



**MetroWest  
Center For  
Independent Living**

# People with Disabilities Living in the Community

January 2015



After a relatively easy December, we're in the trenches with 5 degrees on January 8! Keep those emergency plans up to date.

The big news, nationally, is the proposed Congressional change to the Social Security Disability program (read below).

In Massachusetts, the new administration will almost certainly need educating, if not advocating, on disability issues. As Governor Baker begins his term with a budget deficit, we will need everyone's help to safeguard programs for people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Paul W. Spooner, Executive Director  
MetroWest Center for Independent  
Living

## Recreation News

We just updated our [Sports, Life and Leisure page](#), and there are more opportunities than ever to be active. In fact, the web has become very

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## MWCIL Calendar

Legislative Forum  
with Easter Seals  
Friday, February 6

Independent Living  
Education Day at the  
State House  
Tuesday, March 24

## MWCIL



MetroWest Center  
for Independent  
Living

Website: [www.mwcil.org](http://www.mwcil.org)

Email: [info@mwcil.org](mailto:info@mwcil.org)

useful when looking for accessibility information. Try googling "Explore Boston Accessible", and almost every museum is listed with a page full of their devices, expertise, and accommodations for people with disabilities. Accessibility has become a selling point for good museums - *makes sense to us!*

Thanks to MA Network of Information Providers for People with Disabilities for their updates. Check out their [Resource Database!](#)

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## The Attack on Social Security's Disability Insurance

Social Security has two main parts: Retirement (OASI - Old-Age and Survivors Insurance), and Disability (DI - Disability Insurance). Historically, Congress has reallocated money between the two funds 11 times, as needed. As the baby boomers age, the DI fund is anticipated to need more money in 2016. Instead of allowing the normal re-allocations, the House Majority plans to adopt a provision that will bar the House from replenishing the DI fund by shifting revenues from the OASI fund. *"If new funding is not found, SSDI benefits will be cut by about 20 percent for 9 million workers, 2 million of their children, and about 160,000 spouses."* (Forbes)

Sources:

- [The Coming Congressional War Over Social Security Disability](#) by Howard Gleckman at Forbes, January 7, 2015
- [House Rule Could Hurt Vulnerable Disability Beneficiaries](#) by Kathy Ruffing at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, January 6, 2015
- [Getting It Wrong on Disability Insurance](#) by Kathy Ruffing at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, January 7, 2015
- [Social Security disability payments will be cut by a fifth if Congress doesn't act](#) by Max Ehrenfreund at the Washington Post, January 7, 2015





## CVS Offering Braille, Audio, Large-Print Prescription Labels

By Chelsey Dulaney

*From the Wall Street Journal January 5, 2015*

CVS Health Corp. said Monday that it is now offering braille, large-print and audio prescription labels, a move to expand its services for visually-impaired customers.

The drugstore chain announced in March that it was offering ScripTalk audio labels, which allow customers who can't read standard print to hear prescription information. The talking labels, which are free to CVS members who are blind or visually-impaired, are available for home delivery through its online pharmacy.

Monday's announcement, which expanded those services, was in collaboration with the American Council of the Blind. "Access to prescription label information through audio, large print or braille is essential for the safety and independence of patients who are blind or visually impaired," said Kim Charlson, the council's president, in a statement.

[Chelsey.Dulaney@wsj.com](mailto:Chelsey.Dulaney@wsj.com)

## Fresh Air Bill Signed

This week, before he left office, Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the "Fresh Air Bill".

"The passage of this bill makes daily access to fresh air and the outdoors a right for people in facilities licensed by the Department of Mental Health, including general and private hospitals, by

adding this passage to the law: "reasonable daily access to the outdoors, as weather conditions reasonably permit, at inpatient facilities in a manner consistent with such person's clinical condition and safety as determined by the treating clinician, and with the ability of such facilities to safely provide access. The department shall promulgate regulations defining what shall constitute reasonable access and regulations implementing sufficient precautions to ensure the safety of staff members charged with accompanying patients outdoors." This adds a sixth right to the [Five Fundamental Rights](#) for people in Department of Mental Health facilities. " (BCIL)

Thanks to John Winske at the Disability Policy Consortium and Allegra Stout at the Boston Center for Independent Living for the news.

## Disability Commission Members Can Attend Meetings Remotely

Many Disability Commission meetings have had to be canceled over the years because of regulations meant to ensure openness inadvertently discriminated against disability commissions, because we can be prevented from attending physically by things outside of our control.

[S 1985](#) would allow commissions on disability to allow (if it chooses) a quorum to be met by remote participation. Under the current regulations, a physical quorum must be present before remote participation by other commission members is allowed. This bill allows remote participation to actually meet the quorum.

Here is the key paragraph that was added to the law: "(e) A local commission on disability may by majority vote of the commissioners at a regular meeting permit remote participation applicable to a specific meeting or generally to all of the commission's meetings; provided, however, that the commission shall comply with all other requirements of law and regulation."

*Thanks to John Winske for this information, and for his work getting the bill passed!*

Myra Berloff, Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability, has follow-up information on the implementation of this bill. "By default, it does not go into affect until 90 days after being signed..." [Click Here](#) to read her letter.



## What you should know about the ABLÉ Act

by Justin King at [Vox.com](http://Vox.com)  
Monday, December 19, 2014

"For many Americans living with disabilities, it has been a good week: now that the Senate passed the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act this week (following the House's passage in early December) it is now on its way to the President to be signed into law. The ABLÉ Act creates tax-advantaged savings accounts for use by individuals with disabilities. Critically, savings in ABLÉ accounts won't disqualify those individuals from receiving public assistance. While the bill is a win for many individuals with disabilities and their families, there are millions of others who are left out and need additional measures to pursue the same goals - financial security and upward economic mobility."

[Read More](#)

## Emergency Preparedness

As we head into winter, with a touch of global warming, the weather can disrupt transportation, heat and electricity, water and more. Now is the time to make sure that you have access to what you need, regardless of the circumstances. Make a written plan, post emergency phone numbers, sign up with local responders and/or Town Hall, talk to your friends and care-workers and make

an emergency kit with necessities. *If we're lucky, the plans will not be needed.*

Visit the [MWCIL Emergency Preparedness webpage](#) for resources on how to plan for an emergency.

Download this [document from the Red Cross](#) to help make your plans.

## Got News?

Send us your ideas!

This monthly section is for news and comments from our readers. You can suggest something for us to research, give your opinion on a topic (relevant to people with disabilities of course), or let us know of what is working and what needs improvement in the community. Please email Sue at [srorke@mwci.org](mailto:srorke@mwci.org).  
Thanks!

[www.mwci.org](http://www.mwci.org)

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