



This newsletter may also be viewed as a PDF at [www.PierceADRC.org](http://www.PierceADRC.org) “News & Events.”

### **NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Aging and LTC Providers Network**

First Thursday of each month, 8 – 9 a.m.

Lighthouse Senior Center

5016 E. “A” Street, Tacoma

Contact Bob Riler, ADR, 798-7384 or [briler@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:briler@co.pierce.wa.us)

Dec 5 – WA Talking Book & Braille Library, Tyler Kaye, Patron Registrar

Jan 2 – No Meeting

Feb 6 – Geriatric Psychiatry, Ada Allen-Harris

#### **Health Care Providers Council of Pierce County**

Second Thursday of each month, 7:45 – 9 a.m.

Narrows Glen, 8201 Sixth Ave, Tacoma

(Breakfast \$6; Coffee \$2)

Contact Julie Moorer at (253) 583-2008

Dec 12 – Holiday Party

#### **East County Providers Network**

Third Tuesday of each month, 8 a.m.

Meeting rotates monthly. Call for location.

Contact Laura Fehrenbacher, Stafford Suites, (253) 862-1818

#### **SASH Coffee and Networking for Pierce County**

Ports of Call Restaurant

First Wednesday of each month, 9:30-11 a.m.

Dec 4 – La Quinta Inn Tacoma, 1425 E. 27<sup>th</sup> St.

Contact Beth Pereira at [bethp@sashprogram.com](mailto:bethp@sashprogram.com) or (425) 890-3059

#### **South End (King County) Coalition**

Third Wednesday of each month at 7:45 a.m.

Dec 18 – Wesley GenCare of Renton - The Lodge, 1600 Eagle Ridge Dr S, Renton

Schedule of meeting locations and times at [www.secoalition.com](http://www.secoalition.com)

### **LOCAL SERVICES**

#### **Hilltop Regional Health Center Opens**

Community Health Care’s new Hilltop Regional Health Center is now open and accepting new patients. Highlights of the Hilltop Regional Health Center include urgent care, a medical clinic for children and adults, a dental clinic for children and adults, pharmacy, X-rays & imaging, insurance enrollment assistance, Goodwill coffee shop and outreach & referral assistance. The center is located at 1202 Martin Luther King Jr. Way in Tacoma. For appointments call:

- Hilltop Family Dental Clinic: 253-441-4743 (Monday-Friday, 6:30am- 5:30pm)
- Hilltop Family Medical Clinic: 253-441-4742 (Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm)
- Hilltop Urgent Care Clinic: Monday-Friday, 8:00am-7:00pm (Opens 12/2/13)

Urgent Care is for those times when you do not need the emergency room, but cannot wait to see your primary care provider. Hours and days of urgent care may change in the near future, this will depend on the needs of patients and capacity

### **Planning for Emergency Transportation for Vulnerable Populations**

The Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition is forming a subcommittee to work on Emergency Management for vulnerable populations in our community. While the scope of work will be developed by committee members, a focus of the group will be developing guidelines for managing emergencies big and small that will be included in our larger coordinated transportation plan. The first meeting will be on Friday, December 20 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Please forward your interest in joining by Monday, December 9 to Mickie Brown at [mbrown3@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:mbrown3@co.pierce.wa.us) or call (253) 798-7376.

### **Foreclosure Housing Counseling**

Associated Ministries (AM) has added a new initiative under the Center for Direct Services. The new initiative, funded by a grant from the Washington State Housing Finance Commission, will allow AM to provide foreclosure counseling. AM will be partnering with Parkview Services, a HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agency in Shoreline, to train and certify three Foreclosure Housing Counselors. These counselors will conduct foreclosure prevention workshops, and offer HUD Approved foreclosure Intervention and Default Counseling to Pierce County residents. The counseling is a free service focused on providing financial guidance to assist clients understand their rights and responsibilities under the Foreclosure Fairness Act. The Foreclosure Housing Counseling will be conducted out of AM's new second office in Lakewood. AM will offer foreclosure counseling along with other services at this new location. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (253) 383-3056.

### **Call for Participants for Hoarding Study**

Dr. Jennifer Sampson is currently conducting a research study titled, "The Lived Experience of People who Hoard who have Undergone a Forced Cleanout of their Home." Dr. Sampson is a Tacoma Family Counselor and Lead for the King Pierce Hoarding Task Force. Hoarding has long been identified as a community health problem and has been found to have a significant economic and social burden on communities at large. It is clear to experts that forced full- and partial- cleanouts- or abatements- are not helpful without mental health assistance. In fact, these cleanouts may even be harmful to the homeowners who are forced to clear out their homes to avoid serious consequences, like eviction or loss of child custody. To be eligible for this confidential phone interview study, you must reside in the United States or Canada and be of age 18 or older and have undergone a forced cleanout by some authority (e.g. court-ordered, code enforcement, housing authority/property manager, protective services, etc.) at least 6 months ago. The survey is open to anyone that meets these requirements. If you are interested in participating in this study or getting more information, please contact [research@thehoardingproject.org](mailto:research@thehoardingproject.org).

### **Family Caregiver Newsletter Posted**

The Winter 2013-2014 Family Caregiver Support Program is now available at: [www.PierceCountyWA.org/FCSP](http://www.PierceCountyWA.org/FCSP). The newsletter focuses on protecting yourself from fraud and scams during the holiday season as well as tips to help families when a new caregiver comes in to care for a loved one.

### **Carrier Alert Available in Tacoma Area**

The U.S. Postal Service and the Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center are collaborating to provide Carrier Alert to residents of Tacoma, North Tacoma, Fife, Lakewood, Parkland and University Place. Carrier Alert is intended for people with disabilities, older adults and individuals who live alone or who may be at risk. When making their rounds, mail carriers will watch registered addresses with a bit closer attention and be alert to signs of potential problems. Individuals wishing to be registered must complete a Carrier Alert form which is available at Tacoma Library branches, at

Pierce County Community Connections, 1305 Tacoma Ave., Suite 104; Tacoma, WA 98402 or by calling (253) 798-4600.

### **Video Shows How Community Connections ADR Helps**

Pierce County TV highlighted the work of Matt Santelli, Case Manager with Aging & Disability Resources with a local resident suffering from the effects of a traumatic brain injury. As is typical, one issue turned into several including mortgage modification, food assistance, weatherization, energy assistance and health insurance. [Watch the video.](#)

### **Insurance Commissioner Opts Not to Extend Old Insurance Policies**

Washington state Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler has decided not to extend old health insurance policies that do not meet the basic requirement of the Affordable Care Act. President Obama has offered to allow insurance companies to extend their old policies for one year. About 290,000 people in Washington have had their old policies canceled. People are required to purchase health insurance coverage that meets the minimum ACA requirements. [Read Kreidler's statement.](#)

### **Washington on the Health Reform Forefront**

Washington state is a leader in getting people covered -- despite the bumps we've all encountered along the way. Check out an article in the Washington Post: "[How we got Obamacare to work](#)" by Jay Inslee, Steve Beshear and Dannel P. Malloy, Published: November 17. Also, an [editorial in the Seattle Times](#) deals with the decision by Washington state Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler not to extend old health insurance policies.

### **WA Access Fund Loan Caps Increase to \$25,000**

Looking for a used but reliable Modified Vehicle? Need affordable home modifications? Washington Access Fund (WAF) now offers loans up to \$25,000! This will be particularly important for low and moderate income families who need affordable but reliable used vehicles and/or home accessibility modifications. WAF offers pre-approval as an option so you can start looking for your vehicle or planning your home modification with an idea of how much you can afford to spend. The interest rate is 5%. Contact Kathy Gilman at [kathy@washingtonaccessfund.org](mailto:kathy@washingtonaccessfund.org) or (206) 328-5116 for details.

### **Caregiver Peer Support Meets At TACID**

Are you caring for someone with a disability or illness? Do you feel you have lost yourself in the role of being a caregiver? Could you use a night out with people you can really talk to and understand? Is it time to take care of yourself, your needs, your issues? Helping Hands is a caregiver peer support group that is now meeting at TACID. Join the group every Tuesday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at TACID, 6315 South 19<sup>th</sup> Street in Tacoma. Call (253) 565-9000 for more information.

### **Walt Bowen Wins AARP Washington Andrus Award**

Walt Bowen of Olympia has been selected by AARP Washington to receive the 2013 AARP Washington State Andrus Award for Community Service – the Association's most prestigious and visible state volunteer award for community service. Walt is president of the Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby and works closely with AARP Washington on issues of vital concern to seniors. He received \$1,000 from AARP to be donated to the charity of his choice. He has chosen the Washington State Senior Citizens' Foundation to receive his donation.

### **AARP Tax-Aide Needs Volunteers**

Do you enjoy helping others? Do you like to prepare tax returns? Do you have basic computer skills? Then consider becoming an IRS-certified TAX-AIDE volunteer, and see what a difference helping others can make in your life! Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds are welcome! The TAX-AIDE

program is sponsored by the AARP Foundation and the IRS. You don't need to be an AARP member or retiree to volunteer, or to receive free tax preparation services from TAX-AIDE. Training begins in December. New volunteers work with experienced volunteers at several sites throughout our communities. Please contact [www.aarp.org/taxaide](http://www.aarp.org/taxaide) for an online application, or call 1-888-687-2277.

## **LOCAL HAPPENINGS**

### **Dec 3 – Giving Tuesday**

This year, on Tuesday, December 3, 2013, we are part of a call to action that will change the calendar and help make history! We are celebrating a day dedicated to giving – when charities, families, businesses, community centers, students, retailers and more will all come together for #GivingTuesday – a movement to celebrate giving and encourage more, better and smarter giving during the Holiday Season. A significant number of Pierce County non-profit organizations are participating. To learn more visit [www.givingtuesday.org](http://www.givingtuesday.org).

### **Dec 5 – PC2 Legislative Forum**

Please join the Pierce County Coalition for Developmental Disabilities (PC2) as we talk with our Pierce County Legislators to discuss issues of importance to individuals who experience developmental disabilities and their families. PC2 continues to focus on helping families who are on the no-paid services caseload. We are actively working with DDA and Pierce County DD in an effort to help individuals with developmental disabilities who are on this caseload. Join PC2 at the annual Legislative Forum at 7 p.m. at Franklin Pierce High School, 11002 18th Avenue East, Tacoma. For more information, please call PC2 at 253.564.0707. Check-in begins at 6:30 p.m. Co-sponsored by Franklin Pierce Schools - Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

### **Dec 7 – Medicare Open Enrollment Ends**

People have only until Dec. 7 to join or switch Medicare drug and health plans. Some Medicare Advantage plans have announced that they have terminated a significant number of their network providers for the 2014 plan year. People should request verification from plans that their physicians are still in-network. Also, an increasing number of Part D plans are using 5-tier formularies in 2014, which may mean higher costs for clients. [Learn more.](#)

### **Dec 9 – Scams for the Holidays**

The holiday season is the perfect time for unsuspecting consumers to become victims to theft of personal and financial information. It can happen before you know it. And you could be responsible for the consequences. Learn how to protect yourself during the busiest of seasons when you could be most vulnerable. Held twice this day:

- 12:10 – 12:50 p.m. at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S 35th Street, Tacoma
- 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Soundview Building, 3602 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma

For more information call the ADRC at (253) 798-4600.

### **Dec 11 – Scams for the Holidays**

(See Dec 9 for description) Held twice this day:

- 12:10 – 12:50 p.m. at the County City Building Rainier Conf Room, 930 Tacoma Ave S, 7th Floor, Tacoma
- 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Summit Branch Library, 5107 112th St E, Tacoma

For more information call the ADRC at (253) 798-4600.

### **Dec 13 – Memory Care and Wellness Services: Lunch and Learn**

Professionals in the aging and memory care services field are invited to a “Lunch and Learn” to hear about a unique study for individuals with Alzheimer’s or another dementia and their caregivers. Bring your own lunch. Beverages and dessert provided. Held at noon at the Soundview Building, 3602 Pacific Avenue, Suite 200 in Tacoma. Please RSVP by calling (253) 798-8787.

### **Dec 18 – Hearing Deficits and Dementia Care**

Christine Seymour, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist, presents at this monthly Behavioral Health Educational Roundtable. Held 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. at MultiCare Auburn Medical Center, 202 N Division St. in Auburn in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Rooms 1&2 (elevator D). RSVP: (253) 333-2521 or [Ada.allen-harris@multicare.org](mailto:Ada.allen-harris@multicare.org).

### **Dec 19; Feb 20; April 17 – Crisis Management Planning and Execution**

LeadingAge Washing hosts this 3-part webinar (10-11:30 a.m. each day) that will offer a process and strategy to creating a comprehensive and holistic crisis prevention and disaster recovery plan for any organization. Each webinar will build on the previous one, culminating in a plan that will emphasize prevention, mitigation, communication and resiliency. Speaker is Dan Weedin, an insurance and crisis management expert helping organizations dramatically improve their strategic decision-making involving crisis prevention and response. Registration \$139-\$199. Visit [LeadingAge Washington](http://LeadingAge Washington) or call (253) 964-8870.

### **Jan 13 – Legislative Session Begins in Olympia**

#### **Jan 25 - Writing Your Will: Tips Everyone Needs To Know**

A large percentage of people die without a will. It’s easy to put it off. But doing so isn’t that difficult. It doesn’t take much time, effort or money. And it can prevent tremendous problems in the event of someone’s death. Learn about the basics of writing a will at this information-only presentation. Learn about who needs a will, why do I need a will, if an attorney is needed, what’s in a will, and more. Sponsored by Pierce County Community Connections and Aging & Disability Resources. Held 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. at the Soundview Building, 3602 Pacific Avenue in Tacoma. Please RSVP in advance by calling (253) 798-8787.

#### **Jan 28 – Social Security: What You Need To Know**

If you are planning on receiving Social Security, or if you want to learn more about maximizing your benefits, this is for you. Learn about current benefits and eligibility requirements, early or delayed benefits, disability and much more. Speaker is Kirk Larson from Social Security. Free; no RSVP. Held 4-5:30 p.m. at the Puyallup Library, 324 South Meridian in Puyallup. For more info call the ADRC at (253) 798-4600.

#### **Feb 22 – Women to Women: Living Longer, Living Smarter**

This is a community forum designed by and for women who want to build a successful life strategy for the future. Sponsored jointly by AARP and the Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center. Save the date. Registration information to come.

### **Mar 14 – Legislative Session in Olympia Scheduled to End**

#### **May 6 & 7 – Emergency Planning Institute**

The Pierce County Emergency Planning Institute trains staff from social service agencies, long term care facilities and churches about planning and creating plans for disasters. At the end of the training, participants will have a basic understanding of Incident Command, receive an introduction to disaster issues, develop and/or enhance their agency plan(s) and learn how to update, train and exercise those

plans. Held 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Day 1 at Pierce County Emergency Operations Center, 2501 S. 35<sup>th</sup> St., Suite D in Tacoma; Day 2 at Tacoma Lutheran Retirement Community, 1301 N. Highlands Parkway in Tacoma. Register at <http://piercecounity.surveymshare.com/t/Pierce-County-EPI-2014>. For questions, contact Sheri Badger at (253) 798-2204 or [sbadger@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:sbadger@co.pierce.wa.us).

### **June 2 – Challenges in Caregiving: Giving Care, Taking Care**

This [annual caregiver conference](#) is designed for family and community caregivers and offers practical, up-to-date resources and information to help you in your caregiving responsibilities. Dynamic speakers from a variety of backgrounds including health care, rehabilitation, social work, and law will share their expertise and knowledge in twenty sessions offered throughout the day. You choose the sessions you need most in your own situation. Resource and Information Exhibits offer informational displays of caregiving services, products, and literature from 8 am – 3 pm. Vendor opportunities and participant registration coming soon. Contact [jmikel@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:jmikel@co.pierce.wa.us).

### **Sept 30 & Oct 1 – Emergency Planning Institute**

The Pierce County Emergency Planning Institute trains staff from social service agencies, long term care facilities and churches about planning and creating plans for disasters. At the end of the training, participants will have a basic understanding of Incident Command, receive an introduction to disaster issues, develop and/or enhance their agency plan(s) and learn how to update, train and exercise those plans. Held 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Day 1 at Pierce County Emergency Operations Center, 2501 S. 35<sup>th</sup> St., Suite D in Tacoma; Day 2 at Tacoma Lutheran Retirement Community, 1301 N. Highlands Parkway in Tacoma. Register at <http://piercecounity.surveymshare.com/t/Pierce-County-EPI-2014>. For questions, contact Sheri Badger at (253) 798-2204 or [sbadger@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:sbadger@co.pierce.wa.us).

### **Q&A of the Month**

**Question:** I want to give a nice Christmas present to my grandma. Any suggestions?

**Answer:** We don't know your situation or your grandmother's condition. But we are never at a loss for suggestions like this. Good walking shoes are a must. Don't bother with the cheap versions. Get a pair that has lots of arch support and will be comfortable. Whether just for moving around in the house or out for a walk, there's nothing better than good walking shoes. Get a roll of stamps. Postage stamps may seem like a little thing but they help seniors stay in touch. Subscribe to a large-print edition of a magazine. Sweaters and lap blankets are useful anytime. And how about just a commitment to phone your grandmother once a week in 2014? Family is so very important for seniors and a friendly phone call (anyone other than a scammer) is a joy.

### **NATIONALLY**

#### **Squeezing Seniors**

Stagnant funding from the federal Older Americans Act, cuts from the first sequester and a growing population of older adults is having an impact on services and programs helping seniors. N4A, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, has published [Squeezing Seniors](#), a 28-page report that provides a snapshot of the consequences. Washington was one of the 9 states surveyed for the report. (Source: N4A)

#### **Home for the Holidays Conversations Campaign**

The Eldercare Locator has launched its annual "Home for the Holidays" campaign for older adults with a focus this year on conversations on health, legal, financial and end-of-life issues. The annual holiday campaign is a national media outreach effort that provides tips for discussions when older adults and their families get together. As part of the campaign, the Eldercare Locator and [The](#)

[Conversation Project](#) have created a new guide, “Let’s Talk: Starting the Conversation about Health, Legal, Financial and End-of-Life Issues,” which features information for older adults, family members and professionals who are seeking information about starting difficult conversations with family and friends, topics of consideration for those discussions and what resources can help them. View the Let’s Talk Guide ([www.n4a.org/pdf/Conversations.pdf](http://www.n4a.org/pdf/Conversations.pdf)). To order print copies of this brochure visit: [www.n4a.org/programs/eldercare-locator/resources](http://www.n4a.org/programs/eldercare-locator/resources). Agencies can order up to 25 for free; there is only a shipping charge for the order.

### **Obamacare Deadline For Jan. 1 Coverage Extended One Week**

Consumers will have an extra week — until Dec. 23 – to enroll in health insurance coverage that begins Jan. 1. The previous deadline was Dec. 15. The extension will apply only for consumers seeking coverage effective Jan. 1. In future months, consumers would have to enroll by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for coverage to begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the following month. Open enrollment continues until March 31. In Washington state, consumers should visit [www.WAHealthPlanFinder.org](http://www.WAHealthPlanFinder.org), not HealthCare.gov. (Source: KHN)

### **U.S. Senate Panel Advances Older Americans Act**

A Senate Committee approved a bill by Sen. Bernie Sanders reauthorizing the Older Americans Act (OAA) for a five year period. The OAA was initially enacted by Congress in 1965 and provides essential services for seniors such as nutrition programs, caregiver support, job training, transportation, preventative health services, and protections against physical and financial abuse of seniors. The OAA, usually reauthorized every 5 years, was overdue by 2 years since the last reauthorization in 2006. States have experienced the pressure of continuing to provide senior services, while the population over the age of 60 has increased 20% since 2006. [Read more](#). (Source: FCA)

### **CBO on Budgetary Effects of Raising Medicare Eligibility Age**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently released a revised estimate of the budgetary effects of increasing the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67. Its original estimate, released in January 2012, proposed that increasing the eligibility age for Medicare would create a net savings of \$113 billion. The [revised CBO report](#) drastically reduces the projected savings to \$19 billion. (Source: SHIP Resource Center)

### **CMS Publishes Extra Help Resource Limits for 2014**

The National Center for Benefits Outreach & Enrollment has produced a chart of the 2014 Part D Low Income Subsidy (LIS/Extra Help) resource/asset limits. [Download the chart](#) (Source: NCBOE)

### **Poverty Numbers Released**

The U.S. Census Bureau has released [new poverty figures](#) under its so-called Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM). SPM puts the overall poverty rate at 16 percent, or 50 million people. In an analysis from the NY Times, the poverty rate would be much worse if not for government aid. Some highlights from the new report: But for Social Security benefits, the poverty rate for people 65 and older – 14.8 percent – would have been a backbreaking 54.7 percent, or 23.7 million people; the overall poverty rate of 16 percent would have been 24.5 percent. But for food stamps, the child poverty rate — 18 percent – would have been 21 percent in 2012; the overall poverty rate of 16 percent would have been 17.6 percent. But for unemployment benefits, the overall poverty rate would have been 16.8 percent in 2012, with children, non-elderly adults and elderly adults all worse off. In all, the new report shows that one third of Americans, 103 million people, were living in or near poverty in 2012. (Source: NY Times)

### **Having “The Conversation” During the Holidays**

With the holidays approaching, some families may be planning to talk with their older loved ones about end-of-life wishes. The Conversation Project, from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, offers a practical starter kit that can walk individuals through the process. The site also features videos with co-founder Ellen Goodman and ABC News host Diane Sawyer. [Get the kit](#) | [Watch the videos](#) (Source: NCOA)

### **National Aging Fraud Hotline Now Open**

[The Senate Special Committee on Aging Fraud Hotline](#) will make it easier for older Americans to report suspected fraud and find assistance for themselves or for someone they know. A team of investigators will help figure out what steps to take to combat possible investment scams, identity theft, bogus sweepstakes and lottery schemes, Medicare and Social Security fraud, and a variety of other consumer issues. Visit the [website](#) or call toll free 1-855-303-9470. (Source: ADRC-TAE)

### **New CMS Homebound Policy for Home Health Care**

Medicare only covers home health care if, among other requirements, the beneficiary is homebound. As of November 19, 2013, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires new criteria for purposes of meeting the homebound requirement. Under the new policy CMS will require Medicare beneficiaries to meet two sets of criteria before their home health agency even considers whether they have an ordinary inability to leave home. An individual is considered "confined to the home" (homebound) if two criteria are met: 1) The patient must either a) because of illness or injury, need the aid of supportive devices such as crutches, canes, wheelchairs, and walkers; the use of special transportation; or the assistance of another person in order to leave their place of residence, or b) have a condition such that leaving his or her home is medically contraindicated. 2) There must exist a normal inability to leave home and leaving home must require a considerable and taxing effort. [More information at the Center for Medicare Advocacy](#). (Source: Center for Medicare Advocacy)

### **New Rules Make Video Devices Accessible**

The Federal Communications Commission has adopted rules that will enable people who are blind or visually impaired to have easier access to digital video programming on a wide range of electronic devices. The rules will also enable consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing to activate closed captioning on their devices with greater ease. Devices covered under the new rules include navigation devices – devices used to access cable or satellite services, such as set-top boxes and TiVos – as well as other devices used to receive or play back digital video, ranging from televisions and computers to tablets and smartphones. All covered devices are required to provide on-screen text menus and guides that are audibly accessible, as well as a mechanism that is comparable to a button, key or icon for activating certain accessibility features, such as closed captioning. Devices other than navigation devices are also required to make their other built-in functions accessible. (Source: FTC)

### **Social Security Administration Releases Facts and Figures for 2014**

The Social Security Administration recently released its Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Program (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rates and limits for 2014, available at <http://tinyurl.com/lqgrpx7>. One statistic the site shows is that Americans will pay Social Security taxes on only the first \$117,000 they earn next year. “Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Program” is the official name for Social Security. Supplemental Security Income is a Federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes). It is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income, and it provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. (Source: ARA Communications)

### **AARP Reports on Growth in Medicare Hospital Observation Services**

A new report from the AARP Public Policy Institute looks at the rise in observation services (OS) in Medicare. Medicare claims for Observation Services (OS) increased by more than 100 percent between 2001 and 2009, and in most cases, the OS did not result in an inpatient admission. While the number of OS visits was on the rise, the duration of OS visits also increased significantly. OS visits lasting 48 hours or longer increased by 250 percent for visits that did not result in inpatient admission and increased by more than 100 percent for OS visits that did result in inpatient admission, while inpatient stays of all lengths decreased by 16 percent. According to the report, there is concern that observation stays are being used in place of inpatient stays. [Read the report.](#) (Source: MRC)

### **Increasing Number of Part D Plans with 5-Tier Formularies**

The number of plans offering formularies (drug lists) with 5-tiers will increase in 2014:

- About 84 percent of plans offer five or more tiers
- 73 percent use four copayment tiers (with copayments as high as \$95 per drug) and one coinsurance tier
- 20 percent of plans use two copayment tiers and three coinsurance tiers

This growing number of tiers may cause some confusion, especially when there are additional co-insurance drug tiers that'll be affected by changes in drug costs. Remember that drug prices change regularly throughout the plan year, which means the co-insurance amount will also change. Clients may need your help in understanding why their out-of-pockets costs keep changing. Using the Part D Plan Finder to compare plans will at least give information about what the costs of current prescriptions might be in 2014. For some interesting reading on 2014 prescription drug coverage trends, check out this [Kaiser Family Foundation Report.](#) (Source: SHIBA)

### **ReACT Employer Resource Guide**

ReACT (Respect A Caregiver's Time), in partnership with AARP, the National Alliance for Caregiving and Pfizer, is pleased to provide a free resource guide to assist front-line managers and HR executives in taking action to support their employee caregivers. "Four Steps for Supporting Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities" can be found at [www.aarp.org/react](http://www.aarp.org/react). (Source: ReACT)

### **Nearly 1,500 Hospitals Penalized Under Medicare Program Rating Quality**

More hospitals are receiving penalties than bonuses in the second year of Medicare's quality incentive program, and the average penalty is steeper than it was last year, government records show. Medicare has raised payment rates to 1,231 hospitals based on two-dozen quality measurements, including surveys of patient satisfaction and—for the first time—death rates. Another 1,451 hospitals are being paid less for each Medicare patient they treat. Medicare is reducing reimbursement rates for at least two-thirds of hospitals in 17 states, including Washington. [Read more.](#) (Source: Kaiser Health News)

### **How To Find A Financial Advisor**

Just like planning for retirement, choosing a financial adviser can be much more challenging than it sounds – especially for senior needs. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has produced a guide that help ask the right questions when shopping for an adviser with a title suggesting expertise in senior financial planning. Titles don't always mean the professionals are qualified to help manage money. For some military retirees, the decision can be further complicated by the need for expertise in veterans benefits and retiree pay. [Read the consumer guide.](#) (Source: CFPB)

### **Sharon Lewis Named as Principal Deputy Administrator of ACL**

Sharon Lewis has been named as the Principal Deputy Administrator at the Administration for Community Living (ACL), as well as Secretary Sebelius' Senior Advisor on Disability Policy. Previously, Ms. Lewis led the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD), and she has committed over a decade to working on disability policy at the state and local level. Ms.

Lewis has played a key role in ACL's development while serving as the Acting Principal Deputy over the last year. (Source: Lewin Group)

**DMEPOS Contract Suppliers Announced**

CMS has announced the contract suppliers for the Round 1 Re-compete of the Medicare Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics and Supplies (DMEPOS) Competitive Bidding Program. The list is now available at [www.dmecompetitivebid.com/cs](http://www.dmecompetitivebid.com/cs). (Source: CMS)

**National Survey on Disability Employment**

NCIL, RespectAbilityUSA, the American Association of People with Disabilities, Best Buddies, Autism Society, National Federation of the Blind, DD Councils and others developed a [National Survey on Disability Issues](#). It focuses on employment. They are seeking responses from people living in the United States who have disabilities, their families, and people who work with or on behalf of people with disabilities. The results of this brief survey will be shared broadly to help people with disabilities, but individual answers will remain confidential. If you are interested in completing or sharing you can find the [Disability Survey](#) online. (Source: ADRC-TAE)

**Why Are Seniors The Fastest-Growing Demographic On Social Media?**

Seniors aged 65 and over represent one of the fastest growing age groups to use social media. But what drives them to do so, and what kinds of technology can help their experience? [Audie Cornish speaks with Dr. Laura Carstensen](#), who heads the Stanford Center on Longevity, for more on the culture of seniors and technology. (Source: NPR)

**PLAN AHEAD – FEBRUARY IS...**

AMD/Low Vision Awareness, American Heart, Library, Black History, Therapeutic Recreation, Women Inventors, Relationship Wellness and Wise Health Care Consumer Month; African Heritage & Health (1-7), Women’s Heart (1-7), Congenital Heart Defect Awareness (7-14), Risk Awareness (7-14), Random Acts of Kindness (9-15), Alzheimer’s and Dementia Staff Education (14-21) and Eating Disorders Awareness (23-3/1) Weeks; World Cancer (4), Wear Red (7), Autism Sunday (9), National Shut-in Visitation (11), League of Women Voters (14), Social Justice (20) and Peace Corps Day of Action (27) Days.

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This information is provided as a service of the Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center and is intended for sharing throughout the county. To receive or discontinue this e-newsletter, please contact Bob Riler at (253) 798-7384 or [briler@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:briler@co.pierce.wa.us).