

The Bridge

PCAs: a bridge to community living

Volume 6 Fall 2012

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

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Council and Union Agree to a Three-Year Contract Agreement Provides Wage Increases, Benefits

After five months of negotiations, the PCA Workforce Council and 1199SEIU were able to negotiate a new three-year labor agreement. Last year, with the Commonwealth facing a very bleak financial outlook, both sides agreed to a one-year contract with no wage increase. When negotiations began in January, a longer-term agreement was the goal for both parties. Proposals from the union and the Council were made with awareness that the state was still facing challenging revenue forecasts. The new agreement provides the following.

- PCAs will have seen three consecutive years of wage increases: The hourly wage was increased from \$12.48 to \$12.68 this past July; it will go to \$12.98 in July 2013; and will increase to \$13.38 in July 2014.
- The PCA training fund, started with a \$1M contribution last year, will receive an additional \$1M per year for the last two years of the contract.

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Seated in front of cheering members of the 1199SEIU bargaining committee are the members of the Council's bargaining team: (l to r) Joe Bellil, Treasurer; Jack Boesen, Director; Marianne Dill, lead negotiator; Paul Spooner, Vice Chair; and Christine Griffin, Asst. EOHHS Secretary for Disability Policy and Programs, and Council Chair

LOOKING to hire a PCA?

Remember
www.mass.gov/findpca.
Over 7,000 PCAs are listed,
along with their preferences
and qualifications.

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- A paid time-off benefit will begin in July 2014. This benefit will have an annual cap of \$1.5M. The details of the benefit will be determined by the labor management committee.
- A study will be done on the issue of health insurance. The study will focus on seven specific areas outlined in the contract and is to be completed by January 2014. When the study is completed, there will be a reopener, and negotiations about a health care benefit will begin.

Christine Griffin, Chair of the Council and a member of the bargaining team, praised the new agreement, as well as the people making it possible, saying, "Both sides worked hard to agree on a new contract. I was very impressed with the dozens of PCAs who not only attended but actively participated in these negotiations. On the Council side, Joe Bellil and Paul Spooner volunteered many, many hours. The Council team was ably led once again by Doug Shatkin. When Doug decided, in January, he was going to retire this year, his final gift to the Council was bringing Marianne Dill on board to assist him and then succeed him as lead negotiator. The Council is grateful for their dedication and skill."

The new contract will run from July 2012 through June 30, 2015.



Council Reaches Out for Consumer Input

Council Treasurer Joe Bellil chaired the June public forum in Norwood.

Every other year, the PCA Council must file a performance-review report with the legislature and the Governor's Office. The Council must explicitly include in its report the degree of "satisfaction with services provided to the consumers receiving long-term, in-home personal care services from personal care attendants."

As a demonstration of its commitment to a dialogue with consumer/employers and to gather information for the report, the Council has been holding meetings and forums in various parts of the state. In April, the Council held its regularly scheduled meeting at the offices of Easter Seals Massachusetts in Worcester. The meeting included an opportunity for both consumers and agency staff working with consumers to address the Council. For almost an hour, members of the Council listened to both praise and critiques of the MassHealth PCA Program.

In June, at a conference at the Four Points Hotel in Norwood, and in September at the Statewide Independent Living Council conference in Marlborough, the Council hosted open forum workshops that provided consumers with the opportunity to speak directly to Council members about their experiences and concerns. The information gathered through these public forums is a critical element in assessing consumer satisfaction.



Back row (l-r) are award winners: Laurie Swane of Hadley, Caroline Craig of Weymouth, Wadson Michel of Woburn, and Vicente de la Rosa of Lawrence. Seated are Joe Bellil, Treasurer of the Council, and Christine Griffin, Asst. EOHHS Secretary for Disability Policy and Programs and Council Chair.

Third Annual Paul Kahn Awards Presented

Bonding: That was the main theme during the presentation of the 2012 Paul Kahn Awards for PCA Service. Bonding between PCAs and the consumers who employ them; bonding between the Council and 1199SEIU on development of the PCA workforce; and bonding between the five award winners and the greater PCA community.

This year's event was hosted by Senator Michael Rodrigues and Representative Marco Devers. As Senator Rodrigues noted, "These five people are being recognized for displaying the dedication, skill, and selflessness that thousands of PCAs display day-in and day-out." Representative Devers emphasized government's role as a partner in ensuring that PCA services are provided to those who need them.

Christine Griffin, Assistant EOHHS Secretary for Disability Policy and Programs, as well as Chair of the Council, highlighted the gains that PCAs made in

the recently negotiated labor agreement, and said that for the administration's Community First agenda to succeed, a strong PCA workforce was a necessity.

Senator Rodrigues and Representative Devers presented awards to Caroline Craig of Weymouth, Vicente de la Rosa of Lawrence, Doris Forcier of Leicester, Wadson Michel of Woburn, and Laurie Swane of Hadley. Ms. Forcier was unable to attend the event, and received her award separately.

In her closing remarks, Rebecca Gutman, 1199SEIU Vice President for Home Care, emphasized the union's role in promoting and supporting PCAs. She added that, having represented a wide variety of unionized workers, she considered PCAs to be the most dedicated, caring workforce she has seen.

You can see profiles of the award winners at www.mass.gov/pca.

Consumer Coach

In this occasional feature, the Council and MassHealth provide consumer/employers with information that they need to productively participate in the MassHealth PCA program.

PCA Wages

Workers want not only to be paid, but also to be paid on time. State law requires that all employees be paid within six days of the end of the pay period. This law applies to your PCAs. To comply with this law, as an employer, you need to submit time sheets for your PCAs immediately at the end of each pay period so that the fiscal intermediary (FI) can pay the PCA on time. Remember: The law also requires you to give your PCAs their checks as soon as possible after you receive them.

In addition, MassHealth PCA regulations require you to offer your PCAs the option of having their paychecks deposited directly into their bank account. Please remember to offer the direct-deposit option to your PCAs. PCAs who choose direct deposit will be able to access their paycheck quickly, and will not have to wait for checks to be mailed. Your FI will be able to provide you or your PCA with more information about direct deposit.

Timing Is Everything

As a consumer/employer, you receive a payroll cover sheet from the FI each pay period. This sheet tells you the start and end dates of your prior authorization (PA); the total number of PCA hours that MassHealth has authorized for you for day, evening, night, and holiday hours; the number of PCA hours you have used; and the number of PCA hours that remain on your PA. You should review this sheet when you receive it to make sure that you have enough PCA hours left on your PA to pay your PCA. You should schedule your PCA to work only the amount of hours authorized by MassHealth per week, per night, or per holiday. If you do not have enough hours in any category, the FI will not be able to pay the PCA, and you will be liable for payment.


Leaving Home

If you are admitted to a hospital or nursing facility, you must promptly notify your Personal Care Management (PCM) agency and your fiscal intermediary. Federal regulations prohibit payment for PCA services while you are a patient in one of these facilities.

Please Post!

Every time a new PCA is hired, the consumer receives a new-hire packet from his or her fiscal intermediary. Included in this packet is the notice shown below, which explains some of the rights PCAs have if they are injured on the job. MassHealth purchases a workers' compensation policy for each PCA. As an employer, it is your legal responsibility to fill in the name of the hospital closest to you and post this notice in a prominent place (billboard, refrigerator, etc.). A survey done by the Council found that many PCAs were not aware that they were covered by workers' compensation.

Please comply with this important legal obligation right away!

NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES		NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS 600 Washington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02111 617-727-4900 - http://www.mass.gov/dia		
<small>As required by Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 152, Sections 21, 22 & 30, this will give you notice that I (we) have provided for payment to our injured employees under the above-mentioned chapter by insuring with:</small>		
Atlantic Charter Insurance Company 617-488-6500		
NAME OF INSURANCE COMPANY 25 New Chardon Street, Boston, MA 02114 ADDRESS OF INSURANCE COMPANY		
<small>POLICY NUMBER</small>	<small>EFFECTIVE DATES</small>	
<small>HUB International, 229 Ballardvale St., Wilmington, MA 01887 978-657-5100</small>	<small>ADDRESS</small>	<small>PHONE #</small>
<small>NAME OF INSURANCE AGENT</small>	<small>ADDRESS</small>	<small>PHONE #</small>
<small>EMPLOYER</small>	<small>ADDRESS</small>	
<small>EMPLOYER'S WORKERS' COMPENSATION OFFICER (IF ANY) DATE</small>		
MEDICAL TREATMENT		
<small>The above-named insurer is required in cases of personal injuries arising out of and in the course of employment to furnish adequate and reasonable hospital and medical services in accordance with the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act. A copy of the First Report of Injury must be given to the injured employee. The employee may select his or her own physician. The reasonable cost of the services provided by the treating physician will be paid by the insurer, if the treatment is necessary and reasonably connected to the work related injury. In cases requiring hospital attention, employees are hereby notified that the insurer has arranged for such attention at the</small>		
<small>Nearest Hospital to Consumer's Home</small>		
<small>NAME OF HOSPITAL</small>	<small>ADDRESS</small>	
TO BE POSTED BY EMPLOYER		



Staff and faculty from Bristol Community College pose with students and members of the students' families at the June graduation ceremony. The students graduated from the third and fourth pilot PCA courses.

PCA Training Well Received

The PCA training course being developed by Bristol Community College (BCC), in partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Council, has completed the pilot-course phase of the program. Funded by a federal grant, the Personal and Home Care Aide State Training (PHCAST) Program established a shared or core curriculum that has been incorporated into separate training courses for home care aides and PCAs. Working with PHCAST staff and the Council, BCC developed a 90-hour course for training PCAs.

As part of the course, students observed PCAs working in the homes of consumers who had granted permission to the students. The course includes a strong emphasis on consumer control, and covers technical skills, good communication, and a wide range of best health care practices. Between September 2011 and June 2012, BCC offered four

pilot sessions of the course. Certificates of completion were awarded to 55 students, including several who were already working as PCAs.

The course is constructed with over a dozen distinct modules that can be taught separately. Recognizing that 90 hours represents a substantial time commitment, PHCAST staff developed a fundamentals version, selecting from seven key areas for a 4½-hour course. Working with 1199SEIU, the fundamentals version was presented to working PCAs at sessions held in Springfield, Worcester, and Lawrence. Approximately 70 PCAs received training at the three events. Rebecca Gutman, Vice President for Home Care for the union, reported that all of the PCAs she spoke with were very enthusiastic about the value of this training.

PCA Pioneers

“PCA Pioneers” features interviews with people who have been using PCA services to live in the community for more than 30 years. Their stories demonstrate the importance of PCAs and the impact that PCAs have made in their lives.

Brenda Clark

Interview by Karen Langley

Karen: Brenda, tell us a little of your early years growing up with a disability.

Brenda: I contracted polio at the age of 17 months, which resulted in weakness of my arms and legs. I could walk with a brace on my leg. My mother and sisters provided me with help for my care when I lived at home. As I got older, I needed a power wheelchair to get around in the community.

Karen: At what point did you move into your own apartment and what support did you get there?

Brenda: In the 1980s, I moved into my own apartment in Cambridge with my seven-year-old daughter. Sometimes she would help out. I also had an aunt who took me shopping, and home health aides for personal assistance. I didn't like to use home health aides because they were often late, inconsistent, and didn't want to do all the care I needed done.



Brenda Clark, with her great-grandniece Mia and great-grandnephew Malachi.

Karen: How did you hear about the MassHealth Personal Care Assistance Program?

Brenda: Staff at the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) told me about the program and helped me to apply for it. It was one of the best things that ever happened to me!

Karen: What did you like about the program?

Brenda: The best part was that I could hire who I wanted, when I wanted. It meant I did not have to

be a burden on my family and young daughter. I had control of my life. I could hire PCAs to come in during the day, and some stayed overnight. Now I can hire my sister to be one of my PCAs. It is good for me because she knows my needs so well and it's good for her because she gets paid to do it. It's a win-win situation.

Karen: Has there been a change in your need for PCAs over the years?

Brenda: Yes, as I have gotten older I have experienced more weakness and need assistance with activities I used to be able to do myself or that take longer to do. Also last year I was hit by a van while riding in my wheelchair. I had to have surgery and physical therapy. So now I need 40 hours a week of assistance and nighttime support as well.

Karen: What are you looking for in a PCA?

Brenda: I am looking for someone who is on time, has good communication skills, and is open to meeting my needs. I want someone who is honest and tells me why they can't come to work so I can plan accordingly. I also want someone to protect my privacy.

These attributes are very important to me, particularly being "on time" so I can get to my job on time.

Karen: Do you think that PCAs need to be professionalized?

Brenda: No, I don't. I like that I can hire who I want to do the tasks the way I want. In the past 30 years, I have had many PCAs; one for 20 years. I train all my PCAs and it is best that I do it and ensure they know "why" I want it done a certain way for me. I don't want to be required to hire someone from a pool of PCAs already prescreened or trained.

Karen: What words of wisdom would you offer to others about the PCA program?

Brenda: Receiving services through the PCA program is a remarkable and freeing experience. Being able to get up, get dressed, have breakfast, and do everyday activities that make you happy is a wonderful thing. The PCA program lets you do that. This program gives you the freedom and flexibility to do this.

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.

New Training Fund on the Move

The one-year contract signed by the Council and 1199SEIU in 2011 included \$1 million that the Commonwealth provided to establish a training fund for PCAs. The fund will be administered by the 1199SEIU Training & Upgrading Fund, an independent nonprofit, specializing in the training and education of union workers. Planning and supervision of the fund's expenses will be overseen by the Labor Management Committee (LMC), composed of Council and union members.

As a first step, the LMC organized a needs-assessment process to determine the priorities that the PCAs and their consumer/employers considered for using the training funds. Surveys were sent out to select consumers using both e-mail and regular mail. PCAs received paper surveys and attended several focus groups organized by the union. To see the results of this process, go to www.mass.gov/pca. Click on Reports & Publications, then on PCA Training Assessment Report.

Guided by the priorities emerging from the needs assessment, beginning in the Fall of 2012, courses in First Aid/CPR, Universal Precautions, and Basic Computer Skills will be offered. For further information, please check the Council website listed above.

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 about 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.

Council Welcomes New Member



Kristen McCosh

The Council is pleased to announce that Kristen McCosh has been appointed to the PCA Workforce Council. As required by the Council's statute, Kristen's name was submitted

to the Office of the Attorney General by the Mass. Council on Aging. Attorney General Martha Coakley appointed her in August.

Kristen has been a disability advocate for more than 25 years. She graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in English and Political Science from the University of Massachusetts, and is pursuing her M.A. in Disability Studies at the City University of New York. Kristen was appointed as the Disability Commissioner for the City of Boston by Mayor Thomas M. Menino in 2010. She served as Ms. Wheelchair America 2008, a national advocacy role promoting independent living, empowerment, and civil rights for persons with disabilities.

How to Contact Us

PCA Council

600 Washington Street, Room 7271

Boston, MA 02111

Telephone: 617-210-5715

Website: www.mass.gov/pca

E-mail: pcacouncil@state.ma.us

Staff: Jack Boesen,
Director

Michelle Byrd,
Executive Assistant

Please share this publication with your PCA.