


 HOME  
Choice

# BULLETIN

Helping Ohioans Move, Expanding Choice

Winter 2010, Volume 2, Issue 1

## CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS

Access Center for Independent Living  
Achievement Centers for Children  
Advocacy and Protective Services (APSI)  
American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)  
American Association of Service Coordinators  
Amerigroup  
Assistive Technology of Ohio (AT Ohio)  
Autism Society of Ohio  
Bittersweet Inc.  
Brain Injury Association of Ohio  
Brethren Care Village  
Buckeye Community Health Plan  
Cerebral Palsy Association of Ohio  
Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio  
Creative Housing Corporation  
Definitive Home Health Care  
Delaware Creative Housing  
Easter Seals of Ohio  
Episcopal Retirement Homes, Inc.  
Family Services Council of Ohio  
Good Samaritan Hospital  
Greater Dayton TRA  
Heritage Day Health Centers  
Housing and Urban Development (HUD)  
Heritage Health Care Services  
Housing Leadership Institute  
Legislative Services Commission  
Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP)  
Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program  
Mercy Saint John's Center  
Miami Valley In-Ovations, Inc.  
National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio  
National Church Residences  
Ohio Academy of Nursing Homes  
Ohio Advocates  
Ohio Alliance for Direct Support Professionals  
Ohio Assisted Living Association  
Ohio Association Adult Caregivers  
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities  
Ohio Association of County Boards of MRDD  
Ohio Association of Superintendents of County Boards of MRDD  
Ohio Board of Regents  
Ohio Association on Area Agencies on Aging  
Ohio Capitol Corporation for Housing  
Ohio Centers for Independent Living - CILS  
Ohio Conference of Community Development Organizations  
Ohio Council for Home Care  
Ohio Department of Aging  
Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services  
Ohio Department of Development  
Ohio Department of Mental Health  
Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities  
Ohio Department of Transportation  
Ohio Dietetic Association  
Ohio Health Care Association  
Ohio Hospice & Palliative Care Organization  
Ohio Hospital Association  
Ohio Housing Authority Conference  
Ohio Housing Authority Finance  
Ohio Jewish Communities  
Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association  
Ohio Legal Rights Services  
Ohio Office of Budget and Management  
Ohio Olmstead Task Force  
Ohio PATHS  
Ohio Provider Resource Association  
Ohio State University-Public Policy, Assistive Technology  
Ohio United Way  
Rehabilitation Service Commission  
RHC, Inc.  
Sarah Care Adult Day Services  
Service Employees International Union - SEIU 1199  
The Ability Center  
The Advocate of Not-For-Profit Services for Ohioans (AOPHA)  
The Success Group  
Wright State University - School of Medicine

And, all consumers and families who have participated

## HOME Choice Reaches Out to Children and People with Mental Health Needs

In spring 2009, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) began outreach efforts to Ohio's Family and Children First Councils in the hopes that the HOME Choice could help children move back home to families. To that end, we added respite to the array of HOME Choice services to help meet the needs of children returning home. We are pleased to have an active partnership with 10 Family and Children First Councils and, as of press time, have approximately 16 referrals for children in our HOME Choice Intake and Care Coordination Unit.

Around the same time, ODJFS began working with the Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH) to create an awareness of the HOME Choice Transition program. Mike Rodio of Connections – Health Wellness Advocacy began working with individuals in Cleveland nursing facilities. In conjunction with the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, Mike is providing housing voucher assistance for four individuals with mental illness and other disabilities to help them move out of nursing facilities. The ODMH is working to identify other people with mental health disabilities in need of transition assistance and is planning to expand outreach in 2010.

## HOME Choice Success Stories

### Patricia Oren

The following is excerpted from an article that appeared in the *Sylvania Herald* on December 9, 2009:

*Frail Senior Gets the Wish of Being Home for the Holidays Instead of Being in a Nursing Home*

Patricia (Oren) has many blessings to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. Top on her wish list was getting out of the nursing home and being home for the holidays.

"All the people from the Area Office on Aging's PASSPORT program and the Ability Center who enabled me to get out of the nursing home and come home have been the greatest blessing of my life," Patricia said.

These words mean a lot coming from a person who was pronounced dead for over six minutes and was brought back to life. She was in a serious car accident and was ejected from her car and almost had to have her left leg amputated. This accident caused problems with her lymph system.

After being in a nursing home from a recent fall that she wasn't able to get up from, it looked like Patricia was going to be in the nursing home for a long time since she needed assistance with bathing, dressing and meals. Instead of Medicaid paying about \$60,000 a year for Patricia to be in a nursing home, she found the PASSPORT program could bring services like she received at the nursing home right to her own home instead -- at a cost to taxpayers that is only one-third of the cost of a nursing home.

## HOME Choice Success Stories (continued)

The best news was that Patricia did not have to sit on a waiting list for these services. Thanks to the Home First provision state legislators set up, people in nursing homes can bypass the waiting list for PASSPORT and get in-home services right away.

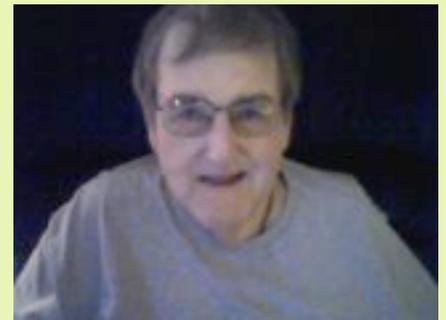
Since Patricia was in need of financial assistance to make the transition from the nursing home back into the community, she was also assisted by the **HOME Choice** program. HOME Choice helped with funding her security deposit and first month's rent on her apartment, as well as some household items she needed.

Patricia is thrilled with her transition back to having her own place. "It saved my life! I was so depressed at the nursing home, trying not to give up. I wouldn't have gotten out without those programs," Patricia said. "It was so overwhelming being in the nursing home. I needed to be there for awhile to get stronger and to lose weight, but it is so nice to be home."

She added, "I have plenty to give thanks for at this time of year. Being out on my own will allow me to be a contributing member to society." When asked what she thinks of her 700-square-foot apartment, she smiles, and says, "It's like being in a castle."

### Richard Price

Richard Price of Kenton (Hardin County) is elated that he took a second look at HOME Choice. The first time he heard about the program while he was living in a nursing facility, he did not realize its full potential for helping him leave and move to his own home in the community. The second time, after Mike Stelzer, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (PSA-3), told him about it, everything clicked and the wheels were put in motion. Richard moved from the nursing facility on September 9, 2009, after spending more than two years there.



Richard Price at home.

Like many who decide to go into a nursing home, Richard needed to sell most of his personal belongings in order to be eligible for Medicaid. Thanks to a HOME Choice benefit that provides up to \$2,000 in transition funds, he was able to purchase new furniture and household items. He used the rest of his funds for security deposits and installation fees. Due to the good coordination and planning during this transition between Mike and Amy Craig of PASSPORT (PSA-3), Richard was set up for success from day one.

You can hear the joy in Richard's conversation about his new home. He is thrilled with his clean, white-walled, carpeted apartment, which he shares with his 89-year-old mother. Both are enrolled on the PASSPORT program and an aide visits three times a week to help them with bathing, fixing meals and running errands.

"This (program) is great – it is fantastic!" he says. "If you want your freedom and dignity back, this is the way to go."

He relishes the ability to take a shower on his own timetable, to eat without waiting for meals to be served to him, and to spend time with his mother. He also enjoys his hospital lift bed.

"I get around just fine," he says.

Richard had the chance to tell his story to the community last fall when a Lima television station ran a story about his transition to the community, making him a bit of a local celebrity.

## In Her Own Words

HOME Choice helped Mr. Gail Weber transition from a long-term care facility to his own home in Wauseon (Fulton County) on July 1, 2009, with The Ability Center of Greater Toledo providing transition coordination services. In completing a Customer Satisfaction Survey, his personal care aide and ex-wife, Sue Echelbarger, not only gave the transition services the highest marks possible, she also wrote her a personal letter of thanks. Transition coordinator, Nickey Cape, forwarded the letter to the *HOME Choice Bulletin*.

When contacted for permission to print the letter, Sue was baking Christmas cookies with Gail keeping her company in the kitchen. She responded with an enthusiastic "Yes!" and expressed her appreciation for HOME Choice repeatedly.

Here is Gail and Sue's story, in Sue's own words:

*"Thank you so very much for helping us. We have been able to really enjoy life with the ramp we received, also the cement pad (on the driveway to help Gail in and out of their van). It has much improved our lives. I no longer hurt my back transporting him in and out of the van.*

*We have been able to travel all over Ohio and enjoy ourselves. Gail says he has done more, been more places, and enjoyed life more since July than in his whole 77 years. That statement made me feel very excited and none of it would have been possible without your help. Also for the first time in my life I have a sweeper – no, two sweepers – that I really enjoy. One for my camper and one for my home.*

*Also the Wal-Mart shopping spree (to buy necessities for setting up Mr. Weber's house) (was) something that was really heavenly.*

*Thank you! Thank you! Thank you very much. God bless you and may you help others as much as you've helped Gail.*

**Mr. Gail Weber and Sue Echelbarger,  
Wauseon, Ohio**



Gail enjoying time with his grandchildren.

## HOME Choice Statistics

Here are the statistics for the HOME Choice program as of press time:

- 361 consumers enrolled
- 1245 people have applied
- 60 transition coordination agencies providing services in each of Ohio's 88 counties
- 130 agency service providers
- 176 non-agency service providers

The HOME Choice program accepts referrals from any source. Please help to get the word out! If you know anyone who is interested in transitioning into a community setting, please notify the ODJFS HOME Choice Intake and Care Coordination Unit toll-free at (888) 221-1560 or fax an interest form to 614-466-6945. Visit <http://jfs.ohio.gov/OHP/consumers/HOMEchoice.stm> for interest forms and other information.

## Balancing News

### Workgroups Meeting Again to Implement Changes Toward a Unified Long-Term Care System

State leaders charged the director of the Ohio Department of Aging to lead a workgroup to develop the framework for unifying the state's long-term care systems. To that end, a workgroup of representatives from state agencies, local boards, administrative entities, associations and providers, as well as more than 300 subcommittee members, produced more than 120 unanimous recommendations for systems reform in May 2009.

Key points of the workgroup's recommendations are:

- Combine similar Medicaid waivers into a single waiver, thus expanding consumer self-direction
- Support agency collaboration to regularly forecast and review costs and caseloads
- Create a "no wrong door" approach to information and referral that will expedite consumers' access to services
- Build a more inclusive array of services
- Ensure nursing facility residents have the information and assistance needed to relocate to home- and community-based services.

Under the current executive budget, the Unified Long-Term Care Systems Workgroup continues to meet and implement its recommendations to help balance Ohio's systems. Eventually, the unified long-term care systems will serve all consumers with chronic or recurring needs for services, regardless of age or disability. Please visit <http://aging.ohio.gov/information/ultcb/default.aspx> for more information and to get involved.

## Workforce News

### Update on Ohioans with Disabilities in the Workforce

In the summer/fall 2009 issue of HOME Choice Bulletin, we highlighted the federal Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, which allows states to provide Medicaid to workers with disabilities. Ohio began enrollment in such a program in April 2008 known as the **Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities (MBIWD)** program.

As of September 2009, approximately 3,483 Ohioans (compared with the 3,307 in June 2009) are enrolled in the program. Although the program is successful, outreach continues. If you know of someone who would benefit from the Medicaid Buy-In program, have suggestions for outreach or a have success story to share, please send a message to the Money Follows the Person e-mail box at [MFP@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:MFP@jfs.ohio.gov).

**Issue Brief Addresses MBI.** Mathematica Policy Research Inc. developed an interesting Issue Brief titled "*What Happens to Medicaid Buy-In Participants After They Leave the Program?*", which is located at <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/disability/WVDDisenrollees.pdf>. Although Ohio is not included in the analysis, the policy implications are important points to keep in mind as we continue to focus on full inclusion of Ohioans with disabilities in the workforce.

### Investing in Ohio's Direct Service Workforce

At the foundation of Ohio's long-term services and supports system and Ohio's health and human service career pathways is a wide pool of direct service workers (nurse aides, home health aides, direct support professionals, personal care aides and independent providers). Considering overall health workforce shortages statewide, changing demographics that will place greater demand on the health delivery system, and growing consumer desire to receive services and supports in the home and community, issues surrounding the direct service workforce and individuals

## Workforce News (continued)

seeking care and support services exist within the broader context of health care workforce needs in Ohio and nationally. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Aging (responsible for Ohio's movement toward a unified long-term care system) collaborated with multiple state agencies (Education, Health, Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Alcohol and Drug Addiction) to develop a unified workforce strategy.

The involvement of health and human service industry leaders within and outside state government (Ohio Board of Nursing, Ohio Medical Board, Service Employees International Union, Health Care and long-term care industry and professional associations) will be critical to the success of Ohio's direct service education and credentialing system. These partners will contribute to defining the system strategy and goals, identifying necessary skills and competencies, providing resources and, where appropriate, hiring qualified participants.

ODJFS will conduct roundtable information and planning sessions during the winter and spring of 2010. We hope you will join us during these events. More details are forthcoming.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Tiffany Dixon at [TDixon@age.state.oh.us](mailto:TDixon@age.state.oh.us), Bibi Manev at [Biljana.Manev@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Biljana.Manev@jfs.ohio.gov) or Erika Robbins at [Erika.Robbins@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Erika.Robbins@jfs.ohio.gov).

### Ohio's Disability Employment Process Improvement Workgroup Releases Survey Results

A survey conducted in May 2009 by Ohio's Disability Employment Process Improvement Workgroup to assess the employment experiences of Ohioans with disabilities will help guide the state as it establishes new strategies and public policies for improving employment services.

**The Disability Employment Process Improvement Survey Report**, <http://www.rsc.state.oh.us/pressroom/PressRoomDocuments/DisabilityEmploymentSurvey.pdf>, shows the ways in which people with a wide range of disabilities find employment opportunities.

The study provides data on the types of jobs people are pursuing, what resources and assistance they use during the search and identifies significant barriers to employment. The study also tabulates how satisfied people with disabilities are with the state-coordinated employment services they have received. This data, along with additional information collected since the completion of this survey, will allow Ohio to evaluate and strengthen its statewide network of employment services that is available to the 2 million Ohioans who have disabilities.

## News of Interest to Transition Coordinators, Case Managers and Support and Services Administrators

### 2010 Bi-Monthly Call Schedule

Mark your calendars to participate in the 2010 conference calls designed to assist transition coordinators, case managers and services and support administrators in helping HOME Choice consumers transition to the community. Calls will cover such topics as deliverables, revised forms, project flow (when to send documents to the HOME Choice Care Coordination and Intake Unit and when to send them to the fiscal agent, JEVS), and more.

The dates are March 18, May 20, July 15, Sept. 16, Nov. 18 (topics are not yet assigned to dates).

All conference calls are from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm. The first hour is dedicated to the call topic and the second hour is an open forum with an opportunity to problem-solve and learn best practices from one another.

The number for all calls is (866) 248.0561, access code \*2874427\*.

We will send an e-mail reminder and agenda before each call. If you would like to be added to our listserv, please contact [MFP@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:MFP@jfs.ohio.gov).

## News of Interest to Transition Coordinators, Case Managers and Support and Services Administrators, continued

### HOME Choice Forms Now on Web

Transition coordinators, case managers and SSAs needing easy access to HOME Choice forms will now find them on the HOME Choice web site: [http://jfs.ohio.gov/OHP/HC\\_tc\\_cm.stm](http://jfs.ohio.gov/OHP/HC_tc_cm.stm).

### Lifeline Program Provides Eligible Consumers with Telephone Assistance

With the economy causing many consumers to struggle to pay their monthly expenses, it is important that transition coordinators, case managers, and consumers understand the Lifeline telephone assistance program. The Lifeline program is offered by local telephone companies throughout Ohio and provides key benefits to eligible consumers, including:

- A monthly discount off the price of basic local telephone service
- A waiver of installation and connection charges for new service
- Removal of deposit requirements.

Lifeline telephone assistance is available to consumers at or below 135 or 150 percent of the federal poverty level, depending on which telephone company serves them. Lifeline also is available to customers participating in one of several federal or state assistance programs.

For the largest local telephone companies in Ohio -- including AT&T, Cincinnati Bell, CenturyLink (Embarq and CenturyTel) and Verizon -- the eligibility is 150 percent of the federal poverty level. A family of three would qualify with an annual income at or below \$27,465.

Large companies' Lifeline programs also offer assistance for residential consumers whose telephone service has been disconnected because of nonpayment. The customer can have telephone service reconnected after making a \$25 down payment toward the past-due balance. Special payment arrangements are then made to ensure the balance is paid off within six months.

### Housing Updates

- Transition Coordinators in Cuyahoga County continue to work with the **Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority** to fill the 25 vouchers for the HOME Choice program. We anticipate having them filled by the first of the year. We appreciate the partnership with the Cuyahoga County Metropolitan Housing Authority and its efforts to fill the vouchers.
- **Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority** will have 25 vouchers available July 1. At that time, ODJFS will work closely with the Transition Coordinators in the Akron area to gather a list of possible HOME Choice participants. We thank Akron MHA for its partnership!
- **The Lucas County Metropolitan Housing Authority** has also provided 10 vouchers for HOME Choice participants and is working closely with the Ability Center of Greater Toledo in filling those vouchers. Thank you Lucas County MHA!
- The **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** is taking HOME Choice seriously with the recent commitment outlined in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). As of press time, more than a dozen Public Housing Authorities (PHA) were willing to apply for vouchers. We will send a letter to all PHAs once the NOFA has been released early this year to remind them of the opportunity to apply for funding.
- HOME Choice Project Director Erika Robbins and Housing Coordinator Brock Robertson attended a **Money Follows the Person Project Directors Conference** in Baltimore in October 2009. They learned that Ohio is one of the few states that has been able to build partnership with the local Public Housing Authorities. It was a testament to the hard work and advocacy efforts of the disability community.

## News of Interest for Providers

### HOME Choice Looking for Providers

The HOME Choice program currently needs more:

- Social workers/counselors
- Community support coaches
- Nutritional counselors
- Independent living skills trainers
- Communication aid providers
- Service animal providers.

Although the list of demonstration and service providers continues to grow, more providers are needed and we continue to recruit them for the HOME Choice Transition Program, especially the provider types listed previously. If you are part of an association, please share our recruitment needs with your members and encourage them to apply!

- It is easy for providers to enroll. The customer-friendly enrollment process to become a HOME Choice provider makes it simple to enroll and reimbursement through JEVS, the fiscal intermediary, is easy. Please visit <http://jfs.ohio.gov/OHP/consumers/homechoice.stm> to find all you need to know about becoming a provider for the HOME Choice program.

ODJFS processes accurately completed applications within five business days. Applications with errors are returned to the sender for more (or the correct) information.

## HOME Choice Quality of Life Survey Contract Awarded

After winning a competitive bid, ODJFS has awarded the Strategic Research Group (SRG) a contract to perform the federally required Quality of Life (QoL) Surveys with persons who have transitioned under the HOME Choice Transition Program back to the community.

The QoL Survey, sponsored by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the state of Ohio, is an essential part of an evaluation of the Money Follows the Person programs in all the states. Specifically, the survey collects data about the consumer's housing, access to care, community involvement, their health and overall well-being.

As of February 2010, approximately 350 QoL Surveys have been completed. SRG will to complete second and third follow-up interviews with consumers beginning in January. The interviews will occur 11 months and 24 months, respectively, after the HOME Choice consumers have transitioned from long-term care facilities to homes in the community. Results from the study will help CMS and the state of Ohio evaluate how well its programs are meeting the needs of Medicaid beneficiaries.

SRG is a full-service research company that provides data collection, consultative, and research services (<http://strategicresearchgroup.com/index.htm>). It has extensive experience in both qualitative and quantitative research.

## HOME Choice Praised Twice in *The Columbus Dispatch*

HOME Choice received good press in a feature article in *The Columbus Dispatch* on October 26, 2009, which was followed by an editorial on October 27, 2009, praising the program. A news release about HOME Choice can be found at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/OHP/consumers/homechoice.stm>



*Confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement and cultural enrichment.*

Olmstead v. L.C., 1999  
Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg  
Supreme Court of the United States

*The Olmstead ruling was a critical step forward for our nation, articulating one of the most fundamental rights of Americans with disabilities: having the choice to live independently. I am proud to launch this initiative to reaffirm my Administration's commitment to vigorous enforcement of civil rights for Americans with disabilities and to ensuring the fullest inclusion of all people in the life of our nation.*

President Barack Obama  
June 22, 2009  
"The Year of Community Living"

The HOME Choice Bulletin is a newsletter for stakeholders and anyone interested in Ohio's Money Follows the Person HOME Choice Transition Program. It provides updates, statistics, and other information about the status and progress of Ohio's HOME Choice Program four times a year.

Please contact [mfp@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:mfp@jfs.ohio.gov) if you have comments, information to share, or would like to be added to the HOME Choice Bulletin e-mail distribution list.

## HOME Choice Vision Statement

**Ohioans who need long-term services and support . . .**

Get services and supports they need in a timely manner

In settings they want from whom they want,

And if needs change, services and supports change accordingly.

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