



DIRECT CONNECTION

Current news from the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities to keep you informed

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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Partnership for Hope Waiver Amendment Approved

The Partnership for Hope Waiver amendment was approved by CMS on October 3, 2011. The amendment requested and approved included the following:

- Changing the name of the waiver from Prevention to Partnership for Hope;
- Expanding the geographic area by adding 11 counties: Barry, Christian, Grundy, Morgan, Oregon, Perry, Randolph, Reynolds, Ste. Genevieve, Stoddard and Wayne;
- Expanding capacity from 970 to 1270 for waiver year 1, and to 1770 for waiver years 2 and 3;
- Adding four new services: Positive Behavior Supports, Employer Provided Job Supports, Job Discovery and Assistive Technology, which will include Personal Electronic Safety Devices; and
- Increases the annual limit on environmental modifications and specialized equipment from \$5,000 to \$7,500.

Missouri Legislation Impacting Individuals Served by the Division

House Bill 555 will:

- Remove all references to “mentally retarded” or “mental retardation” or “handicapped” in state law, changing them to “developmentally disabled,” “developmental disability” or “disabled;”
- Add individuals with developmental disabilities, especially autism, to the list of people whose service dogs must be allowed access to public places, especially for search and rescue of a person who may become lost;
- Create new protections to protect the parental rights of individuals with disabilities; and
- Designate the month of October as Disability History and Awareness month in Missouri’s K through 12 public schools.

House Bill 631 will:

- Create a tax check-off whereby Missouri taxpayers can donate through their state tax return to help reduce the Developmental Disabilities Waiting List;
- Allow an individual or corporation beginning on January 1, 2011 to designate at least \$1 on a Missouri individual income tax return or at least \$2 on a combined return of his or her tax refund amount to the Developmental Disabilities Waiting List Equity Trust Fund; and
- Establish a fund to be used to provide community services and support to people with developmental disabilities and such person's families who are on the developmental disabilities waiting list and are eligible for but not receiving services.

For More Information: The legislation can be found at

<http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills111/billpdf/truly/HB0555T.PDF>

<http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills111/billpdf/truly/HB0631T.PDF>

IN FULL SWING

Division Guideline #11

Medicaid Waiver services provide a wide array of service options to support individuals with developmental disabilities to live and work in their communities. The link below provides guidance on current waiver services available to eligible individuals through the person centered planning process.

<http://dmh.mo.gov/dd/Guidelines.htm>.

IN DEVELOPMENT

Division Update

For the last several years, the Division of DD has been undergoing a restructure that is designed to better support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. To continue this transformation, the Division has partnered with the UMKC-Institute for Human Development, University Center on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, to work with stakeholders to identify strategies for further improvement. Specifically, activities will be focused on increasing options and outcomes related to employment, housing, direct services (self-directed and shared living) and family supports. To achieve these outcomes, stakeholders within and outside of the disability field will come together to explore, problem-solve and work towards developing innovative supports persons with developmental disabilities and their families in their communities. Over the next six months, staff from UMKC will be facilitating conversations with stakeholders to gather information and feedback that will guide this process. Then in March 2012, the Division will host a statewide summit in partnership with key stakeholders and major funding provider organizations, where national and statewide disability leaders will discuss the future of disability services and supports in Missouri. Information about this process, as well as avenues for providing input, will be available to stakeholders in the next several weeks.

Family to Family Brown Bag Webinar

October is Disability History Awareness Month in Missouri! One of the ways that you can celebrate is by attending the monthly Family-to-Family Brown Bag Webinar hosted at every local Regional Office by the Family Support Coordinators or attend on your own computer. Every fourth Wednesday at noon each month, webinars are hosted to assist self-advocates, families and professionals in learning about different types of supports and services in Missouri. On Wednesday, October 26 at 12:00 p.m., the webinar will look at the current and future of disability services by reviewing the history of the field and the importance of the family and self-advocacy movement in this evolution. If you can't make the live viewing, these free webinars are also archived so that you can view them at your convenience. Be sure to check out the website to see archived webinars and future topics. www.mofamilytofamily.org




<http://asdtransition.missouri.edu>

All young people make the transition from being a teenager to becoming an adult. However, this passage may be more challenging for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) due to the social and communication difficulties they experience. Even individuals with ASD and high levels of cognitive ability may struggle to be successful in college or at work. To help with this transition, [Roadmap to the Future](http://asdtransition.missouri.edu), a website featuring information on transitioning into adult life, is now available. The site includes resources in five areas that must be considered as a young person becomes an adult:

- Adult Services and Benefits
- Education and Training
- Employment
- Health and Safety
- Community Living

This website was developed with funding from *The Rapid Response Project: Implementing Missouri's ASD Roadmap*, a federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to the University of Missouri Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders [grant number H6MMC11059].

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BRIGHT IDEAS

Illinois Company Hires Adults with Autism to Test Software



In this photo taken Thursday, Sept. 8, 2011, Marc Lazar, autism specialist for Aspiritech, a nonprofit enterprise that specializes in finding software bugs, works with employee Alan Sun, as they test a new program in Highland Park, Ill. Aspiritech hires only people with autism disorders. Traits that make great software testers--intense focus, comfort with repetition, memory for detail-- also happen to be characteristics of autism. (AP Photo/M. Spencer Green)

The software testers at Aspiritech are a collection of characters. Katie Levin talks nonstop. Brian Tozzo hates driving. Jamie Specht is bothered by bright lights, vacuum cleaners and the feel of carpeting against her skin. Rider Hallenstein draws cartoons of himself as a DeLorean sports car. Rick Alexander finds it unnerving to sit near other people.

This is the unusual workforce of a U.S. startup that specializes in finding software bugs by harnessing the talents of young adults with autism. Traits that make great software testers - intense focus, comfort with repetition, memory for detail - also happen to be characteristics of autism. People with Asperger's syndrome, a mild form of autism, have normal to high intelligence and often are highly skilled with computers.

Aspiritech, a nonprofit in Highland Park, Ill., nurtures these skills while forgiving the quirks that can make adults with autism unemployable: social awkwardness, poor eye contact, being easily overwhelmed. The company's name plays on the words "Asperger's," "spirit" and "technology."

Clients, nine companies in Aspiritech's first two years, have been pleased. "They exceeded my expectations," said Dan Tedesco of Shelton, Conn.-based HandHold Adaptive, which took a chance on Aspiritech to test an iPhone application. "There is a pride in their product you don't usually see in this type of work."

Aspiritech was founded by Moshe and Brenda Weitzberg after their son, Oran, now 32, was fired from a job bagging groceries. Oran was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome when he was 14. He now works at

Aspiritech. "He went from failing at bagging groceries to being one of the best software testers on our team," said Brenda Weitzberg.

The Weitzbergs modeled Aspiritech on a successful Danish company called Specialisterne, or "the Specialists." Specialisterne also employs software testers with autism. Its satisfied clients include Oracle and Microsoft. Other companies in Belgium, Japan and Israel are either hiring or training adults with autism as software testers.

This year, Aspiritech projects \$120,000 in revenue, with 60 percent coming from donations and 40 percent from clients. The Weitzbergs hope to raise the client revenue to 50 percent next year. "There have been a couple of attempts in the U.S. and Aspiritech is the one that's making it," said Scott Standifer of the University of Missouri's Disability Policy and Studies office and the organizer of a national conference on adults with autism and employment.

The exact unemployment rate for adults with autism is unknown, but it's thought to be high, Standifer said. "We don't know how many adults have autism and, because of that, we don't know their rate of unemployment," he said. "We do know from tracking adults just emerging from high school that they are having great difficulty finding jobs."

A 2009 U.S. Department of Education survey found the employment rate for young adults with autism was on par with that for deaf-and-blind young adults, and well below the rate of those with blindness alone or learning disabilities or traumatic brain injuries, Standifer said.

Since Asperger's syndrome didn't become a standard diagnosis until the early 1990s, many of Aspiritech's software testers were adults when they first learned they were on the autism spectrum. They are pioneers, the first generation of adults with Asperger's.

Katie Levin, 35, was diagnosed in her late 20s with Asperger's. As a child, she'd been labeled as mentally ill. "Asperger's is not a mental illness," she said. "I definitely feel like I identify with the Asperger's community more than I did with the mental illness community." She tests software and runs Aspiritech's Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Rick Alexander, 24, another tester, has a degree in computer science from the Illinois Institute of Technology and completed an internship developing software for the city of Chicago. "I have a lot of social anxiety. I don't like meeting new people," said Alexander, who was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome as a teenager. Like many of the other testers, he lives with his parents. He'd rather be a software developer than a tester, he said. But selling himself in a job interview is "very difficult for me." "When you're a child, the school is very concerned with you, the state is very concerned with you," Alexander said. Organizations help adults with autism, he said, but "you need to approach them and for somebody with Asperger's syndrome, it's very difficult to do the approaching."

Most research dollars have gone toward studying children with autism while adults have been neglected, said Molly Losh, an autism researcher at Northwestern University. "Our vocational structure really isn't suited to funnel people with autism into the workforce," Losh said. Aspiritech "is a magnificent and innovative venture," she said.

Many businesses hire offshore companies to test software. Mike Mestemaker, director of engineering for Schaumburg, Ill.-based ISI Telemanagement Solutions, chose Aspiritech because it offered competitive rates but was based in the United States. "They dove right in and worked very quickly," Mestemaker said. "They were very detail-oriented people. They really got the job done." ISI was happy with the work and has hired Aspiritech for a second project, he said.

Aspiritech provides meaningful work (pay is \$12 to \$15 an hour) in a relaxed environment where bosses never yell if you're late and nobody minds if you need to be alone for a while. What's more, the company is building social skills. The software testers, who are in their 20s and 30s, are trained to work together and they take part in organized outings: miniature golf, bowling, eating at a restaurant.

"We want to improve social skills among people who tend to be socially isolated," said Marc Lazar, Aspiritech's autism specialist. For many of them, software testing is not going to be their lifelong career, Lazar said, "but while they're here they're going to improve their job skills and they're going to learn what kind of behavior is expected on the job and they're going to have more to put on their resumes."

Read more: http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/illinois/article_0c019952-e44f-11e0-a8d9-001a4bcf6878.html#ixzz1Ymu0AC2H

RESOURCES

DIVISION FACTS AT A GLANCE

(updated quarterly)

	2005	2010	Sept 2011
Number of Persons Served			
Habilitation Centers - On Campus	1,106	695	559
Habilitation Centers – Off Campus	156	147	194
Residential Services	5,277	5,988	6,490
In-home services	7,398	9,497	9,917
Case Management Only	14,698	13,428	14,948
Number of Persons Enrolled in DD Waivers			
Comprehensive Waiver	7,686	7,732	7,841
Community Support Waiver	625	1,180	1,256
Lopez Waiver	200	192	187
Partnership for Hope Waiver	<i>Not Available</i>	<i>Not Available</i>	1,015
Autism Waiver	<i>Not Available</i>	126	146
Number of Persons Self-Directing	106	361	636
Waiting for Services:			
Residential	515	508	289
In-Home	2,982	4,822	3,954
Number of Counties with local TCM Services	15	50	81
<u>Division Fiscal Year Budget</u>			
General Revenue	\$217,190,991	\$262,849,442	\$245,784,098
Federal Funds	\$205,080,127	\$337,791,117	\$390,740,840

Mental Health Local Tax Match Funds	\$5,852,732	\$12,853,770	\$12,853,770
Other Funds	\$6,594,186	\$8,931,482	\$5,993,549
Total DD Budget	\$434,718,036	\$622,425,811	\$655,372,257
Budgeted FTEs	4,511.20	3,790.55	3,506.63