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Metro West Center For Independent Living

December 2021

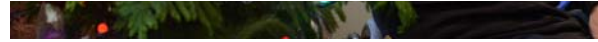
"The more things change, the more they stay the same" *. We are referring, of course, to Covid-19. And in fact, things are not the same. Most people seem to have returned to a fairly normal routine even though infection rates are rising again. While many of us feel safer after vaccinations and boosters, this may not be true for young children, the elderly and people with chronic health conditions. We ask that everyone continue to be masked, get vaccinated and boosted, and stay socially distant in order to stay healthy.

Happy Holidays to everyone!

(Image is Board Member, Mike Kennedy, at our 2015 Holiday Open House.)

Paul Spooner,
Executive Director





* English translation of French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr quote “plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose “ (according to google!)

A New State Commission Aims to Unite the Diverse Disability Community

Congratulations to our Executive Director, Paul Spooner on his appointment as the Commissioner of the newly formed Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities!

Read the entire [article on the new commission at wbgg.com](#) by Meghan Smith, published on December 16, 2021.

"While there has been some progress in recent years, disability advocates want to build on the momentum of the social justice reckoning that rippled through America last year to enact change in



Massachusetts. Part of that work will be undertaken by the newly formed Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, established by a 2020 law that aimed to expand equity and racial justice in Massachusetts. Historically, work on disability policy across the commonwealth has been fragmented, according to Spooner. He and other advocates believe the state commission presents an opportunity to unify efforts.

“We can all sit back and say, ‘Well, this disability commission is just legislative feel-good,’” Spooner said. “And I don’t think it’s that — I think it’s much more about taking the opportunity we have now to really kind of move the needle forward.” "

MassHealth PCA Program Changes

From My Ombudsman

- Beginning January 1, 2022, Tempus Unlimited will become the only Fiscal Intermediary (FI) serving the MassHealth Personal Care Attendant (PCA) and MFP Self-Directed Waiver programs
- **All Consumer-employers and PCAs who DO NOT CURRENTLY use Tempus Unlimited as their FI must complete and return paperwork to Tempus Unlimited before December 17, 2021**, at the very latest.
 - Note: If a consumer or PCA currently uses Tempus Unlimited as their FI, they do not need to take any action
- Tempus has already mailed pre-filled forms to all Consumers and PCAs who are affected by the transfer.
 - Any Consumer/PCA who has already received their forms must complete them and return them to Tempus Unlimited right away

- Any Consumer/PCA who has not received the forms should contact Tempus Customer Service and/or visit the [Tempus transition website](#). Tempus will mail new pre-filled forms to any Consumer or PCA, upon request.
- Consumers and PCAs can complete their forms by:
 - Filling out the pre-filled forms they received in the mail
 - Contacting Tempus to ask for pre-filled forms to be mailed to their home
 - Filling out their forms online through the Tempus "Paperworkr" application (for more information, visit the [Tempus transition website](#), or call/email Tempus customer service)
 - Downloading blank forms from the [Tempus transition website](#) and filling them out
- Completed forms should be immediately returned to Tempus by email, fax, or mail:
 - Email: MAFMS@tempusunlimited.org
 - Fax: (800) 359-2884
 - Mail: 600 Technology Center Dr., Stoughton, MA 02072

What if I need more help with this?

- Consumers or PCAs with questions can also join online help sessions, hosted by Tempus staff:
 - Help sessions are hosted three times per week:
 - Mondays from 4pm-5pm
 - Wednesdays from 9am-10am
 - Friday from 12pm-1pm
 - Help session links and information can be found by visiting the [Tempus transition website](#) and clicking "Get Help"
- You can also contact Tempus Customer service at: 877-479-7577 or

MAFMS@tempusunlimited.org

- As always, if you have further questions or need assistance with this transition, please contact one of the My Ombudsman helplines:
 - Phone:
 - 855-781-9898
 - Video Phone for Deaf and Hard of Hearing:
 - 339-224-6831
 - Email:
 - info@myombudsman.org

Social Security Scam Alert

It is easy to be scammed. I recently tried to get a new SS card, and somehow found myself on a website that said I would need to pay \$40 first. I paid, and eventually figured out (with help!) that this was a scam to get both money and information from me. I was able to get a refund from my credit card company, and eventually found the right SS page. FYI: Replacement Social Security cards are free!

The Social Security Administration recently shared the following SCAM ALERT.

If you receive a call, text, or email that...

- Threatens to suspend your Social Security number, even if they have part or all of your Social Security number
- Warns of arrest or legal action
- Demands or requests immediate payment
- Requires payment by gift card, prepaid debit card, internet currency, or by

mailing cash

- Pressures you for personal information
- Requests secrecy
- Threatens to seize your bank account
- Promises to increase your Social Security benefit
- Tries to gain your trust by providing fake "documentation," false "evidence," or the name of a real government official

...it is a SCAM!

Do not give scammers money or personal information – Ignore Them!

Protect yourself and others from Social Security-related scams.

- **Try to stay calm.** Do not provide anyone with money or personal information when you feel pressured, threatened, or scared.
- **Hang up or ignore it.** If you receive a suspicious call, text, or email, hang up or do not respond. Government employees will not threaten you, demand immediate payment, or try to gain your trust by sending you pictures or documents.
- **Report Social Security-related scams.** If you receive a suspicious call, text, or email that mentions Social Security, ignore it and report it to the [SSA Office of the Inspector General](#) (OIG). Do not be embarrassed if you shared personal information or suffered a financial loss.
- **Get up-to-date information.** Follow SSA OIG on [Twitter @TheSSAOIG](#) and [Facebook @SSA Office of the Inspector General](#) for the latest information on Social Security-related scams. Visit the [Federal Trade Commission](#) for information on other government scams.
- **Spread the word.** Share your knowledge of Social Security-related scams. Post on social media using the hashtag #SlamtheScam to share

your experience and warn others. Visit oig.ssa.gov/scam for more information. Please also share with your friends and family.

Report an SS Scam

Social Security Account

Plan for the future, manage the present!

With your free and secure *my Social Security* account, you can receive personal estimates of future benefits based on your real earnings, see your latest *Social Security Statement*, and review your earnings history. It even makes it easy to request a replacement Social Security Card, check the status of an application online, and much more, from anywhere!

[Learn More at SSA](#)

U.S. Access Board to Host Public Event on Equity in Healthcare for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing primary and preventative healthcare. It is vital for medical care facilities and equipment, such as exam rooms and tables, diagnostic instruments and machines, and patient bedrooms and bathrooms, to be fully accessible to people with disabilities. The U.S. Access Board will host a virtual public event on equity in healthcare for people with disabilities on January 12 from 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. (ET).

The event will feature presentations on standards and resources related to healthcare accessibility, including inclusive medical equipment, healthcare facility design, information technology, and communication devices and systems. Members of the public will be able to pose questions during the event.

[Learn More about this Event on Healthcare Equity](#)

MassHealth Health Equity Requests for Information (RFIs)

Thanks to Disability Policy Consortium for this information.

MassHealth is committed to working with members and other stakeholders to address health inequities and eliminate disparities in health and healthcare. To help inform its approach to understanding and addressing these issues and related efforts, MassHealth has released two Requests for Information (RFIs):

1. **MassHealth Member Engagement Initiatives Request for Information (RFI)** (BD-22-1039-EHS01-EHS01-68839). The purpose of this RFI is to request ideas from members and other stakeholders that will help inform and strengthen MassHealth's efforts to engage with members directly on issues related to health equity and more broadly.
2. **Health Equity Incentives for Certain MassHealth Hospital, Managed Care, and Related Programs Request for Information (RFI)** (BD-22-1039-EHS01-ASHWA-68794). The purpose of this RFI is to request information about health equity and social risk factor data collection and the identification, prioritization, and reduction of health and health care disparities, and related accountability.

Each RFI includes particular questions that MassHealth would like stakeholders to respond to, as well as specific instructions on how to submit responses. The RFI questions may be answered by anyone who wants to provide feedback, including by members, advocates, providers, plans, or other stakeholders. Responses can be submitted by an organization or from an individual. Respondents do not have to answer all the questions and can choose which questions to respond to.

The deadline for responses has been extended to January 15th, 2022

To share your experiences and ideas on these issues, you can access the RFIs by logging into CommBuys at www.commbuys.com or online at: [MassHealth Health Equity Requests for Information \(RFIs\) at Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/health-equity-requests-for-information-rfis).

Stop the Fernald Light Show in Waltham

Thousands of disabled people died at the Walter E. Fernald Developmental Center. Today, in its ruins, the City of Waltham is allowing the Lions Club to host a month-long holiday light show fundraiser that will erase disability rights and replace them with Christmas lights. As a coalition of leading disability advocates from across Massachusetts, we are calling on the City of Waltham to revoke the permit.

The use of this site is both disturbing and inappropriate, given its history of human rights abuses and experimentation on children. Hosting the Greater Boston Celebration of Lights here ignores the fact that the people who lived at the Fernald School were denied holidays with their families and loved ones for generations.

Waltham is a city with many beautiful landscapes, all of which could be repurposed for a holiday light show. This should not and cannot be one of them. The Fernald is a site of national historic importance. It is a place of memory, of human rights abuses, and a major civil rights movement. All of that should be told and memorialized. It should not be a site for holiday party that erases that history so people can drive among abandoned buildings. Nor is our history an afterthought. People with disabilities are people, and we will not be overlooked.

We have seen compromise ideas proposed on social media, such as having pamphlets distributed, telling holiday light show attendees that they are driving through the ruins of a site of human rights abuses; or that free light show tours be given to people with disabilities, giving them the chance to celebrate the holidays in a place where people like them were once locked away. For obvious reasons, these are unacceptable.

The state Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee (independent agency of the judiciary that works to enhance and protect the rights of persons with mental health concerns throughout the Commonwealth) has sent the attached [letter \(pdf\) protesting the light show](#) to the state Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Anyone can take peaceful, nonviolent action, and here are some ways to do it:

1. [Share the petition through email and social media](#). Awareness helps support short and long-term action to address the mindsets that lead to the repeated misuse of this site. For background on this issue, read this [article on the 2020 protest in The Boston Globe](#).
2. Fight for the future of Fernald this Tuesday by attending a Zoom hearing with Mayor McCarthy and planners. It is almost certain that the city will try to ban non-Waltham residents from speaking, but you can make your

voice heard in advance, too, by [contacting the Recreation Department director, Nick Abruzzi](#). Information is here. Former Fernald residents have said they want open space and recreation uses, combined with a museum and memorial.

3. Outreach and protest. Waltham's elected government furthers and supports the continued misuse of this site, including a potential waste dump plan in a watershed that drains into the Charles River. The city appears to have removed the names of members of the Fernald Use Committee from its website, but [city council members can be reached here](#)
4. At this time we are not organizing a direct action, but are supportive of others' efforts to take nonviolent, peaceful steps.
5. Outreach to media. Contact your local media outlets and send a letter to the editor. In Waltham, those are the Waltham Tribune (jcollings@wickedlocal.com) and [Waltham Patch](#).



Image is from 2020 protest at Waltham City Hall

Centering Disability in Technology Policy

A New Report from American Association of People with Disabilities and Center for Democracy & Technology

Press Release from AAPD - 12/13/2021

"The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and the Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT) released [Centering Disability in Technology Policy](#), a report highlighting the ways in which technology can discriminate against disabled people – and what advocacy groups, regulators, and funders can do to change this. [A plain language version of the report, linked here](#), was also released."

"The report makes a number of recommendations for tech organizations, public interest groups, or anyone with an interest in using technology to meaningfully improve peoples' lives. It covers a wide range of topics, including digital accessibility practices, equitable employment and education access, data privacy, online hate and harassment, law enforcement surveillance, algorithmic bias, and more."

[American Association of People with Disabilities website](#)

[Center for Democracy & Technology website](#)

ARPA Spending Bill

The Massachusetts Senate and House have been working on how to spend \$4 billion in Covid money from the federal American Rescue Plan Act

(ARPA).

According to the [Boston Globe article on the ARPA funds](#): "The biggest sector to benefit from this legislation is healthcare, with \$400 million for mental and behavioral health, in part to help recruit more workers to that field, \$250 million to help cash-strapped hospitals, and \$200 million for local and regional public health efforts (including nearly \$100 million for improving systems for data sharing). The bill also includes more than \$500 million for housing, including money for new construction, apartments run by housing authorities, first-time home ownership, and the chronically homeless."

The final version should be completed soon, and sent to Governor Baker's desk for his signature.

MA Redistricting Complete

The Redistricting of Massachusetts is complete. The new maps are posted on the State website at <https://malegislature.gov/Redistricting/NewDistricts/>. The new Congressional, State House, State Senate and Governor's Council maps will be used for the 2022 elections.

The new maps are a snapshot of districts, but are difficult to translate into actual representation. Congressional districts are fairly clear. MetroWest changes are significant for Districts 4 (Auchincloss) and 2 (McGovern). Unfortunately, state house and state senate representation is difficult to predict using the maps.

Voters will need to pay close attention for the September primaries and

November election. Massachusetts will be selecting candidates for all offices in 2022. MetroWest communities has several redrawn maps.

Selma Blair and James Lebrecht on the Growing Disability Rights Movement in Hollywood

[Disability article in The Hollywood Reporter](#) by Tyler Coates, December 10, 2021

"The actress, whose documentary chronicles her multiple sclerosis, and the 'Crip Camp' co-director discuss the mental shift that still needs to happen in Hollywood to include the disabled: "You finally get to the table, and the ramp is four miles down the road." "

While this article is ostensibly about disabled stories and actors are increasing, Blair and Lebrecht discuss their personal experiences off stage. Blair has a relatively recent disability and Lebrecht was born disabled. Their insights and understandings of living with disabilities is eye-opening.

They sum up with:

- **Blair:** "Stories of disability are stories of people. [I say to] my beloved Hollywood community, please ... I just really urge people to see us all."
- **Lebrecht:** "I have this opportunity to really change what it means to be disabled. And that's worth the last 65 years or so of putting up with some pretty dismissive crap."

Bob Dole

While not universally praised, most disability groups remembered Dole's contributions to disability access.

[The Disability Scoop on Bob Dole](#)

"Former U.S. Sen. Bob Dole is being remembered as a champion of disability rights.

Dole had disabilities stemming from injuries sustained while serving in World War II.

He represented Kansas in the Senate for more than two decades and was majority leader from 1985 to 1996 when he became the Republican nominee for president, an election he lost to Bill Clinton.

Disability issues were central to Dole's work from his early days in the Senate to his retirement. He used his first Senate floor speech in 1969 to talk about the ways in which the country needed to better include people with disabilities and he went on to be instrumental in pushing through the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990."

[NPR on Bob Dole](#)

FRANK MORRIS, BYLINE: Bob Dole lived 98 years, but he was very nearly killed at 21. A German machine gunner shot him fighting in Italy in World War II. Bullets tore through his shoulder and shattered his right arm. He never recovered the use of that arm, and his left arm wasn't fully functional, either. The injuries not only derailed his dream of being a doctor, it gave him a taste of

what it meant to be looked down on. Dole Institute director Audrey Coleman says that after the war, Dole confronted a stark new difference in the way people treated him - first, when he was in uniform.

AUDREY COLEMAN: They recognized him to be a war hero. But if he were wearing civilian clothes, folks wouldn't treat him with the same - you know, not look him in the eye, not give him the same kind of respect. And clearly, their perception was that he, as an individual, did not have that same kind of value.

MORRIS: That made a mark. Coleman says that in 1969, Dole used his first speech on the floor of the Senate to talk about expanding opportunities for people with disabilities. Bob Dole was a staunch Republican but also a master dealmaker. And he got behind a massive effort pushed by Democrats called the Americans with Disabilities Act. Dole was crucial, Coleman says, because he knew how to frame the issue as a pragmatic win for the economy.

Partners



[REV UP Massachusetts](http://www.revupma.org) - Increasing the Disability Vote!



[MA Tales of Independence](#) - a collection of videos by people who are successfully living independently.



[Dignity Alliance of Massachusetts](#) is dedicated to secure fundamental changes in the provision of long-term services, support, and care.

About MetroWest Center for Independent Living

We provide an array of independent living services that enable people with disabilities to live in the community. The center was created by people with disabilities seeking full integration into society. We empower people with disabilities

by teaching the practical skills and confidence to take control over their lives and become active members of the communities in which they live. We promote access and change within society while advocating for programs and services needed by people of all ages with a wide range of disabilities. MWCIL is a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential private nonprofit agency.

We enable people with disabilities to gain freedom from nursing homes and other institutional settings.

If you have a disability, live within our area (26 towns in Metrowest section of Massachusetts) and have needs, goals, or barriers related to your living independently, then contact us at 508-875-7853.

MetroWest Center for Independent Living is a scent-free environment. Please keep this in mind when you plan a visit.

[View our Services](#)



MetroWest Center for Independent Living

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