

TODAY'S NEWS

Special Interest Articles:

- Amerihealth pulls out of Iowa
- Presidential Farewell
- Drake University IRA
- Federal Legislative Report
- Scholarly Article Shout Out
- Awards and Nominations

Amerihealth Pulls Out of State Programing

Amerihealth is responsible for about 200,000 lowans receiving Medicaid benefits. On November 30th, they are out of the state program, meaning those 200,000 and their providers have just 30 days to organize a switch to the remaining two providers.



“it really hurt a lot of people. It is unplanned, too fast and harmful,” said Jane Hudson, Executive Director of Disability Rights Iowa.

Hudson has some harsh criticisms for the state’s privatized Medicaid system and now has even more worries.

“We are very concerned about the chaos that is going to happen with this only happening over one month, and what’s going to happen in the meantime until they find someone.”

At a press conference, DHS Director Jerry Foxhoven indicated that the 200,000 patients using AmeriHealth would be assigned to one of the remaining MCOs, United Health Care if Amerigroup but Hudson worried that it will not be that easy.

“What are the details? How is this going to be implemented? Just getting a card in the mail isn’t enough. They need to know who their case manager is and they need to know that their services will be continued throughout the next six months,” she said.

While patient advocates like Hudson worry for the clients, those who advocate for the health care providers are just as concerned.

“It was just as stunning. We wish we would have had more notice; time to prepare; time to communicate; time to get questions answered...said Shelly Chandler, CEO of the Iowa Association of Community Providers.

“There is a concern about being paid on time. Making sure that service planning continues. What I do know of my members who are providers is that they will continue providing services regardless,” said Chandler.

Now the countdown starts to November 30th, where if things are not sorted out, some of Iowa’s most at-risk individuals will be hurt.

Iowa Rehabilitation Association

Membership:

319 Marie Avenue

Elk Run Heights, IA 50707

We’re on the Web!

See us at:

www.iraiaowa.org

“Every time we say something more questions come back in, so it has been extremely...chaotic is the proper term,” said Chandler.

Adding to the complications is that there are some providers in Iowa which are only contracted to do business with AmeriHealth. Both Chandler and Hudson worry that organizing new contracts with the other two providers on a 30 day time crunch is going to be difficult.

Presidents Farewell

I have greatly enjoyed being the 2017 President of the Iowa Rehabilitation Association. My term is coming to an end. There is something so refreshing about connecting with IRA members and being able to help provide education and opportunities for professionals in the field to connect. I want to welcome Ellen Sokolowski, a long time IRA board member, who will be taking over as President for 2018. Ellen brings a wealth of knowledge about our field and IRA. She recently attended the National Rehabilitation Association annual conference and has participated at a national level for several years. Congratulations Ellen! I will continue to be a part of this organization moving forward. Your feedback, participation and ideas are always welcome. Continue to let the board know what type of programming best meets your needs and we will continue to deliver. Happy Holidays! And again, thank you for allowing me to lead this organization over the past year.

**MICHELLE
DICKERSON**
**President, Iowa
Rehabilitation
Association**

Farewell,
Michelle

Train to Inspire- Drake University IRA

On September 30, several of our local state chapter and Drake University student chapter members joined a group of 152 volunteers who helped out with Train to Inspire’s third annual All-Inclusive Accessible Obstacle Course event hosted at Easter Seals Iowa Camp Sunnyside. There were 168 participants this year, a massive growth from the 40 participants who took part the first year. This year’s course included many adaptive obstacles, including monkey bars, rock climbing wall, board breaking, paintball target practice, and of course Train to Inspire’s exclusive slip and slide before the finish line.

JENNA BATTEN
**President, Drake
University- IRA**

For those who are not familiar with the program, Train to Inspire works toward their mission of making the seemingly impossible a reality for people with disabilities by hosting several events throughout the year which are meant to give participants opportunities to get out, get active, and socialize. Events are always free, are funded solely through donations, and are 100% volunteer supported. Volunteering for a Train to Inspire event is something everyone should experience at least once. This is the type of experience that you go into hoping that you might help change a life, but odds are that you will come out of it having been the one who is changed.



For more information on train to inspire and the wonderful work they are doing for people who have faced adversity and hardship, please visit www.traintoinspirelowa.org or visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/traintoinspire.

Federal Legislative Report

The House of Representatives developed a budget agreement, adopted on a 216-212 vote, with all of the Democrats and 20 Republicans voting against. The agreement adopted allows the Republican leadership to write legislation that can pass with a simple majority in the Senate.

ELLEN
SOKOLOWSKI
Federal Legislative
Chair

The budget House Republicans adopted last week was significantly different from the one they sent to the Senate in September. That budget called for a deficit neutral tax plan and \$203 billion in mandatory spending reductions over 10 years. Fiscal conservatives have campaigned on reducing deficits, the House leadership ended accepting the Senate’s budget, which includes instructions to find \$1 billion in savings over 10 years-a much more modest spending cut.

Implications for persons with disabilities are not know at this time. If taxes are cut and spending is not reduced, social safety net programs could escape cuts. The risk of that is that cutting taxes without cutting spending may accelerate the growth of the national debt.

Should Congress decide to reduce spending, however, there may be significant cust in Medicaid, Medicare housing assistance and education as well as other programs critical to the lives of persons with disabilities.

Preparing for advocacy on these issues can occur now. Contacting your members of Congress or their state staff and advising them of how much these programs mean to the individuals that we work with. Remind them of how individuals are removed from being tax user to tax payers by programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation and the role that Vocational Rehabilitation plays in their lives. Have you Congressmen meet with one of your consumers to let them tell *their story*, the *impact that Vocational Rehabilitation has had in their lives*. *Ask an employer to contact a Congressman to let them know of the productivity of persons with disabilities and the relationship that they have been able to develop with Vocational Rehabilitation.*



Awards Nominations Sought

It is not too early to begin thinking about individuals you might work with, counselors, consumers who are deserving of recognition. The Iowa Rehabilitation Association encourages recognition of those individuals. The following are the awards given by the Iowa Rehabilitation Association at its annual conference. Please consider nominating individuals for these high honors.

Chuck Wood Memorial Award

This award is given to recognize the achievements of a persons with a disability who has attained a high level of independence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency in the community. Someone who has demonstrated achievement of his/her goals in the community and personal life.

Bill Donohue Memorial Award

“Implications for persons with disabilities are not known at this time.”

This award is provided to the professional who has demonstrated the most outstanding efforts in the area of placing individuals with disabilities in employment. The recipient of the Bill Donohue award is then nominated the next year for the NRAJPD Margaret Fairbairn Award.

IRCEA Counselor of the Year Award

This award specifically recognizes an individual who has given time and commitment beyond “the call of duty.” The nominee must be a current member of NRCEA/IRCEA . and be verified as working as a rehabilitation counselor.

Gerry Byers Award for Outstanding Service

Gerry Byers spent most of his adult life dedicated to helping persons with disabilities achieve their employment goals and to the Iowa and National Rehabilitation. Association. He spent 30 plus years employed as a Placement Specialist for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the Council Bluffs Area Office. He was a tireless recruiter for members in the National Rehabilitation Association. Often a recipient of a free membership for his recruiting efforts (but already a lifetime member) he would donate the membership to a new individual. He rarely missed a training conference on the state, regional and national level and throughout his tenure held several offices on those levels as well. He was a Bill Donohue Award recipient and the NRAJPD Margaret Fairbairn Award recipient for his exemplary achievement in job placement.

IRA Achievement Award

The IRA Achievement Award is given to a job candidate who has an identifiable disability, who has been involved in the rehabilitation process and has been successfully placed in competitive employment for at least three months. They must also have shown competency in taking care of most personal daily living needs.

If you know of individuals that you work with professionally, either job candidates or co-workers, do take the time to provide them with heartfelt recognition that they deserve. If you should have any questions about what is required in the nomination packets feel free to contact me at :

Ellen Sokolowski, MS, CRC
 1005 E. 7th Street, Ste. 201
 Atlantic, Iowa 50022
ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov

**SCHOLARLY ARTICLE
 SHOUT OUT**

VEWAA Journal Volume 41 Number 2 2017

Poverty, Disability, and Vocational Assessment of Youth with Disabilities

*Catherine A. Anderson,
 Laura Owens, and Andrea Perkins Nerlich*

- This special issue contains a selection of papers related to assessment for youth and students with disabilities in transition.



Outstanding Organization of 2017 : CASS Inc.

CASS, Inc. of Atlantic, Iowa was recognized by the National Rehabilitation Association as being the Outstanding Organization of 2017.

The Outstanding Organization recognizes organizations that go above and beyond in the placement of persons with disabilities.

Employment First and supported employment efforts were not strangers to CASS, Inc. and were embraced at every opportunity with local businesses, educational facilities and service providers tirelessly and in a positive manner.

They have lived beyond their motto of *Enriching Lives*. A community garden was begun to further experience community engagement of persons with disabilities. The garden was hewn, manicured, planted, maintained, harvested, marketed and sold by the individuals who gave of their time to ensure its success.

CASS Incorporated has been distinguished as a 'Top 10 Place to Work' by the Des Moines Register. Staff throughout the organization, whether it be in supported employment operations, supported community living, volunteer opportunities, and giving back to the community, as well as to the individuals served, are monumental in their work ethic, creativity and ingenuity.

CASS Inc., located in Atlantic, Iowa has worked with persons with disabilities since 1977. They have shown innovation and creativity in the placement of persons with disabilities in community integrated employment. They have been able to work with a wide variety of employers in the Atlantic area, placing their consumers in a wide variety of positions.

Outstanding Employer (small) of 2017 : Pizza Ranch

Pizza Ranch of Atlantic was honored by the National Rehabilitation Association at their annual meeting as being the Outstanding Employer (small) in 2017.

Pizza Ranch has worked both CASS, Inc., as well as Concerned, Inc., in the placement of persons with disabilities in community integrated employment. According to Trey Berge, Manager, "I believe in giving persons a chance." Management staff as well as staff have been willing to work with persons with disabilities in their employment setting.



At Pizza Ranch, individual with disabilities who are hired there do more than bussing tables, cleaning and the like. Individuals may cook/broast chicken, make pizzas as well as deliver pizzas. There they are matched to their skills and abilities as well as interests.

The manager, Trey Birge, knew the kind of successes that another Pizza Ranch had been able to obtain by hiring individuals with disabilities in Harlan, Iowa. Trey was receptive to worksite assessments, job coaching and follow-up provided by community rehabilitation programs. Like the manager in Harlan, Trey does not see the individuals that he hires as 'special'. They are employees.

Leadership Award of 2017 : Ellen Sokolowski

Ellen Sokolowski was honored with the Yvonne Johnson Award for Leadership at the National Rehabilitation Association annual conference in Corpus Christi, Texas recently.

Through her leadership, ribbons were given to first time attendees at NRA conferences. Board members were encouraged to reach out to them to feel comfortable and welcome. A new attendee social hour was also developed. Efforts were also undertaken to reach out to students in counseling programs under her tenure, She brought the recommendation to the NRA Board of Directors to add a position of a student member. With her committee, she designed the term of office for the students so that there would be a mentoring component to it.

She has served in a variety to capacities at the state and division level. She has served as chapter President of IRA, the Iowa JPD chapter and NRA-JPD. She has also been the past NRA Awards Chairperson and the NRA National Training conference chairperson. She has served as Iowa's representative to the Governmental Affairs committee and has mentored others in her state and beyond in being an effective advocate for persons with disabilities.



2018 Board Members:

Board Members

President - Michelle Dickerson

Past President – Jami Schwickerath

Vice President - Todd Ohnesorge

President Elect - Alice Castle

Secretary - Lisa Worden

Treasurer - Kathleen Davis

Bylaw Chair - Rosemary Thierer

Membership Chair - Shannon Myers

State Legislative Chair - Jeffrey Morgan

Federal Legislative Chair - Ellen Sokolowski

Communications – Caylin Lundberg

Members at Large

- Laura Gibson

- Mindy Myers

- Caylin Lundberg

- Jenny Erdman

- Ashley West

- Kera O.

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- Jenny Erdman

- Ashley West

- Kera O.

IRCEA President – Jeffrey Morgan

JPD President – None

DU-IRA President – Jenna Batten