

The Bridge

PCAs: a bridge to community living

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT QUALITY HOME CARE WORKFORCE COUNCIL

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We Heard You!

Council Makes Consumer-Requested Changes to Referral Directory

When the Council launched its online PCA referral directory (www.mass.gov/findpca) in September 2009, a commitment was made to seek input from consumers/employers on how to improve the directory's operation. Recently, Rewarding Work Resources (RWR), which manages the directory for the Council, announced several changes that are all based on feedback received from consumers and staff at PCM agencies. The main improvements are the following.

- You will no longer have to enter your MassHealth ID number every time you log on to the directory. Now, when you log on, you are given a one-year subscription and easy access with a password. You will have to use your ID number only once a year.
- Consumers had expressed displeasure about the many choices available while doing a search. The directory now has a streamlined search feature that is loaded with the most-common search choices.
- A PCA employer can now save a set of search criteria he or she has used. When a new worker files an application including those criteria, the consumer will be sent an e-mail.
- Previously the shortest radius for a search was within five miles of the consumer's home. Now searches can be made for as small as a one-mile radius.

“These changes make the directory a much more-useful tool for consumers,” said Elenore Parker, president of RWR. “We look forward to continuing our conversation with consumers so that we can continue to improve the directory. As part of this effort, we are now surveying consumers, PCAs, and PCM agency staff by e-mail on a regular basis. The information we gain through this process will lead to further improvements in the way the directory operates.”

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Tips for Consumers/Employers Using the Massachusetts PCA Directory

How to Register

You must be registered to search online for applicants in the Mass. PCA Directory.

Go to www.mass.gov/findpca. Click on **“Register to find and hire the worker you need.”**

- Complete all required fields marked with an asterisk (*).
- Remember to check that you agree to **“Terms and Conditions.”**
- Enter your MassHealth number (process is secure and for verification purposes only). ***You will need to do this only once.***
- Enter your e-mail address as your username.
- You will receive a password by e-mail. The next time you log in, you will be asked to change it.
- You may log in from any page on the site by entering your e-mail address and password. This login will be valid for one year.
- You may change your account information at any time.
- Click **“Continue”** to go to the **“Search our applicants”** page.

How to Search the Directory

You must be logged in to search the directory.

To conduct a **Simple Zip Code Search**

- Enter your zip code.
- From the **“Distance from Zip Code”** drop-down menu, click the distance you want, from 1 to 100 miles.
- Click **“Search Now.”**

To conduct a **Simple Search** with additional criteria

- Follow steps above, but do NOT click **“Search Now.”**
- Choose preferences from the drop-down menus, such as workers who wish to work with adults, who prefer to work days, or have valid drivers’ licenses.
- Enter keyword only if you have a specific name or description.
- Click **“Search Now.”** You will see a list of candidates who live near you. The most recent applicants will be at the top of the list.

To conduct an **Advanced Search** looking for specific qualifications

- Click **“Advanced Search.”**
- Start by selecting your state and click **“Next.”**
- Select the criteria most important to you in the fields shown, such as “experience working with a particular disease” or “fluent in following languages.”
- Click **“Search Now”** at the bottom of the page. You will see a list of candidates.

How to Sort Your Search Results

You may sort the results of your search by different fields. The **default view** shows columns by Name, City, State, Zip, and Date of application. The **default sort order** is by date.

- To change which information appears in the columns, click **“Sort results by changing columns.”** Uncheck the criteria that you don’t want. Then check up to three criteria you wish to view (for example, applicant’s telephone number, certifications, and experience).
- Click **“Update column options”** to see your choices. You may change fields and repeat.
- To see a candidate’s complete application, click **“View.”**

How to Save Your Search

- To save your search for future reference, enter a name for your search in the box that says **“Save your search.”** Keep the name simple, such as “PCA for Mom” or today’s date.
- Check the **“e-mail notification box”** if you want to receive e-mails when new applicants match your saved search criteria.
- Click **“Save Search.”**
- You will be able to access your saved search at any time by logging in and clicking **“Your saved search”** in the navigation menu on the left.

Questions? Call toll-free 1-866-212-WORK (9675) or e-mail company@rewardingwork.org.

Council Creates Awards to Recognize PCAs

Inaugural Paul Kahn Awards for PCA Service Are Presented

Last October, at a ceremony held before a packed audience at Nurses Hall in the State House, five PCAs, from different regions of the Commonwealth, received recognition for their dedication to their work and their employers.

The PCAs, nominated by their consumers/employers or human services agency staff, were presented with the first Paul Kahn Awards for PCA service. Paul Kahn, who passed away in January 2010, was a long-time advocate for disability rights and one of the first persons in Massachusetts to employ a PCA.

The awards, sponsored by the Council and 1199 SEIU, were presented to the PCAs by Health and Human Services Secretary JudyAnn Bigby, who also spoke at the event. Representative Kay Kahn; Council member Liz Casey; Robert J. Master, MD, President & CEO of Commonwealth Care Alliance; Commissioner Charles Carr of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission; and Veronica Turner, Executive Vice President of 1199 SEIU Health Care Workers East, also spoke.

A committee, including staff from the Council, 1199, and Rewarding Work Resources, reviewed dozens of nominations. The winners were rated on their length of service, their dedication to going beyond requirements, and for improving the image of PCAs.

Receiving awards were Rosa Amegah, Worcester; Amarilis DePina, Brockton; Maria Garcia, Lynn; Mary Ketter, East Boston; and Eric Osgood, from Bondsville. Jack Boesen, Director of the Council, said, "We are proud to honor these five persons, both in their own right as well as for representing thousands of PCAs who perform work of similar quality throughout the Commonwealth."

Information on the 2011 Paul Kahn Awards and a nomination form are included in this edition of *The Bridge*.

Federal Money for PCA Training

In September 2010, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) was notified that they were one of six successful applicants for a federal training grant. Over three years, EOHHS will receive \$2.3 million from funds that are part of the national health care reform legislation.

The funds will support developing two courses of study for distinct, but related, workers: home care aides and personal care attendants. The courses being developed will emphasize elements and skills shared by both categories of workers. The Massachusetts Council for Home Care Aide Services will provide training for home care aides. Bristol County Community College (BCC), working with EOHHS and Council staff, will develop the PCA course. The first PCA class will be held in 2011 and begin a three-year development plan. Issues such as consumer direction, complex care management, and technical proficiency will be common to both courses.

"The courses we develop," said Jack Boesen, Director of the PCA Workforce Council, "will hopefully stand as national as well as statewide models."

Profiles of the Winners of the Paul Kahn Award for PCA Service

Proudly holding their plaques, the 2010 winners of the Paul Kahn Award for PCA Service pose on the State House steps with staff and colleagues from their union. *Front row, L to R: Amarilis DePina and Eric Osgood. 2nd row: Rosa Amegah, Maria Garcia, and Mary Ketter*



Rosa D. Amegah, Worcester

Ms. Amegah's reputation is such that she was nominated by three separate individuals. A Worcester native, Rosa is an L.P.N. She has worked as a PCA for 30 years. Regarding her PCA work, Rosa said, "It is not about the money. It is about the caring and being there for a person in need." Rosa serves as a delegate for the PCA union and works to connect hundreds of PCAs working in the Worcester area.

Amarilis DePina, Brockton

Amarilis was working at a rehabilitation facility when she met Susan, the woman for whom she now works as a PCA. In her nomination letter, Susan said, "...Even when her husband passed away unexpectedly...she found coverage to take care of me..."

Maria C. Garcia, Lynn

Ms. Garcia, who came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic when she was 12, has been a PCA for 10 years and was nominated by Laura, the surrogate for Janet, who is the consumer for whom Maria works. In her letter, Laura said, "Maria... does not think twice about giving up her weekend or working hours that are not...going to be paid."

Mary C. Ketter, East Boston

Ms. Ketter says that "PCA work is very hard but getting to know my employer on a personal level is very rewarding." Linda, the employer who nominated Mary, said: "(Mary) started working for me several years after she moved here from Kenya. Mary learned to perform my complicated care with an expertise...that I had never before witnessed. She...trains new PCAs in the complex aspects of my daily care."

Eric Osgood, Bondsville

Mr. Osgood was nominated by Judy Sherman, a service coordinator at the Dept. of Developmental Services. She came to know Eric through his work as a mentor with Scott. When Scott graduated and moved into his own apartment, Eric became his PCA. As Ms. Sherman said in her letter, "Eric opened up his world to Scott, introducing him to his son...and a new array of friends..." Eric has been an integral part of Scott's world, respectfully attending to his myriad emotional and physical needs. In so doing, Eric has helped a young man to gain success, maturity, and greater independence.

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR 2011 PAUL KAHN PCA SERVICE AWARD

The PCA Quality Home Care Workforce Council, in collaboration with 1199 SEIU Health Care Workers East, will present the 2nd annual Paul Kahn Awards for PCA Service in September 2011. Nominations are open to all consumers, PCAs, families, nonprofit staff, and governmental agency staff. Awards will be given to PCAs who demonstrate

- dedication to their work;
- longevity of PCA service; and
- actions that increase the value and image of PCA work.

If you know of one or more PCAs whose service and dedication to PCA work deserves recognition, you can submit his or her name for consideration.

Nominations must be made on the form included in this edition of *The Bridge*.

Please remember to provide us with your contact information and the nominated PCA's telephone number, so the selection committee can contact both you and the PCA.

Nominations can be sent by the following methods.

Mail: PCA Workforce Council
600 Washington Street, Room 6184c
Boston, MA 02111

Fax: 617-348-8515

Nominations must be received by July 1, 2011.

PAUL KAHN AWARD FOR PCA SERVICE 2011 NOMINATION FORM

(The entire form must be completed.)

Name of Person Making the Nomination	Relationship to PCA	
Address	Phone Number	E-mail
Name of PCA Being Nominated	Number of Years Working as a PCA	
Address	Phone Number	E-mail
1. Tell us how the PCA has shown dedication to a consumer and to PCA work.		
2. Tell us whether and how the PCA has mentored, trained, or recruited other PCAs.		
3. What has the PCA done to enhance the value and image of PCA work? Please include any other information that you believe is relevant.		

PCA Pioneers

This feature includes interviews and stories of people we are calling “PCA Pioneers.” Pioneers have been using PCA services to live in the community for more than 30 years. They will share the importance of having a PCA and the impact on their lives.

Linda Pelletier

Interview by Karen Langley

Karen: Linda, tell us a little about your disability.

Linda: I was born with cerebral palsy in 1952 and had weakness in all four limbs. I missed all the usual developmental milestones such as rolling over, sitting up, feeding myself, etc. I could walk very short distances with braces and holding onto people’s hands. I started using a manual wheelchair at age six and a power wheelchair when I was 20. My speech was also affected.

Karen: Where did you live and who provided your personal assistance?

Linda: I lived at home with my parents until I was 26. I was home-schooled until the fifth grade, and after that attended class via intercom through which I could hear and participate in class. My school was inaccessible and my family didn’t want me to go to an institutional school.



Linda Pelletier

My parents provided all my personal care until my father died, and then my mother did it all. During that time I graduated fourth in my high-school class and later attended Salem State College, where I earned both a BA and MA in English.

Karen: When did you begin using the MassHealth PCA program?

Linda: I began using PCAs in 1978 when I moved into the Worcester Area Transitional Housing program (now the Center for Living and Working). During the two years I was there, I learned all aspects of independent living and

using personal care assistance. I taught other transitional residents how to use PCAs and also attended Assumption College, where I got an MA in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Karen: Has your need for personal assistance changed over the last 32 years?

Linda: It definitely has changed as I have aged and had some health issues. When I first started using PCA services in the late 70s, I needed 35 hours/week of support plus night-time assistance. In 2004 I had pneumonia and had a tracheotomy performed. Since then, I require ventilator support at night, suctioning, and supplemental oxygen 24/7. Due to the complexity of my breathing, I now require 117 hours/week and nighttime support.

Karen: What has been the value of the PCA program?

Linda: The control and flexibility offered by the program allows me to hire who I want for the hours I need to do the activities that I like: going out, taking classes, and enjoying life. Also, since I have gotten my tracheotomy, I have needed additional support, as it is difficult to talk, and use a surrogate to help with the hiring and especially firing of PCAs.

It has also enabled me to live in the community and not in a nursing home or other institution. Being able to increase hours and other supports as I've needed over the past 32 years has made remaining in the community possible even as my medical needs have changed.

Karen: Are there activities that you require PCA support for but are not reimbursable under the MassHealth program?

Linda: Yes, when I am in the hospital I need my PCAs to provide support. Hospital staff get scared, can't feed me, don't come when I ring the bell. My PCAs know what to do and how to do it easily.

Karen: Is there anything you would recommend changing in the PCA program?

Linda: I think there needs to be more "basic" training for PCAs. Many have no skills and it is difficult for me to teach them particularly since I have gone on the ventilator. Better-trained PCAs will provide me with better support.

If you are a "PCA Pioneer" or know of one and would like to share your experiences using PCAs, please contact the PCA Workforce Council at pcacouncil@state.ma.us.

PCA Council Reaches Out

Six Consumer Focus Groups Held Across State

Maintaining a dialogue with consumers has always been a top priority for the Council. The newsletter you are reading and the Council's Web site, www.mass.gov/pca, are just two examples of ways the Council provides consumers with both information and opportunities to respond. In 2010, the Council organized six focus groups across the Commonwealth. Each group brought together six-to-eight consumers or their surrogates. Participants were recruited by staff from various PCM agencies, with selections being made to include individuals with a variety of disabilities, as well as representing gender and ethnic diversity. In addition to staff, a different member of the Council was present at each focus group.

Ethos & Boston Center for Independent Living recruited for the Boston session. The Center for Living & Working and Bay Path Elder Services recruited for the Worcester focus group. Stavros recruited for the one held in Amherst. AdLib recruited for a session held at their office in Pittsfield.

The Northeast Independent Living Program hosted a group at their Lawrence office, and Options recruited for and hosted a group at their Taunton office.

The participants were asked a range of questions about their use of and participation in the PCA program. Participating consumers received compensation for their time and were assured that all of their responses would be confidential. Joe Bellil, a Council member who attended the Worcester session, said "This was very valuable. Whenever you have a respectful conversation with consumers, you always come away learning something new."

A report on the focus groups will be given to the Council. Information from the focus groups was also incorporated into the Council's biannual performance review report to the Governor and the Legislature. The performance-review report can be viewed at www.mass.gov/pca.



Contribute to the Bridge

The Bridge is a newsletter for MassHealth members who use PCA services. We are very interested in your letters, articles, and thoughts about the PCA program and improving the PCA workforce. Please send your ideas to pcacouncil@state.ma.us. We can't promise to print everything we receive, but all submissions will receive our serious attention. For consumers without e-mail, please call 617-210-5715 or forward your ideas to the address on the right.

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Please share this publication with your PCA.