

OFFICE OF HANDICAPPED CONCERNS

WILL'S CORNER, OKLAHOMA



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(Serving the Disability Community of Oklahoma)

HANDICAPPED PARKING ENFORCEMENT

(An Innovative Approach)

In May of 1990, the Oklahoma City Police Department began a new program employing local citizens, most of whom are disabled themselves, to enforce handicapped parking violations. It appears to be the only such program in the state at this time, although, reportedly Tulsa is considering something similar for their city.

The Oklahoma City Police Department created a new job title in city government called *Handicapped Parking Enforcement Specialist* and empowers these employees to issue citations involving violations of handicapped parking laws and illegal parking in fire zones. Employee candidates have a three to four day training on city ordinances and Oklahoma Department of Transportation codes concerning disabled parking and fire zone parking. What is innovative about this relatively-new program is that it hires people

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**OHC web site:
www.ohc.state.ok**

BARTLESVILLE EMPLOYER RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine Chao announced earlier this year that **ARC Industries** of Bartlesville, Oklahoma was selected as one of five sites in the nation to take part in a training and technical assistance program for people with disabilities. ARC Industries is receiving technical assistance from the University of Massachusetts, Boston to move from offering segregated employment services to applying customized employment strategies for people with disabilities seeking to fill employer needs in competitive jobs within their community. Simply put, the agency is getting help on moving people from sub-minimum wage workshop jobs to real jobs in the community paying minimum wage or better. It may sound simple but it involves a shift in philosophy and the commitment to do some real work in locating the right job for the person with disabilities and selling the community on the idea that people with disabilities—particularly people with mental disabilities—are able to work and contribute to the general welfare of us all.

ARC Industries is a non-profit employment agency for people with disabilities. The mission of the agency is “to assist people with disabilities in obtaining employment and reaching their career potential which ultimately enhances their quality of life.” By helping people gain and maintain employment, ARC Industries is helping people with disabilities to improve their independence, self-reliance, and self-image. ARC has a 30 year history in Bartlesville. It started out as a work activity center for people with cognitive and physical disabilities. Today

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BARTLESVILLE EMPLOYER RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION (continued)

ARC serves 120 people with about 70% people with mental retardation, 25% people with mental health conditions, and 5% people with various physical disabilities.

This afternoon I am with Barry Maxwell, the director of ARC as he shares with me his vision for positive change. “Barry, first let me say ‘congratulations’ on ARC’s being selected as one of five agencies in the nation slated to receive special assistance. I understand that you have been working to change the direction of employment services for ARC even before you applied for and received the assistance from the Department of Labor?”

Barry Maxwell

“We began converting our workshop from a contract-based, in-house operation to customized employment services in the community several years ago. We still have nine people in our workshop, but we also have about 111 people in supported employment in the community. This is what we mean by workshop conversion. We find jobs for people in the community where they live and we tailor those jobs to fit their needs and abilities.”

“Right on Barry. People with disabilities are going out into the community to work. You hear about a job at the local fast food, and you grab a candidate for the interview. Is that how it works?”

“Hardly. We fit the job to the person, not the person to the job. We customize that job for the person with real person-centered planning in advance of job development. A lot of effort goes into making sure that there is a real good job match so that the person will want to remain in that job.”

“Give me an example, Barry.”

“A Team convenes for each person with disabilities who is wanting to get their own job in the community. We ask the person to tell us what their dream job is. The Team of people who know the person

from various perspectives contributes information on past work history, current living arrangements, hobbies, and interests. We ask the individual questions like ‘Do you want to work outside or inside? What hours do you want to work? What kind of pay are you looking for?’”

“Do you also look at the skills the individual brings to the table?”

“Of course. We also do situational assessments and tours of work sites to familiarize the person with the work scene. We want people to set realistic employment outcomes based on real-life experience.”

We fit the job to the person, not the person to the job.

“I sure wish I had had you around, Barry, when I was looking for a job.”

“We do more than work site familiarity. We discuss employers out there who have certain types of job tasks. We approach employers to carve out job tasks out of existing job descriptions so that the person with disabilities can be successful. We set up action steps in that Team meeting with time frames to get things done, and we schedule follow-up meetings to report new information. This is what we mean when we say we fit the job to the individual.”

“I am impressed.”

“The University of Massachusetts at Boston has the grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to provide technical assistance to agencies across the nation in providing even better employment services to individuals with disabilities. They came out to our facility back in September (2003) and met with staff, consumers, family members, and board members to

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BARTLESVILLE EMPLOYER RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION (continued)

assess our agency and make recommendations on how we could serve our people in an even better way.”

“Did they make some recommendations?”

“Yes. They noticed that we have a lot of people still working in enclaves in the community. It is true that they are working in the community, but they do not yet have their individual job. They also noticed that our contract with DDS (Developmental Disabilities Services Division of DHS) reimburses the same rate for individual or group placement. We need a rate change to encourage individual job development.”

“Barry, we’ve been talking theory here. Can you give me an example of a job match that you made for a person with disabilities?”

“I’m glad you asked that. We had a young man in a Team meeting who really enjoyed movie videos, CD’s, and the *TV Guide*. He had a narrow interest but intense. We talked to a local video store about carving out a job for him doing nothing but reshelving videos which were brought back. They had never had a person before who did nothing but that, but they were willing to hire him. The job match worked for both the young man and the employer, and in the process of serving that one young man, we established a relationship with that employer which helped us in future placements. That’s an example of the kind of work we do.”

I have watched for the past twenty years as the idea that people with disabilities—particularly people with mental retardation—were fully capable of working in constructive activities which could benefit themselves and the general population. As people began leaving institutions, many came into the community and found jobs in sheltered workshops. Some people at the time said this would never work, but it did. The idea continued to develop with a group of people with disabilities working together in the community

**Even if you
tell jokes as
well as Jay
Leno, neither
your cat nor
your teen will
ever crack a
smile.**



doing a certain group of tasks. This was called an enclave, and while it was successful in getting people with disabilities actually into the workplace, the people were still not fully integrated into the workplace. Somebody got the idea that an individual with a disability could actually hold down a job and be paid competitive wages. This was full integration. It brought a pay which had been unimaginable a few short years before. ARC, Industries is taking that idea even further. They are working to find not just any job in the community for the person with disabilities. They are working to find the right job which reflects the person’s capabilities and interests and needs. You know, that seems to be not just what the person with disabilities wants. Isn’t it really what we are all searching for? I congratulate you, ARC, Industries, and I hope that what you are doing in Bartlesville, Oklahoma will grow all over our state. You are bringing people with disabilities into a whole new life of empowerment. You are changing public attitudes about people with disabilities and challenging our stereotypes. Thank you.

MEDICAID TRANSITION

I attended a public meeting on the changes to Medicaid in Oklahoma which are going into effect January 1, 2004. If you are a Medicaid beneficiary and live outside the major metropolitan areas of Oklahoma including Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lawton, please disregard this. Your Medicaid continues without change. However, if you do live in a metropolitan area, there will be changes, and you will need information to help transition from one system to another.

Medicaid in Oklahoma's metropolitan areas has been administered through Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) as opposed to the rest of Oklahoma which has been under a fee for service system. One of the two major HMO's announced it was pulling out of Oklahoma Medicaid in October 2003, and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority which administers the whole Medicaid program in Oklahoma decided to drop the HMO system of delivering services beginning January 1, 2004. This decision will affect about 189,000 of the 500,000 eligible Medicaid recipients in Oklahoma.

If you are receiving medical (including psychiatric) services paid for by Medicaid and you live in the Oklahoma City, Tulsa, or Lawton metro areas, you will need to **transition** to a new way of doing business. The Oklahoma Health Care Authority is working as we speak to make this transition easier and to assure that your services continue smoothly. What are they doing? They are hiring extra staff to handle questions which will inevitably arise in a systems change. They are working to contract with the present doctors that you are using in your HMO so that they may continue to serve you under the new system. The same is true with mental health counselors who may be working with you now.

They will approach these people to contract directly with the Health Care Authority in order to transition smoothly to the new system.

But there is something that you can do also as a recipient of Medicaid services in the affected areas of Oklahoma. If you are seeing a doctor or therapist now which is paid for by Medicaid, you may suggest to your health care professional that they contact the Oklahoma Health Care Authority and seek a direct contract with them so that they may continue to provide you with the services you have been used to in your HMO. Your provider may call 405-522-7300 in the OKC metro or 800-522-0310 and ask to speak with Provider Relations at the Health Care Authority. Provider Relations can tell your health care provider how to contract directly with them. If your provider does contract with the Health Care Authority, this will help your services to continue smoothly through this transition period.

There are some changes occurring in Oklahoma Medicaid in the affected areas which I think you will like. The standard prescription drug benefit of three prescriptions is being expanded to six prescriptions. (No more than three of these six prescriptions may be a brand name.) For those of you who are being served through a Medicaid Waiver program such as the Advantage Program or the DDS Waivers, it will be possible for you to receive as many as ten prescriptions. Again, prescriptions are limited to three of the ten which are brand name drugs. You have been limited to two physician visits per month if you are currently receiving Medicaid services through an HMO. Under the new system, you may receive as many as four physician visits per month. In the old system, you were limited to 15 days stay in the hospital per

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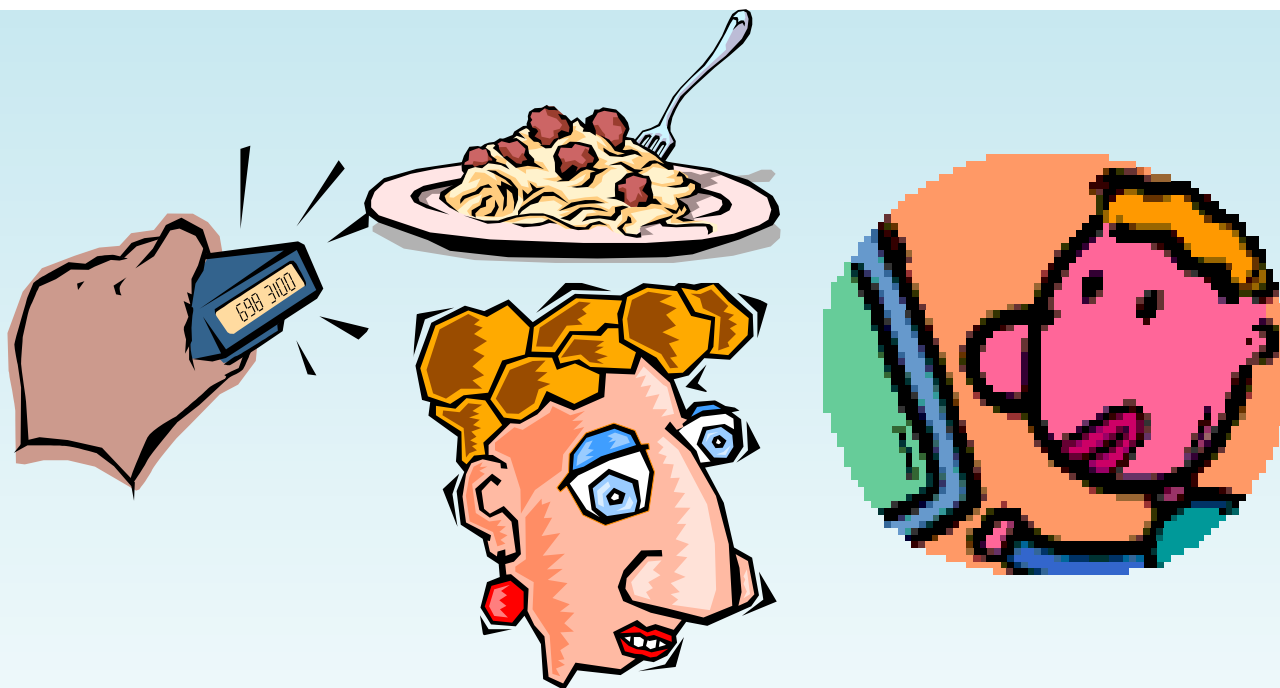
Oklahoma Medicaid will be transitioning from HMO's to a new system beginning January 1, 2004

MEDICAID TRANSITION (continued)

year. This will increase to up to 24 days depending on your need.

If you have a concern about the delivery of your services, call the OHCA at 405-522-7300 in the OKC metro or 800-522-0310 statewide. If the services involve mental health, ask to speak to someone in Behavioral Health. If the services involve some other area, ask to speak with care management staff. OHCA will be announcing enrollment fairs in the metro areas of the state in the near future to enroll people with a primary care physician under the new system. You may also stay in close touch with your Medicaid worker at your local office of the Department of Human Services. It is important to everyone that you do not have a disruption in your Medicaid services.

If you have questions, call 405-522-7300 in the metro or 800-522-0310. Ask to speak with someone in Behavioral Health if your questions involve mental health or ask to speak with care management staff if your questions involve other services.



You know you live in 2004 if you just called your son's beeper to let him know it's time to eat and he emails his response.

The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)

If you are a sophomore or junior with disabilities in a public school in Oklahoma, you have a wonderful opportunity to participate in five days of leadership and career development training. The Developmental Disabilities Council which is a state agency in Oklahoma, will use a portion of its federal grant to train Oklahoma youth with disabilities on how to be leaders and how to advocate for issues which affect them. The program is the Youth Leadership Forum, and it will be held for four nights and five days between June 21 and 25, 2004 at the University of Central Oklahoma. Applications will be taken through March 5, 2004. If you are interested, contact your school principal or vice principal and ask for an application. Each application will have the address in Oklahoma City where it is to be sent.

You may think, “how do I know whether to apply or not?” The answer to that is pretty simple. You must either be a sophomore or junior in high school. You must be a person with disabilities, and that disability may be either a physical or a mental disability. Finally, you must be a person who is goal directed and is thinking about what you want to do with your life.

This last qualifier is a little more difficult. Lots of us with disabilities have **low expectations** of ourselves. We are not used to making real decisions and planning for our lives. If we are going to be one of the successful 20 applicants or 4 alternates selected, we are going to have to convince someone that we are serious about taking control of our lives. Whether you apply for the Youth Leadership Forum or not, I would like for you as a person with disabilities to begin thinking about your life and how to take control of it. The application to the Youth Leadership Forum challenges us to do just this.

I just happen to have an application right before me. It asks for information about what you are good at, what your goals are after high school, what are your skills right now, and what you will need to

accomplish your goals. Hey folks, this is good stuff to think about. If we don't plan, I can guarantee that nothing will happen. Know yourself. Know where you are now, and know where you want to go in the future. Lathonya Shivers who is planning for the Youth Leadership Forum at the DD Council affirms, “Just because you have a disability does not mean you cannot be a leader.” We must learn that leadership and disability are not two totally different things. It is possible for us to make a contribution to others with the talents we have been given.

“Lathonya, we have been talking about the first ever Youth Leadership Forum in Oklahoma that the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council is sponsoring this year at the University of Central Oklahoma. Is this a one-time only event? I mean, if I were to apply this year and wanted to apply again next year, is that possible?”

(Lathonya Shivers of the DD Council)

“Remember that we said you need to be a sophomore or a junior to apply. You can attend the Youth Leadership Forum only one year, but you can apply more than one year. We are hoping that this will become an annual event.”

“Lathonya, how do you define the term ‘leader’?”

“A leader is a person who brings out the best in others.”

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**Just because you have
a disability does not
mean you cannot be a
leader.**

The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) (continued)

“I understand that you will choose 20 people for the YLF and 4 alternates. What happens if you get a successful applicant who needs some sort of physical accommodation or has another need related to their disability?”

“We intend to provide any accommodation or support service that the successful applicant needs.”

“What kinds of things are you going to be doing at the YLF?”

“We will have a Day at the Capitol to tour the State Capitol and meet elected representatives. Maybe we'll even have the chance to meet Governor Henry. We'll have a demonstration of assistive technology, and there'll be a dance at the end of the camp. But two of the things I think will be so good are that each successful applicant will have an adult mentor who they will meet, and each camper will with assistance complete their own Personal Leadership Plan.”

“Will the adult mentor also be a person with disabilities?”

“Yes. But we would like to go even a step further and pair the camper up with a mentor who has the same type disability as they have. Don't you think that would be a strong message to the camper?”

“It would tell me that I can be successful in life even if I have a disability.”

“You bet. And the Personal Leadership Plan that you complete during the camp is going to be your roadmap on how to reach your goals.”

“Do I get any kind of certificate for finishing the Youth Leadership Forum?”

(Lathonya Shivers of the DD Council)

“Yes, each student will get a certificate, and the DD Council will notify each student's school of their achievement.”

“Lathonya, if I want to apply, where do I go to get the application form?”

“Go to your principal or vice principal at the school you attend and ask for the application to the Youth Leadership Forum, or you may download a copy of the application from our website at www.okddc.org. You may also call our toll-free number 800-836-4470 requesting an application to the Youth Leadership Forum. We will accept your application through March 5, 2004. We will announce our selection of successful candidates by the end of April. Don't be discouraged if you are not selected the first year you try. We will notify you even if you are not selected, and we do this to thank you for your efforts and encourage you forward.”

Folks, Lathonya is saying the word ‘encourage’ here. It seems like to me that this whole Youth Leadership Forum thing is to encourage young people with disabilities to think about and plan for your future. It is easy to be discouraged thinking you cannot have a future because of your disability, but this is not true. Whether or not we are selected as one of the 20 successful applicants or the 4 alternates, all of us can begin to think about our future. Where will we live? What will we do? What do we want from life? It is important that we have expectations and that those expectations be realistic. I have asked Lathonya if I could go up to the University of Central Oklahoma and see what's going on at the Youth Leadership Forum. Maybe I'll have some more information for you in our July edition of *Will's Corner, Oklahoma*. That's it for now.

State of Oklahoma

www.youroklahoma.com

HANDICAPPED PARKING ENFORCEMENT (continued)

with disabilities themselves to enforce the law and educate the public about handicapped parking regulations.

...it hires people with disabilities themselves to enforce the law and educate the public about handicapped parking...

Dena Hunt is the program coordinator of this program in the Oklahoma City Police Department. She is a wealth of information on handicapped parking and its enforcement. Her Handicapped Parking Enforcement Specialists write tickets to vehicles with expired handicapped parking placards, vehicles parked illegally in the striped zone designated for lift-equipped vans, and vehicles which illegally display a permit.

This civilian cadre of law enforcement routinely enters any private property which maintains parking spaces designated for people with disabilities. They are looking for proper display of handicapped parking placards which are current and valid. This parking enforcement specialist may issue a valid parking citation or, in cases of a minor violation—a warning.

(Will)

“Dena, how many of these parking specialists do we have in Oklahoma City?”

“We have fifteen right now, and I am proud to say that fourteen of these employees have a disability themselves. The other employee has a family member with a disability.”

“What kinds of things do people want to consider who are using handicapped parking places?”

“Be sure you have a handicapped parking placard if you park in a place designated for people with disabilities. Just because you are just going to be in the store a minute is no excuse for parking illegally. If you do have a handicapped parking placard, be sure that it is current. Many people still think that handicapped parking placards are permanent. This is not true. Placards must be renewed every five years or, in the case of a temporary permit, every six months. Also it is important to validly display the permit. Sometimes the placard is in tatters or the person to whom the placard is issued is deceased.”

“Just because you are just going to be in the store a minute is no excuse for parking illegally.”

“That brings up a point I have always wondered about. Is the handicapped parking permit issued to the car or to the person?”

“It is always issued to the person, and that person with a disability must be with the car either as a passenger or driver when it is being used. The person who owns the permit must be outside of the vehicle utilizing the handicapped space. Handicapped parking is for the person with disabilities to be nearer the door.”

“Dena, what do I do if I do have a valid permit to park in handicapped parking and I have more than

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HANDICAPPED PARKING ENFORCEMENT (continued)

one car? Do I just transfer the placard from car to car?"

"You may do that, or you may request more than one placard so that you can have one in each vehicle you own. However, always make sure that you are in the vehicle using the placard either as a passenger or as a driver. It is not legal for Uncle Joe who does not have a permit to use your permit so he can have privileges to park in handicapped parking close to his destination."

"You mentioned earlier that parking specialists can write tickets on private property. Would you be more specific about that?"

"Our people can go to parking lots at malls, hospitals, schools, or shopping centers. We do not go into gated communities unless the security officer at the gate requests our presence. Again, remember that we operate within the city limits of Oklahoma City. We have no authority in surrounding municipalities. The police of that municipality have authority in a suburban location."

"You mentioned police, and I have been very much focusing on the *Handicapped Parking Enforcement Specialist*. Do Oklahoma City police officers also enforce handicapped parking violations?"

"Of course they do. Oklahoma City is spread over 621 square miles. Fifteen people could not possibly cover that kind of territory."

"Dena, does the *Handicapped Parking Enforcement Specialist* get paid?"

"Yes, but I must confess that the pay is very small considering the good they do, and they don't get mileage for their vehicle nor is their insurance paid. Surprisingly, people still want the job because they believe that handicapped parking is so important for people with disabilities."

Dena Hunt tells me that the fine for parking ille-

gally in handicapped parking spaces has recently been substantially increased in Oklahoma City. It was \$60 before August 1 of this year, and it is now \$150. If the ticket is not paid within the specified ten days, that fine increases to \$200. The city obviously believes that parking for individuals with disabilities is an important issue. Dena says that the new city ordinance is getting people's attention. Six hundred sixty-three handicapped parking tickets were written in October, 2003 which she says is fairly average for a month's period. However, Dena Hunt stresses that her job is not just to write tickets but to educate the public on the value of designated parking for people with disabilities. Making a place for those among us who have special needs makes for a better place for all of us to live. If you are interested in knowing more about handicapped parking in Oklahoma City or you are interested in creating a program in your city to empower people with disabilities to enforce parking violations, contact Dena Hunt at 405-297-3646. Wouldn't it be wonderful if other municipalities in Oklahoma hired people with disabilities to enforce handicapped parking in their respective cities.



**When the door of happiness closes,
another opens; but oftentimes we
look so long at the closed door that
we don't see the one which has been
opened for us.**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 17-18, 2004** Conference for persons in supported employment (OK APSE), Cox Convention Center, OKC, Contact David Horn for more information (405-325-0457).
- March 29-30, 2004** Governor's Conference on Developmental Disabilities, Metro Tech Okla. City, \$25 registration, contact Gail Russell 405-271-4500 for more information.
- March 30-31, 2004** Oklahoma Statewide Independent Living Council, contact Charlotte Bowen for more information (405-325-4916 or 888-325-2409).
- April 4-6 2004** Oklahoma Housing Conference, Marriott Hotel OKC, contact Jennifer Anderson for more information 405-843-3020. This conference is aimed at agencies, builders, and lending institutions.
- April 19, 2004** Disability Day at the Capitol, public invited 10-2pm State Capitol Building, booths from disability organizations, make an appointment to visit with your legislators.

If you have an event coming up relating to disability, let us know at 800-522-8224 and we'll help you publicize.



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returnable and energy efficient.
Give someone a hug today. You're
almost sure to get one right back.**