

90 Important NOW/COMP Disability Waiver Update and More

Dearest Advocates:

This is a very important announcement for families that currently receive the NOW/COMP disability Waiver in Georgia and are self directed:

I just found out late last week that the state is now calculating your rates of your employee's in a different way compared to prior to April 16, 2009. If you are self directed you need to know that effective **IMMEDIATELY** the capped rate that is under the new waivers has to include all the taxes you pay (including Medicare, federal and state unemployment, workers comp. etc) which is 21.115%. Before 4/16/09, some families were billing their employee's time at the max unit rate and their budget would be reduced by that employee rate plus the 21.115% in taxes.

Office of DD has decided that this not the way they intended the program to work so they changed it on April 16, 2009 without family's knowledge. No communication (at least that I'm aware of) has been given to families on this issue in a systematic approach to make sure we all understand the implications of this change.

Bottom line: Our employee's will now take a 21% reduction in their rate due to this change of including the taxes in the unit cap on your Prior Authorization (PA). As you can imagine, I have been very disappointed in finding out about this and have been working with the Office of DD and Support coordination to make sure I have my facts straight prior to sending out this email. I personally found out when one of my employees had not been paid in April (for services in March) and I called Acumen (the fiscal agent) to find about this change (not from support coordination or the Office of DD).

This is the response I received from the Office of DD on this issue for your FYI and understanding:

The authorized amount on the prior authorization for any service which involves payment of employees is to include the worker's comp and employer taxes. This is not a policy change, but since the beginning of self-direction was to be a part of the budget development. This relates to the "Show Me the Money" form which has been a part of self-direction since its inception. This form indicates what is needed to cover worker's comp and employer taxes, depending on what is paid the employee. The authorized amount for these services should be at the amount required to cover worker's comp and employer taxes along with the employee rate of pay.

Acumen had been paying employees what was submitted and losing dollars related to the worker's comp and employer taxes. Acumen reduced the employee payment in accordance with what would be needed to cover the employer taxes and worker's comp effective April 16th. Families were being called about this change, but I never saw a summary of which families were contacted. I was not involved with making these calls.

The maximum amount that can be paid any employee through Community Living Support 15 Minutes Self-Directed is \$12.54, because of the dollars needed for worker's comp and employer taxes. If an employee has been paid more than \$12.54 for CLS 15 Minutes Self-Directed, the rate of pay decreased to this amount. Acumen did the most recent payroll (April 16 through April 30th) with the reduced rate of pay.

Heidi's Suggestion: Therefore, if your employee's are being paid above the unit rate including the taxes, **you** will need to fill out another "Employee Rate Sheet" form and submit to your Support Coordinator for filing this change with Acumen. Your employees will **NOT** be paid until this is done.

If you have any other questions regarding this issue, please contact your Support Coordinator and not me. This is all I know right now. Once again, there has been a communication breakdown in the system that needs to change. Hopefully, with the new organization of Behavioral Health and Development Disabilities they will work on effective communicating with families when changes occur and that families will be a part of the process and discussion prior to any changes. Just a thought...

In addition, please see below additional information for your use regarding scholarships, new play groups, reorganization of DHR, etc.

Hope you find this information helpful.

“UNITED – WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!”

Sincerely,

Heidi

(Proud Mother to Jacob - 9 yrs old with Down syndrome and Jared - 7 yrs old)

“Help the Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!”

www.heidijmoore.com

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Special Needs Play Group - Elementary Age or Younger - Play Activity Center, Highway 92 and Crabapple Road:

My name is Lynn Shebat, and I am starting a new special needs play group at Play Interactive Gym. I have a beautiful daughter who has Autism. We love to play at Play Activity Center. In the gyms, there are trampolines, and jumpy houses, and lots of sensory activities, that we are going to have access to in our own private gym. I am starting this program to help our family and your family find balance in your life, put in a little play with a lot of learning, and make new friends. The sky is the limit to how much fun we will have together in our play groups, as we work on turn taking, playing games, participating in small group, and making friends with some new social skills. We will emphasize language development, cooperation and following directions in a fun and active sensory rich environment.

I have been in the field of Special Education for over 25 years. I know what is important for children with special needs to learn academically, but it is only with the birth of my daughter, that I learned how important it is for our children to learn to play. We will concentrate on skill deficits to fill in the gaps, and have fun. Join us.

Lyn Shebat

Where: At Play Activity Center
Highway 92 and Crabapple
10930 Crabapple Rd. Ste 15
www.playactivitycenter.com

Anticipated Start Date: June 6
(putting groups together now, please call and play with us.)

Lynn Shebat
678-469-0155
Email: LynnSheb@aol.com

(Heidi Comment: This is a fantastic opportunity for families to have a special education teacher work with their child on social skills in a fun way! I know I'm always looking for different approaches to social skills training for our son.)

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Columbus Disability Day Announced- May 21,2009:

http://www.ciclt.net/ul/gcdd/Columbus_2009_%20Columbus_Flyer.pdf

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Special Needs Consignment Sale:

I am a volunteer for the "Special Needs Consignment Sale."

This is a yearly sale for individuals to consign special needs and adaptive equipment. The sale is designed to allow families and organizations to sell and buy their used special needs items and to benefit the non-profits that work with special needs.

I am attaching a flyer with information concerning the sale for you to pass on to any of your special needs students' parents who may be interested in participating.

If you desire more information, you may refer to the website at:
www.specialneedsconsignment.com or call - toll-free - 1-866-484-8014.

Christie

2009 Special Needs

Consignment Sale

May 26-30

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church

1375 New Hope Road Lawrenceville,Georgia

www.specialneedsconsignment.com

Walkers & Gait Trainers, Wheelchairs, Strollers, Support Chairs , AFO Shoes , Specialty Clothing , Adaptive Toys, Medical Supplies , Bathing Accessories , Feeding Systems , Tables & Trays , Strollers & Push Chairs, Communication Aids , Positioning Devices , Therapy Equipment , Typical Children Items

Go online today and register as a seller, shopper, volunteer, vendor, or sponsored non-profit!

www.specialneedsconsignment.com

Don't miss this once-a-year chance to sell your unneeded adaptive equipment and medical supplies while helping nonprofits dealing with disabilities raise funds for their cause. On your behalf, we sell your items on consignment at our sale events for the price you set. All you have to do is register, drop your tagged items off at your appointed time, and we handle everything else, from marketing to merchandising.

Consignors earn 60% of the selling price for items sold.

Sponsored non-profits earn 10%-20% of the selling price for their supporting consignors sold items. Register to buy, sell and volunteer at www.specialneedsconsignment.com .

*Please note: Due to lack of space, we must limit our number of sellers.

First registered, first admitted. You MUST register to be a seller and be assigned a seller ID#.

Raise Money For Your Special Needs Cause

Visit us online to learn how this event can benefit you!

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Governor Signs Legislation to Restructure the Department of Human Resources

Monday, May 4, 2009

Contact: Office of Communications 404-651-7774

ATLANTA – Governor Sonny Perdue today signed House Bill 228, reorganizing the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Department of Community Health (DCH) and creating a new Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. HB 228 was introduced in the House by Rep. Mark Butler and carried in the Senate by Sen. Renee Unterman.

“Signing HB 228 will allow us to deliver greater value for Georgians’ healthcare dollars,” said Governor Perdue. “The legislation reorients our approach to healthcare by shifting the focus from inputs to results.”

The bill will result in three agencies reorganized to provide more focused results – the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Community Health and the Department of Human Services. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities will be responsible for all mental health, developmental disability and addictive disease programs currently under DHR. The department will report directly to the Governor, increasing transparency.

The Governor announced that Dr. Frank Shelp will serve as the new agency’s commissioner. Dr. Shelp currently works as the Clinical Director at Georgia Regional Hospital in Savannah. The Governor also appointed Dr. Bill McDonald to serve as Special Advisor to the Governor on Mental Health. Dr. McDonald currently serves as professor of psychiatry at Emory University. He is the chair for late life depression and chief of the Division of Geriatric Psychiatry. Gwen Skinner, who has been an integral part of DHR’s mental health service delivery, will serve as a Deputy Commissioner for the new agency during the transition until her retirement later this year.

DCH will be reorganized to include all the public health and long-term care regulation programs of DHR. This change establishes one lead agency to focus on improving Georgia’s health and streamlines health related activities currently in two separate departments. This agency will be led by current DCH Commissioner Dr. Rhonda Medows.

DHR’s remaining services will be housed under the Department of Human Services. Programs included in this department include Aging, Division of Family and Children Services and Child Support. Commissioner B.J. Walker will head the Agency.

The bill largely resembles the recommendations made by the Health and Human Services Task Force, which convened last year and studied these issues at length. Sen. Renee Unterman, Sen. Jack Hill, Rep. Ben Harbin and Rep. Mark Butler all served on the Health and Human Services Task Force. Rep. Pat Gardner and Sen. Johnny Grant also worked for passage of the bill and joined the Governor at today’s bill signing.

“Today we begin building a new stronger foundation for health and human services in the state of Georgia,” said Rep. Butler. “This foundation is just a beginning, and the real work lies ahead. We must continue to strive and make our public and mental health systems the best and most efficient in the nation. I want to thank the Governor and the leadership of the House and Senate for making this new day a reality.”

“This is a great day for Georgia and the many citizens that receive healthcare services from the state,” said Sen. Renee Unterman. “I am confident that these changes will result in improved care for our state’s most vulnerable residents.”

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Scholarships Available for families:

Kiddos’ Clubhouse Foundation is awarding \$2,500 scholarships to families who demonstrate the financial and therapeutic need for their children. Our goal is to provide a scholarship each quarter. The money can be used to pay for therapy services anywhere or therapy equipment. We all know families who have struggled to pay for therapy and have had to stop due to financial reasons. The application can be accessed on the web site: www.kiddosclubhousefoundation.org

The deadline for the next scholarship is June 30th. We have had past recipients use the monies for music therapy, ABA and therapy equipment.

Please pass this information along to anyone who could benefit from the scholarship monies. I have attached a single sheet to provide to parents with the basic information. If there is a family that does not have access to a computer and needs an application, please have them call 678.527.3224 x11 and we will get an application mailed out to them. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at: bdevore@kiddosclubhouse.com

For all the Directors of Special Education, this would be great information to provide to your ISTs.

Thank you!!

Brett R. DeVore, MS, OTR/L

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Mental Health Advocates Meeting:

The MH Advocates Meeting will be held today at 2:00 PM at Two Peachtree St, Atlanta on the 22nd floor in room 270 (large conference room).

The meeting is open to all people interested in Mental Health issues.

If you are unable to attend in person, you may call in:

1-866-244-8528

Passcode: 218749

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Mental Health & Addictive Diseases
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