

WINTER 2024

# FOCUS ON INDEPENDENT LIVING

The Official Newsletter of AdLib Center for Independent Living



## ADLIB WELCOMES NEW TEAM MEMBERS

In July AdLib welcomed our new Executive Director, Sally English. Sally comes with ten years of leadership experience in human services, including working in a senior leadership position at the Boston Center for Independent Living. She also has personal experience with disability and ensuring that family can remain in the community.

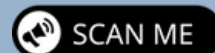
One of Sally's first goals was to fill open positions that directly support our services. We are excited to announce that AdLib has welcomed seven new team members since September! Our new team members are: Peter Putnam, Van Driver; Tamera Grandbois, PCA Data Specialist; Monica Sumpter, PCA Skills Trainer; Lisa McBain, PCA Billing Coordinator; Sara Hadsell, IL Advocate and Peer Counselor; Bob Bertolino, PCA Skills Trainer; and Alex Maroni, Nursing Home Transition Advocate.

In addition to the new members of the team, two staff received promotions. Jennifer Knowlton was promoted to Receptionist and Mary Ellen Rahilly was promoted to Independent Living Director.

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## **CALL FOR ADVOCACY: NO CHANGES TO REQUIREMENTS FOR PCA SERVICES!**

MassHealth officials recently announced that in an effort to save over \$100 million they are proposing changes to eligibility requirements for the PCA program. Right now, anyone who needs hands on assistance with at least two activities of daily living (ADLS) are eligible for services, regardless of the amount of help needed. Under the proposed changes, people would only be eligible if they need at least 10 hours of ADL assistance. These changes would mean that approximately 6,000 people statewide would lose these vital services! In the Berkshires we estimate that 100-150 consumers would lose the PCA program. In addition, they proposed reducing maximum meal prep time from 13 hours a week, to 7. This would have a major impact on consumers with special dietary needs who can only get food prepared properly through PCA Services.

The message is simple:

**Governor Healey--Don't Change Our PCA Program!  
Call Governor Healy at 617-725-4005 or 888-870-7770**

Even more concerning, the state just announced that they are working to centralize all assessments for PCA, Adult Foster Care, Group Adult Foster Care, Day Habilitation, and PACE programs. This would mean that AdLib would no longer be responsible for conducting intake and assessment for PCA consumers and instead there would be centralized entity that would assess for all services and then determine which a consumer is eligible for.

AdLib is working closely with the Statewide Personal Assistance Coalition (PAS) to prevent these changes through advocacy initiatives. If you would be impacted by these changes and are willing to talk about why these services are vital to you please contact Sally English, [senglish@adlibcil.org](mailto:senglish@adlibcil.org) 413-442-7047 to tell your story and connect to advocacy efforts.

The PAS Coalition is planning a rally at the State House on March 20th. Please contact Sally and watch AdLib social media for more information.

# BE AN ADVOCATE



## BRTA ANNOUNCING ADDITIONAL EVENING AND WEEKEND SERVICES

In November, the BRTA announced increase to evening and weekend services. This would increase the number of fixed route services available providing weekday service on specified routes until 8:30pm and adding Saturday services for specified routes until 7:30. Accessible chair car services would continue to be available during the times of fixed route, meaning a slight expansion but still leaving people with disabilities stranded on Sundays and after 9pm. To learn more about the changes, proposed to being implementation in February, please visit <https://berkshirerta.com/>

Advocacy efforts can help to ensure vital services are available to people with disabilities-stay informed!

## ACP Ending in April

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) currently provides internet services to eligible households for \$30 per month. This has allowed millions of Americans to access high speed internet. With the increased use of online applications, lack of internet means lack of access to jobs and services. ACP is now scheduled to end in April meaning a huge increase to the cost of internet. Now is the time to look at your bill and find out if you will be impacted. If you do receive ACP in April your internet bill will automatically go to the regular amount, meaning a \$30 bill could be \$130 or more. If you cannot afford internet without the reduced price you will need to call and cancel services before the charges are incurred. To sign the petition against the end to ACP visit: Don't Disconnect US ([dontdisconnectus.org](http://dontdisconnectus.org))

If your phone service is impacted by discontinuation of government programs please consider reaching out to PhoneBros, LLC. AdLib staff Sara Hadsell worked with this local phone provider to create affordable options for phones and data. You can learn more by calling AdLib's office and asking to speak with the IL Department.

## ART AT ADLIB RETURNS!

In January, cherished art instructor Mark Ziobro restarted Art at AdLib. This group takes place on Wednesdays from 10am-12pm in our large meeting area. The group is composed of adults with disabilities and their support staff and is open to additional participants. Projects include making Valentines, painting figurines, and collage. If you are interested in joining please contact AdLib at 413-442-7047



## MASSHEALTH ROLES OUT EVV

The long-awaited implementation of Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) for the PCA program has started. All new PCA consumers are now required to utilize EVV. This means that in order to start the program consumers must have an email address and ability to approve time sheets electronically. For those who may be impacted by lack of a device or internet, devices can be requested from Tempus--the fiscal intermediary-- and MassHealth advises consumers to bring their device to a location with public WiFi such as a library or grocery store to upload their data. Roll out for existing consumer is being done by last name and will be taking place over the next 6-9 months.

Tempus Unlimited <https://tempusunlimited.org> is the fiscal intermediary and has numerous video trainings available on their website. Consumers will receive postcards, emails and text messages to alert them of onboarding to the program. This is a major change for consumers, staff, and officials in all agencies. AdLib continues to educate staff and advocate for needs of consumers in Berkshire County.

## PCA CONSUMER ADVISORY BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

The PCA Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) is for consumers of the PCA program and their surrogates or PCAs to provide input about the PCA program and learn about proposed changes from MassHealth. This year we are planning to host meeting on: March 27th, May 15th, and August 7th. Please contact Megan at 413-442-7047 ext. 43