

ADRC E-Newsletter December, 2017



The ADRC E-Newsletter may also be viewed as a PDF at www.PierceADRC.org "News & Events."

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NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Aging and LTC Providers Network

First Thursday of each month, 8 – 9 a.m.
Mid-County Community Center, 10205 44th Ave E, Tacoma.
(Morning refreshments served compliments of Spring Ridge)
Contact [Bob Riler](#), ADR, 253-798-7384
Dec 7 – “Financial Literacy” with Sound Outreach
Jan 4 – No meeting

Health Care Providers Council of Pierce County

Second Thursday of each month, 7:30 – 9 a.m. (Breakfast \$10 - ends at 8 a.m. sharp)
New Location: McGavick Center at Clover Park Technical College, Building 23, 4500 Steilacoom Blvd SW, Lakewood. [Click here for a campus map.](#)
Contact [Joan Engle](#) at 253-627-3833
Dec. 14 – Holiday Party – Donations of new gloves, hats, scarves, blankets, non-liquid toiletries, combs, brushes, etc. to local senior centers. [Please RSVP to the Holiday Party.](#)
Jan 11 – Topic TBA. Held at Mountain View Funeral Home. More details to follow.

East County Providers Network

Third Tuesday of each month, 8 a.m.
Location varies monthly
Contact [Laura Piacitelli](#), Stafford Suites, 253-862-1818

Pierce County Care Transitions Collaborative

Next meeting January 18, 7:30-8:30 a.m. (No meeting in December)
New Location: Brookdale Allenmore Independent Living, 2010 Union Ave., S., Tacoma
Contact [Rosanna Pace](#) at 206-914-4755

SASH Coffee and Networking

Tacoma - First Wednesday of each month, 8:30 – 10 a.m.
La Quinta Inn (Ports of Call Restaurant), Tacoma, 1425 E. 27th St.
Puyallup - Fourth Wednesday of each month, 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
Willow Gardens, 4502 6th St., SE, Puyallup
Contact [Rebecca Bomann](#) at 206-501-4375

South End (King County) Coalition

Third Wednesday of each month at 8:15 – 9:30 a.m. (Second Wednesday Dec, 2017 only)
Dec 13 – The Lodge at Eagle Ridge, 1600 Eagle Ridge Dr. S.; Renton
Schedule of meeting locations and times at www.secoalition.com

NW Networking

Every Wednesday 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Puerto Vallarta Restaurant, 215 15th St, SE, Puyallup (lunch purchase encouraged)
Contact Steph Hilfer, CayCare, 253-235-3562 or visit [Facebook page](#)

LOCAL SERVICES

Pierce County Developmental Disabilities Wants Your Opinion

The Pierce County DD program is conducting focus groups to learn about needs for resources, referrals and support related to developmental disabilities. Refreshments provided. Three focus groups for self-advocates and parents/caregivers are scheduled:

- Dec 6 – 6 p.m. at Goodwill/Reach, 714 S. 27th Street, Tacoma
- Dec 7 – 2:30 p.m. at Pierce County Sound View Building, 3602 Pacific Ave., Tacoma
- Dec 7 – 6 p.m. at Pierce County Sound View Building, 3602 Pacific Ave., Tacoma

Groups for case managers, service providers and educators are scheduled:

- Dec 6 – 2:30 p.m. at Goodwill/Reach, 714 S. 27th Street, Tacoma
- Dec 7 – 10:30 a.m. at Pierce County Sound View Building, 3602 Pacific Ave., Tacoma
- Dec 7 – 2:30 p.m. at Pierce County Sound View Building, 3602 Pacific Ave., Tacoma

Please RSVP at 253-798-7372 or bkeech@co.pierce.wa.us.

Time for that Flu Shot

Each year thousands of people go to the hospital because of the flu. It's especially important for the elderly, pregnant women and those with other health conditions to protect themselves against the flu. You help to protect yourself and the health of those around you when you get a flu shot. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department recommends the flu vaccine for people six months and older. Over 114 people in Washington state died last year from complications from the flu. Get a shot now to protect yourself and those around you. You can get a flu shot at many local pharmacies or your healthcare provider. More about the flu vaccine at www.tpchd.org/flu.

Smart Planfinder Helps Enrollment

The Washington Health Benefit Exchange has more customer resources and assistance available than ever before to help people find and enroll in health coverage for 2018. This includes [Smart Planfinder](#), a new decision-support tool on *Washington Healthplanfinder* that connects customers with plans that best fit their needs, and additional community-based locations that are available. [Smart Planfinder](#) customizes customers' 2018 health plan choices based on personal factors including the types of prescription medicine they take, expected doctors' visits during the year, and their preferred provider or hospital. Washington State residents should not use the [federal exchange at HealthCare.gov](http://federal.exchange.at.HealthCare.gov). Open enrollment for 2018 ends December 15, 2017.

Caregiver Conference Invites Exhibitors

The 25th Annual "Giving Care, Taking Care" Caregiver Conference will be held on June 4, 2018 in Tukwila. This popular conference is intended for family and the community caregivers that help them, attracting over 400 attendees. It offers a unique opportunity to obtain practical, up-to-date information and resources that will help them care for their loved ones. Dynamic speakers from a variety of backgrounds will share their expertise and knowledge in concurrent sessions throughout the day. A Resource Exhibition offers 40+ informational displays of caregiving products, services, and literature. Watch your mail for vendor registration packets or contact [John Mikel](#) at 253-798-2823.

DD Ombuds Program Up and Running

The [Office of Developmental Disability Ombuds](#) is designed to help protect the health and well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities. The office acts as watchdog, monitoring and reporting on the services provided in Washington state for potential situations of abuse and neglect. The DD Ombuds team is comprised of staff with extensive experience in serving the needs of people with developmental disabilities, including several people who experience developmental disabilities. They have offices in Spokane, Seattle and Olympia that cover all three regions in Washington State. The complaint line is at (833) 727-8900 / Voice: (206) 324-1521 or info@ddombuds.org. Please use 711 for Washington Relay Service.

New ‘Instructions’ Could Let Dementia Patients Refuse Spoon-Feeding

For years people who abhor the thought of being kept alive with feeding tubes or other types of artificial nutrition and hydration could document their wishes to halt such interventions – and have them honored — using advance directives. The practice has rarely – almost never – included provisions to refuse food and fluids offered by hand. But End of Life Washington has created [guidelines for dementia patients](#) who don’t want to be spoon-fed at the end of life. EOLWA recently posted new [“Instructions for Oral Feeding and Drinking”](#) on its website.

United by Music North America: You're Invited!

United by Music North America is a program for very musically talented people with developmental challenges and delays to work with professional musicians in rehearsals and performance. Barbara Hammerman and Amanda Gresham, founders of this nonprofit organization in the United States, have announced a Casting Call for new talent to train for performances during Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle July 2018! Everyone may see the members of the band perform at 4 p.m. on December 11th on the WoodSongs Old Time Radio Hour by logging into www.WoodSongs.org to watch-as-it-happens! The UBMNA band performs worldwide and year around. For information about involvement or booking a concert, email Barbara@UBMNA.org, call 253-225-7655 or visit the [UBM webpage](#).

Mental Health First Aid

Q13 Fox News produced a 2-part news story about Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults. The story starts with Todd and Laura Crooks telling their family’s story, includes statements from Pete Ansara and Paulina Kura from Pierce County Human Services, and scenes from one of the MHFA classes. Here are links to both news stories: [Mental Health First Aid](#) | [Kitsap Co. mom admits to strangling son to death on Halloween after praying on it](#). CHI Franciscan health is spearheading the 8-hour MHFA class. Contact [Monet Craton](#) for more information or call 253-539-6786.

2018 County Budget Helps Seniors

The Pierce County Council voted unanimously to adopt the County’s 2018 operating and capital budgets. The new budgets take effect Jan. 1, 2018, pending the County Executive’s signature. Among the items included in the budget is one position in the Assessor-Treasurer’s Office to process new applications and renewals for low-income senior and disabled Pierce County residents.

Inslee Announces New Director of State Health Care Authority

Gov. Jay Inslee [announced the appointment of Susan Birch](#) as director of the Washington State Health Care Authority. Lou McDermott, who has served as interim director since the departure of Dorothy Teeter Frost in June, will become deputy director. Birch is currently the executive director of the Colorado Department of Health Policy and Financing. Over the past six years she has overseen public

insurance, health delivery and policy development, and implementation of the Affordable Care Act in Colorado. Birch's appointment is effective Jan. 1, 2018.

AG Ferguson Expands Lawsuit against Pharma Companies over Generic Drug Price Fixing

A wide-ranging antitrust investigation by Attorney General Bob Ferguson and 45 other attorneys general has uncovered even more involvement in an alleged generic drug price-fixing conspiracy. The states allege the companies violated antitrust laws to artificially inflate the prices of the drugs, and agreed to divvy up the market for the drugs to reduce competition. Some of the drugs increased in price by more than 1,000 percent. View the [request to file an amended complaint](#).

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year – Tax Season

[VITA \(Volunteer Income Tax Assistance\)](#) provides free tax preparation services to individuals and households with incomes less than \$54,000, as well as seniors, from early February through April 15. The success of the program depends solely on the volunteers who give of their time. In 2016, nearly 5,000 Pierce County households were helped by free tax sites. Volunteers may serve as: 1) Tax Preparers, who complete tax returns; 2) Quality Reviewers, who check returns for accuracy; 3) Site Coordinators, who oversee tax sites; 4) Greeters, who welcome clients; and 5) Interpreters, who translate for non-English speaking or hearing-impaired customers. No experience required, and free training is provided. VITA offers flexible hours (days, evenings and weekends) and locations throughout Pierce County. All VITA sites are IRS-approved. [Apply online](#). Contact Amy Allison at 253-426-1516.

Prepare in a Year – Shelter in Place

Sometimes the best way to stay safe in an emergency is to get inside and stay inside a building or a vehicle. Get inside. Bring your loved ones, your emergency supplies, and your pets. Find a safe spot. The exact spot will depend on the type of emergency. Stay put until officials say that it is safe to leave. [Learn more at Pierce County Emergency Management](#).

King County Bus Fares Change

King County Metro Transit will simplify its fares next year, when a flat \$2.75 takes effect July 1. The new fare applies to all standard adult trips, including the use of multiple buses within two hours. The change does not affect senior/disabled fares. Whether you use an Orca card or pay by cash, the same new fare will apply. Pierce Transit fares remain unchanged at this time.

Volunteer Opportunities – Holidays and Year Round

Do you know someone who would be a great volunteer at Nourish (formerly Fish Food Banks)? Invite them to an orientation where they can find out more about getting involved! Sign up for orientation at www.nourishpc.org/volunteer or call 253-383-3164. Orientation dates are now scheduled for December, January and February.

Looking for a Used Car? Be Very, Very Careful

While many areas of the country are still reeling from the devastation of hurricanes Irma and Harvey, scam artists are now trying to sell flood-damaged vehicles here in Washington state. The Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance estimates as many as 1 million vehicles flood-damaged vehicles could be sold to unsuspecting buyers nationwide. Before you buy a used car, research the title and VIN number at <http://www.vehiclehistory.gov> and/or <https://www.carfax.com/press/resources/flooded-cars>.

SCAMS OF THE MONTH

Good News on Scams

Did you lose money to a scammer who had you pay using Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017? If so, you can now ask for your money back – and you have until February 12, 2018 to file your claim. If you already reported your fraud loss to Western Union, the FTC, or another government agency, you might get a claim form in the mail. The forms were just mailed out and will come from Gilardi & Co, which is the company DOJ hired to handle the claims. [You can file your claim online](#) – just use the Claim ID and the PIN that are on the form you get in the mail. If you didn't already report your loss, or you don't get a claim form in the mail, go online to file your claim. Start at FTC.gov/WU to get to the claims website. [Read more about the refunds](#). (Source: FTC)

Warning on Holiday Scams

The BBB is sending out a warning to travelers on what scams to look out for during the holiday rush. When planning to visit family over the holidays, BBB recommends to look out for these scams:

- **Ride-sharing con.** BBB has heard of complaints about scammers posing as drivers for ride-share services at airports. Drivers will claim to be the transportation that travelers have ordered, but after the ride is complete, the driver will ask for an upfront payment rather than the paying through the app and passengers are often over-charged.
- **Hoax websites.** Reputable business names are often used as a ploy for scammers to get customers to trust them. Find a prominent, local travel business on the BBB App at bbbapp.org.
- **Fake travel agencies.** Scammers posing as travel agents will entice consumers with cheap travel options. To confirm the company is legitimate and legally able to sell to consumers, ask the agent for their International Air Transport Association (IATA) number or an Airline Reporting Center (ARC) number. It's a big red flag if the travel agent doesn't provide these.
- **Grandparent scam.** Scammers call in distress claiming to be a grandchild of the elder and needing money. Seniors are advised to hang up and call their actual grandchild's phone number or another relative to confirm their grandchild is safe.
- **Always pay with a credit card.** Paying with a credit card adds additional protection if consumers are scammed. Other payments such as wiring money and pre-paid cards are harder to track and most of the time it's impossible to get money back.

For more travel tips, check out go.bbb.org/travelplanning. Victims of travel scams are encouraged to report their encounters, whether money lost or not, to BBB Scam Tracker.

RECOMMEND READS

While They're Still Here

After a lifetime of strained bonds with her aging parents, Patricia Williams finds herself in the unexpected position of being their caregiver and neighbor. Williams answers the call of duty with trepidation at first. Honest, humorous, and graceful, *While They're Still Here* is a poignant story about a family that waves the white flag and begins to heal old wounds as they guide each other through the most vulnerable chapter of their lives. Order paperback or Kindle at caregiver.com.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Dec 7 – Social Security Retirement 2018

This is a fast-paced presentation for anyone anticipating their retirement benefits and those currently receiving benefits. The workshop will update changes for 2018, discuss early retirement and present effective strategies that can maximize benefits. Participants will also learn how to negotiate the rules about working, either full or part time, while receiving benefits. Presenter is Kirk Larson, Public Affairs Specialist, from the Social Security Administration. Held 4 to 5:30 p.m. at the Lakewood Senior Activity Center, 9112 Lakewood Dr., SW. Free; No RSVP required. Call 253-798-4600 for more information. [View event flyer.](#)

Dec 15 – Estate Planning for the LGBT Community

[Lavender Rights Project](#) will be providing a free estate planning clinic catered to the needs of the LGBT community. Information about vital legal documents including Will, Disposition of Remains, Durable Power of Attorney and Health Care Directives followed by a Q&A session. No cost. Held 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the [Rainbow Center](#), 2215 Pacific Avenue in Tacoma.

Dec 21 – Blue Christmas

Holidays can be an exciting time. But for many the season comes with a mix of emotions including sadness, depression and loneliness. Older adults who live alone or have families wrapped up in their own activities, are often impacted the hardest. United Church in University Place, 3912 Grandview Drive West, hosts this evening of solace at 7:00 p.m.

Jan 10 – Dementia Friendly Community

Want to be a part of a special movement? A special group is forming around making Pierce County a “Dementia Friendly Community.” Our next gathering will be from 9:30 to 11 a.m. at the Pierce County Library Administrative Center, 3005 112th St. E., Tacoma. We will be formulating our first steps in providing community education to faith communities. All are welcome. For more information call [Bob Riler](#) (253-798-7384) or [Linda McCone](#) (253-722-5691).

Jan 12 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 1 of 6)

More and more families are facing the long road of caring for a loved one with dementia. There is a lot of uncertainty before the diagnosis and in the early stages after the diagnosis. Take a look at the questions and the answers in this 6-part series for families and individuals beginning the journey. Part 1 - What is Dementia? What are the warning signs? [View flyer.](#) Held at noon at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma. Free; No RSVP. For details call 253-798-4600.

Jan 20 – Mental Health First Aid

An evidence-based, 8-hour training that introduces participants to common risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems and specific illnesses like anxiety, depression, substance use disorders, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Participants learn a five-step action plan to support someone developing a mental illness or experiencing a mental crisis, and connect them to appropriate care and support. Open to adults age 18 and over who live and/or work in Pierce County. Training is offered at no cost. Held 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Center for Dialog & Resolution, Tacoma. To register, please email your 1) name, 2) organization, 3) email, and 4) phone # to Reception@CenterForResolution.org.

Jan 23 – Abuse in Later Life: Cross Training for Victim Service Providers

Learn the dynamics of abuse in later life and how to identify and utilize resources in the community. The purpose of this training is to enhance older victims’ safety and quality of life by strengthening

collaboration among victim service providers. Held 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at KWA, 123 E. 96th St. in Tacoma. [Register online](#) or call 253-798-4313 or [e-mail](#). Registration required.

Jan 26 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 2 of 6)

(See Jan 12 for event description.) Part 2 - How does the disease progress? What should I expect? [View flyer](#). Held at noon at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma. Free; No RSVP. For details call 253-798-4600.

Feb 6 – Living & Thriving with Parkinson's

Parkinson's is a complex disease that can affect almost every part of the body, ranging from how you move to how you feel to how you think and process. It affects not just those with the disease but their loved ones as well. While Parkinson's affects everyone differently, there are certain things that anyone can do to live well with Parkinson's and actually thrive. Free; No RSVP required. (In case of bad weather call 253-798-8787 for possible postponement information.) [View event flyer](#). Held at 6:30 p.m. at Sumner Branch Library, 1116 Fryar Ave, Sumner. Call the ADRC for more information at 253-798-4600.

Feb 9 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 3 of 6)

(See Jan 12 for event description.) Part 3 - How do I start the conversation? How do I cope with the shock?" [View flyer](#). Held at noon at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma. Free; No RSVP. For details call 253-798-4600.

Feb 10 – Living & Thriving with Parkinson's

(See Feb 6 for event details.) (In case of bad weather call 253-798-8787 for possible postponement information.) Held 10 a.m. at Pierce County Sound View Building, 3602 Pacific Ave., Tacoma. [View event flyer](#).

Feb 14 – Living & Thriving with Parkinson's

(See Feb 6 for event details.) (In case of bad weather call 253-798-8787 for possible postponement information.) Held at 6:30 p.m. at University Place Library, 3609 Market Place W., UP. [View event flyer](#).

Feb 19 – NAMI Lobby Day

Save the date and stay tuned for more updates about the next NAMI Washington Lobby Day.

Feb 23 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 4 of 6)

(See Jan 12 for event description.) Part 4 – What are the typical Behaviors? How do I manage them? [View flyer](#). Held at noon at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma. Free; No RSVP. For details call 253-798-4600.

Feb 24 – Mental Health First Aid

(See Jan 20 for event description.) Held 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Pierce County Library Administrative Center, Tacoma. To register, please email your 1) name, 2) organization, 3) email, and 4) phone # to monetcraton@chifranciscan.org.

Feb 27 – Abuse in Later Life: Cross Training for Victim Service Providers

See Jan 23 for event description and registration.

Mar 9 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 5 of 6)

(See Jan 12 for event description.) Part 5 – How do I pay for care? What are the legal things I should do? [View flyer](#). Held at noon at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma. Free; No RSVP. For details call 253-798-4600.

Mar 23 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 6 of 6)

(See Jan 12 for event description.) Part 6 – Where can I turn for help? What are the resources I can rely on? [View flyer](#). Held at noon at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma. Free; No RSVP. For details call 253-798-4600.

Mar 23-25 – West Region EMS Conference

Save the Date. Keynote speaker is Randolph Mantooth from the hit TV series “Emergency.” Held at the Ocean Shores Convention Center, Ocean Shores. Conference preceded on March 23, 8 to noon by a train-the-trainer workshop – What do you consider to be lethal?” For more information contact lori@wrems.com or 360-705-9019.

May 7 – Mental Health First Aid for Veterans & Military Members

(See Jan 20 for event description.) Includes additional content on risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems commonly experienced by veterans and military members. Held 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Pierce County Library Administrative Center, Tacoma. To register, please email your 1) name, 2) organization, 3) email, and 4) phone # to monetcraton@chifranciscan.org.

Q&A of the Month

Question: We are planning some driving trips soon. How best should I prepare?

Answer: Winter can be a beautiful time to hit the road. But the key is all about preparation. [Get your car ready](#) by checking the tire pressure, headlights, and windshield wipers before you go. If you are going to be taking out the grandkids, you might want to find out if you have [the right car seat](#) for their size and age. Kids should sit in the backseat at least through age 12. Get information on [road closures](#) before you take off, even if you know the highways by heart. Going over the Cascades or even the Coast Range can be tricky as weather conditions can change rapidly. Make sure your cell phone is fully charged and you have a charger to plug into your car. And remember to give your cell phone to a passenger or put it away. It’s illegal in Washington state to talk on your cell phone unless it’s entirely hands free. No text message or phone call is worth an accident on the road.

NATIONALLY

Advocates Say Tax Reform Threatens Seniors and People with Disabilities

- [AARP Evaluation](#)
- [National Council on Aging Analysis](#)
- [Leadership Council of Aging Organizations](#)
- [Justice in Aging](#)
- [National Association of Area Agencies on Aging](#)

Individual Mandate Penalty Calculator Estimates Penalty for Being Uninsured in 2018

A [new individual mandate penalty calculator](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation allows consumers to estimate how much they would owe as a tax penalty for lacking health coverage in 2018, and to compare that amount to the cost of the least expensive 2018 Affordable Care Act marketplace plan in their local area. (Source: KFF)

ACA Subsidies Cheat Sheet

Health care is complicated. Shopping for an individual health plan just got even more so, especially with this year's complex political environment. Known as cost-sharing reduction payments (CSRs), these federal funds had helped insurers offset the costs of the discounts they are required to offer to some lower-earning customers to help them pay for deductibles and copays. [Take a look at these helpful cheat sheets](#). (Source: KHN)

Tax Reform Threatens Health Care Deduction

The [House Republican tax plan](#) is currently being debated by the Ways and Means Committee, and several of the provisions will have a devastating impact on older adults and people with disabilities. Most notably, the plan does away with the [medical expense deduction](#), which allows people who spend more than 10% of their income on health care expenses to deduct the remainder of their medical expenses from their federally taxed income. Medicare Rights, along with other organizations, sent a [letter to Congress](#) urging them to protect this deduction. (Source: MRC)

Trump Administration Plan to Add Medicaid Work Requirement Stirs Fears

The recent [announcement by a top administration official](#) that the federal government will entertain requests to implement work requirements for many adult Medicaid enrollees has raised concerns among advocates for the program. (Source: KHN)

Rising Health Insurance Costs Frighten Some Early Retirees

Higher premiums loom for Americans in their late 50s and early 60s who are still too young for Medicare and don't qualify for subsidies under Obamacare. [Read the story](#). (Source: KHN)

Bill Gates Reaches for the Holy Grail

It's one of the holy grails of science: a cure for Alzheimer's. Currently, there is no treatment to stop the disease, let alone slow its progression. Bill Gates thinks he will change that by [investing \\$50 million of his own money](#) into the [Dementia Discovery Fund](#), a private-public research partnership focused on some of the more novel ideas about what drives the brain disease, such as looking at a brain cell's immune system. It's the first time Gates has made a commitment to a non-communicable disease. (Source: CNN)

How Safe Are Nursing Homes?

There are about 15,600 nursing homes that participate in the Medicare and Medicaid programs in the United States. These operations serve as home for roughly 1.4 million of America's most frail citizens. The hurricane-related deaths at a nursing home in Florida and photos of nursing home residents sitting in wheelchairs with water up to their waists near Houston provide a stark illustration of the need to learn everything possible about the nursing home industry before a crisis. [Read AARP's examination of the issue](#). (Source: AARP)

U.S. Seniors Fair Poorly Compared to Other Countries

Despite having nearly universal health coverage through Medicare, adults 65 and older in the United States are sicker than their counterparts in 10 other high-income countries and more likely to go without needed care because of costs, according to the [Commonwealth Fund's 20th International Health Policy Survey](#). (Source: Commonwealth Fund)

Be Aware of Changes to SNAP Benefits

Do you have clients coming to you with concerns about reduced Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps) benefit amounts? Learn why some people may be affected due to recent cost-of-living changes. [Get the facts](#). (Source: NCOA)

Get the New Medicare Hospital Observation Toolkit

People with Medicare may be surprised by unexpected bills for a hospital stay if they were classified under outpatient/ observation status. The Center for Medicare Advocacy has created a toolkit that explains this status designation, answers frequently asked questions from beneficiaries and advocates, and provides a sample Medicare Outpatient Observation Notice (MOON). [Access the toolkit](#). (Source: Center for Medicare Advocacy)

Understanding Medicare's Home Health Benefit

The Medicare home health benefit serves millions of Americans, allowing many homebound older adults to get the care they need while remaining in their homes. However, Medicare coverage rules for home health are complicated and often misunderstood. Check out the Public Policy Institute's [Spotlight](#) for more on this important benefit. (Source: AARP)

How Tax Reform Will Impact Seniors

Tax reform is speeding through Congress, and the rapid pace means few people understand what's in the latest proposals. [Read NCOA's effort to provide the most reliable, factual information available](#) about how the bills would affect older Americans. (Source: NCOA)

Medical Expense Tax Deduction Take Center Stage

With Tax Reform rushing through Congress, one feature has drawn significant attention – the medical expense deduction. The deduction's proposed elimination has shined a light on the growing number of Americans with very high out-of-pocket health care costs. About 9 million people took the deduction in 2015. In 2016, an estimated 40 million Americans spent 10 percent or more of their gross income on out-of-pocket medical expenses, not including premiums. These expenses include costs associated with long-term care, support for people with disabilities, and serious illness and injuries. [Read the discussion to learn more](#). (Source: Commonwealth Fund)

Compassionate Allowances: Fast-Track Help to Those Who Need It Most

Social Security is committed to processing disability claims as quickly as possible in all cases, but the initial claims process typically takes three to four months. If you suffer from a serious medical condition that prevents you from working, time is of the essence when it comes to receiving a decision on your disability application. [Learn more about how Social Security is able to expedite the application process](#) through our Compassionate Allowances program. (Source: SSA)

Veterans Can Receive VA-Covered In-Home Care

Many people are aware that the VA offers veterans comprehensive health care benefits through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). But did you know that in-home care is part of this Standard Medical Benefits Package? [Read on to learn how](#) veterans and their caregivers can take advantage of VA homemaker and home health aide services (H/HHA) (Source: Aging Care)

Must-Have Assistive Devices for Seniors

For many individuals with senior parents who live in their own homes, mobility and safety is a constant worry. Declining agility and unsteadiness can result in [falls with devastating injuries](#) for seniors, as well tasks that were previously simple, such as getting out of bed, dressing or performing personal hygiene, may become increasingly difficult to accomplish. Assistive devices are fantastic resources to help seniors maintain their daily activities and routines, while encouraging personal freedom and prolonging independent living. [Here is a list of some great devices.](#) (Source: A Place for Mom)

Coffin Clubs Draw Fans

National Geographic recently released a video about older New Zealanders (Kiwis) who join “coffin clubs” to plan their funerals. Coffin clubs allow them to bring their personality to their funerals. And, they have fun in the process. Club members have a workshop where they build their own affordable coffins with love ... and drink tea. When the coffins are finished, they use them for storage or spare seating. (Many Americans do not complete a [health care proxy or a living will](#).) [Watch the Coffin Club video.](#) (Source: JustCareUSA)

Minka: Age Friendly Dwellings, Tools and Services.

In Japanese, Minka means “the people’s house” and describes the elegant, innovative use of tools and materials to meet people’s most fundamental needs. Minka is all about creativity, flexibility, durability and efficient use of space and materials. The Minka home is a simple post-and-beam smart home that helps older people downsize and younger people (many with disabilities) upsize. Homes are designed and all components are “printed” using cutting-edge CNC (Computer Numeric Controlled) routers to keep costs low. Homes are assembled in days rather than months. More information is available at <https://myminka.com>. (Source: myminka.com)

Shield HealthCare's Caregiver Contest 2017

What advice would you give to a fellow caregiver? That’s the question Shield HealthCare is asking for their 16th Annual Caregiver Contest. Submit your entry of 150 words or more for a chance to win a \$500 American Express gift card! [Enter to win](#). Deadline is Jan 31, 2018. (Source: Shield Healthcare)

How Older Patients Can Dodge Pitfalls Entrenched In Health Care System

Being old and sick in America frequently means a doctor won’t ask you about troublesome concerns you deal with day to day — difficulty walking, dizziness, a leaky bladder, sleep disturbances memory lapses, and more. It means that if you’re hospitalized, you have a good chance of being treated by a physician you’ve never met and undergoing questionable tests and treatments that might end up compromising your health. In her new book, [“Old & Sick in America: The Journey Through the Health Care System,”](#) Dr. Muriel Gillick, a professor of population medicine at Harvard Medical School and director of the Program in Aging at Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute, delves deeply into these concerns and why they’re widespread. (Source: KHN)

Adjusting To Life in a Retirement Home “Not as Scary as I Thought”

