform the Department of Human Services (DHS) implementation of EVV. You can find the EVV Survey link at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TXSJRFN>.

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PA Child Speaks at World Down Syndrome Day

The United Nations for World Down Syndrome Day met March 21 with a global focus on employment opportunities for people with Down syndrome.

The goal of the event was to “reach out to members of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and government and UN officials to ensure they see how persons with Down syndrome can and do make meaningful contributions to the community throughout their lives,” according to WebTV. un.org.



Alex Lee, 10, participated in UN World Down Syndrome Day in New York.

Alex Lee, 10, a PA early intervention graduate and son of Cecelia Lee (co-chair of the PA State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) through the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), participated in the panel discussion. Also, his “new best friend,” Jose Maria Batalla of Spain, shared a powerful speech about Alex and other individuals with Down syndrome.

You may view Alex asking a question to the panel at 0:34:14 in this UN Web TV video: <https://tinyurl.com/yb525ald>

Jose’s speech can be viewed at 1:40:00.

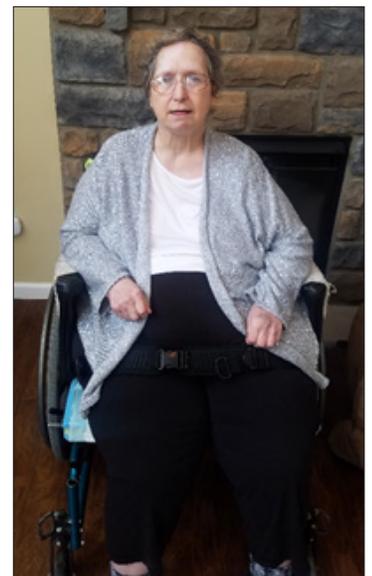
Brenda Enjoys Independence

In 1987, Brenda entered Hamburg State Center, living there for 30 years. Brenda moved from Hamburg into a one-person home in January as part of the initiative to close state centers and provide residents with access to community living and community resources.

She now lives closer to her mother and they are able to more frequently visit with one another, including dinners together. She enjoys visiting her favorite stores, Michael’s, the Dollar Store, and the local pet store.

Brenda has made new friends and grown fond of staff, with which she has worked to create a care plan that focuses on what she wants to do, now and in the future, ultimately resulting in her happiness and success.

Brenda often comments that this is the best thing to have had happen to her, and when asked what’s been her favorite thing about living in her new home, she proudly responds, “Independence!”



Brenda is now able to visit more often with her mother.

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The 'Golden Girls' Remain Together

Carol, Elsie, and Amelia were all born in Philadelphia. They lived with each for more than 50 years at Hamburg Center. The three ladies are very close friends. On Nov. 15, 2017, they moved to a community home in Bethlehem. Their provider agency is SPIN.

Amelia takes cues from Elsie and others to know what time of day it is, to know when it is time to eat, to know when it is time to do an activity, etc. Elsie and Carol have both become accustomed to Amelia and how she communicates. At times, the two ladies have helped unfamiliar staff figure out what it is Amelia wants or needs. If one of the ladies is sick or not feeling well, maybe even in the hospital, the other two ladies worry, ask to call, or write a letter.

The ladies' actions and interactions with one another show how much they care about each other and are true lifelong friends. Carol and Elsie have repeatedly verbalized wanting to live with each other and Amelia as they transitioned together to their new home. Amelia shows her preference to live with these ladies by her calmness, happiness and the history of how sad she became when living without them for a week.

Carol, Elsie, and Amelia enjoy the same type of community activities, such as going out to eat, shopping, going to the movies, going to the zoo, picnics, live entertainment, and outside activities such as gardening. Each thoroughly enjoys dressing up, getting their hair done, and receiving compliments from others. Each one has her own sense of style.

They all love and look forward to celebrating their birthdays, Christmas, and Easter.

The ladies complement each other's strengths as well. Although they thrive as a team, all three women take pride in maintaining their independence.

Change and transition for anyone can be very stressful. Being together helped create a natural support for each of them and created a smoother transition into the community.

(Written by Jada Preston-Rountree, RSW at White Haven Center)



Carol

Elsie

Amelia

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Employment Initiatives Continue

ODP continues to focus on [Governor Tom Wolf's Executive Order 2016-3: Establishing "Employment First" Policy and Increasing Competitive Employment for Pennsylvanians with a Disability](#), prompted by the national Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

Increasing employment is also one of the ISAC recommendations, with an emphasis on the fact that the benefits for people with disabilities are significant. Learn more about the strategies that the ISAC recommends ODP use to [help increase employment opportunities](#) for the people we support (Page 8).

Following are highlights of initiatives thus far:

- Five state centers have committed to paying all individuals who live and work there minimum wage or above.
- The OVR/ODP Joint Referral Bulletin is moving through signature process, so keep your eyes open for it. ODP and OVR (Office of Vocational Rehabilitation) plan to conduct joint training sessions on the Bulletin once it is issued.
- As of July 1, 2017, the Consolidated and P/FDS Waivers offer the following employment and related services: Advanced Supported Employment – An Outcome-Based Service, Supported Employment, Small Group Employment, Benefits Counseling, and Community Participation Support. These are also offered through the new Community Living Waiver.
- The P/FDS Waiver offers participants \$15,000 above the ap to use toward Supported Employment or Advanced Supported Employment.
- In May 2017, OVR and ODP held three Provider Transformation Leadership Boot Camps. Fifty-five providers across three sessions attended these trainings, and six have been selected to receive 1:1 technical assistance from a national subject matter expert.
- Pennsylvania has been selected as a Core State to receive technical assistance through the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) during the 2018 federal fiscal year. This technical assistance is available for multiple agencies and offices in Pennsylvania, to include the Department of Education, Department of Labor and Industry, and the Department of Human Services.
- The Supporting Families Initiative Central and Regional Office leads are partnering with the Employment Central and Regional Office leads to determine ways to help families envision a good life for their loved ones, specifically targeted toward employment dreams and goals. One way that this is happening is that the Supporting Families leads are conducting LifeCourse trainings at various employment coalitions throughout the state.

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Summary of ODP Communications Issued Through March 2018



1. [Governor's Proclamation](#): National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month - March 2018
2. [024-18](#): Certified Investigator Forum - March Date - Now Available
3. [025-18](#): Updating AE, SCO and Provider Contact Information for Quality Assessment & Improvement Process
4. [026-18](#): Clarifications on Residential Service Staffing Ratios and Supplemental Habilitation in Residential Habilitation Services
5. [027-18](#): CDS and Fires Safety Licensing Requirements
6. [BAW18-10](#) Announcement : SPRING 2018 Statewide ASD Seminars: Comprehensive Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) Training
7. [028-18](#): Now Available: Life Sharing and Respite Question and Answer Document
8. [PATC 2018 - SAVE THE DATE!](#)
9. [029-18](#): REISSUE Community Participation Support ISP FY 18-19 Renewal Template
10. [2018 PA Community Alliance Summit](#) - Seeking Pop-up Talks! Applications are due Friday, March 30, 2018
11. [030-18](#): Training Opportunity Related to Interviewing Individuals with Disabilities that are Victims of Crime

Employment Initiatives Continue

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- ODP plans to support the Pennsylvania Family Network (PAFN) in discussing employment as part of its workshops and mentoring with families across the state.
- ODP and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, specifically the Bureau of Early Intervention Services, are discussing ways to partner in reaching families to envision a good life for their very young children. In an effort to help our partners at OCDEL and the families they serve understand how various services intersect throughout a person's lifespan, ODP shared Experience the Employment Connection Road Map with OCDEL, which distributed it among the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and will share with the Bureau of Special Education. Check out this link to find the Road Map, along with other resources from Experience the Employment Connection 2017: <http://pa-eec.org/resources>.

If your organization is hosting webinars that anyone can attend, please send information to RA-PWODP_OUTREACH@pa.gov