

Rocky Mountain Chronicle

February 2010
Winter Edition

Happy New Year! Here is to a happy and healthy 2010 to all the Consumers we serve across the great state of Montana.



In the first part of 2010 you probably have heard or seen in the news the potential for upcoming budget cuts that could affect the services you're receiving. Governor Brian Schweitzer is instructing Administrators in Helena to cut 5% from the budget. Our Administrator, Kelly Williams, is currently trying to figure out how to do that. The three most common ways to reduce the budget in our division are:

1. Reduce the number of people receiving services in the State
2. Reduce the number of hours per week people are authorized for
3. Reduce the agency reimbursement rates and/or reduce the wages caregivers are paid

You need to know that the Consumer Advisory Council (made up of many of you) along with Consumer Direct staff is fighting to prevent any of the above these 3 things from happening. On January 26th, your Consumer Advisory Council sent a letter to Governor Schweitzer and Kelly Williams, the Administrator of the Senior & Long Term Care Division, asking Kelly not to recommend to the Governor that any of the three things above be reduced. These services are vital to many people across the state whose goal is to stay in their homes.

Keep yourself updated on these upcoming potential changes. Don't sit back and wait! If you want to get involved in the Consumer Advisory Council please call your local office in Billings, Havre, or Missoula. Consumer Direct will also do our best to keep you updated of any upcoming news or changes.

In Good Health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Spaid".

Program Manager

Reminders from Noel & Alicia

Be good Record Keepers. This means keeping your pink or yellow copies of the Timesheets & Paystubs. You never know when you will need them.

On Timesheets—Slow down and take your time. Before you submit double check that:

1. The correct tasks are checked
2. In/Out Times or "Live-In Caregiver" is filled in
3. You used all your hours for the week
4. The Consumer/PR and Caregiver sign and date after the last day of the work week.

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Caregiver of the Quarter



Linda Dschack from Glendive

How long have you been a caregiver?

I've been a caregiver at least 30 years. When I started out I was a nursing home caregiver. I've worked with people with Developmental Disabilities at Eastmont for 16 years. I've also worked at EMI. I'm currently working at AWARE as well as providing care under the self-direct program.

How and why did you become a caregiver?

It was a choice I made in my younger days. We lived in a small town and the nursing home was the spot to go because there were job openings. And that's how I got into it. I've always enjoyed people and helping. And seeing happiness from the people I'm caring for as well as feeling that emotion myself.

Name the #1 thing you have learned from being a caregiver.

To always have a smile on your face because that's what everybody looks for. If they don't see a smile they think something is wrong. And always to have to a good attitude.

What is the hardest thing about being a caregiver?

If one of the people I care for is sick. You have to adjust and find something good about it and focus on the good.



What is the most rewarding part of being a caregiver?

The smiles, happiness, sharing, laughter, and the talks you share with people every day. The person I care for and I have had a lot of fun in the last two years.

Any other information?

I have seven grandchildren and one great-granddaughter who was born January 18th. She is BEAUTIFUL!

How to Nominate for Caregiver of the Quarter

Do you have an exceptional caregiver?

If so, we'd like to reward such excellence.

Let us know about these generous people by nominating them. Write us a paragraph and tell us why they're special. Each quarter Consumer Direct will honor up to two special caregivers. They will receive a \$25 gift certificate. You can fax or mail your nomination to the Missoula office. The fax # is 1-866-541-8704 and the address is 1903 S. Russell, Missoula, MT 59801



Safety in the Home

House Fire & Burn Prevention

Smoke alarms can be life savers ... if they are working!

- Install one outside of each sleeping area. If you can, connect all alarms so they will go off at the same time. Test smoke alarms once a month and replace them every 10 years.
- Design a fire escape plan that has at least two ways out of every room. Practice the plan with your family.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, get out of the house and stay out!

Hot foods are common causes of burns.

- Keep hot foods and liquids away from counter edges. Watch for kids before you carry a hot dish to the table.
- Keep pan handles pointed away from the floor to avoid spilling their hot contents on someone.

Scalds from hot bath water can cause severe burns.

- Set the water heater thermostat at 120 degrees or less.
- Always test the water temperature with your wrist, elbow or back of your hand before bathing.

Cooking is the leading cause of fires, often because a person leaves the room.

- Turn fast-cooking foods off when answering the door or telephone and when you have to go to another room for a time.
- When simmering, boiling, baking or roasting food, check it regularly. Don't leave, set a timer.

The heat is on!

- Use a fireplace screen or keep the door closed on a wood stove to keep sparks inside. Have the chimney cleaned and the central heating system inspected.
- Turn portable space heaters off when you go to bed or spend time in another room. Be sure there are no curtains, paper, furniture or other combustibles within three feet of the heater.



Staff Spotlight - Alicia Sperry



Alicia with her husband Ryan and her son Trenton

Alicia Sperry, our great Administrative Assistance/Timesheet Auditor, at Consumer Direct in Billings was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) 16 years ago. It is a day she will never forget.

During the last 16 years Alicia has become one of the leading local and national advocates for MS. She was invited to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Public Policy Conference in Washington D.C. March 1st-March 3rd. While there, she will be talking with national policy makers about issues that are critical for people with MS. The issues she will talk about include Respite Care, MS Disease Registries Act, and Congressionally Directed Medical Research.

Locally she is actively involved in the Montana Government Relations Committee as well as the MS Society in Billings. Alicia and the rest of our staff will be at the MS Walk in Billings coming up May 1st. Call Alicia at (406) 256-7875 or 1-877-256-4440 for more information or if you are interested in attending.

"I don't want people who are newly diagnosed to feel the same way I felt. It's not a death sentence when you are diagnosed. Knowledge is power. The more you know, the healthier you'll be," says Alicia.



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Happy Valentine's Day

Fun Factory Recipe **Cherry S'Mores Diet Candy**

Ingredients

1/2 cup marshmallow crème
1/2 cup dried tart cherries
1/4 semisweet chocolate morsels
12 squares graham crackers (1.5 inch)

Directions:

In a small bowl, combine marshmallow crème, cherries and chocolate morsels; mix well.
Place 6 of the graham crackers on a microwave-safe plate. [Spoon](#) a heaping tablespoon of marshmallow mixture on each cracker. Top with remaining crackers. Microwave, uncovered, on High, for 30 to 45 seconds or until marshmallow mixture is soft and warm.

[Recipe](#) makes 6 servings Cherry S'Mores.