



Pennsylvania Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition
Opening Doors for Older Pennsylvanians

News You Can Use...

March 2013

Social Security Changes for 2013

Some major changes are going to be occurring for people who are receiving social security benefits. To stay on top of these changes, please take some time to familiarize yourself with the following information. As a result of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), Social Security beneficiaries began receiving a 1.7% increase in their Social Security checks in January 2013. The average monthly Social Security check increased from \$1,240 to \$1,261. The U.S. Department of Treasury will no longer be mailing paper checks for federal benefit payments (Social Security, SSI, Veterans Affairs, and the Railroad Retirement) and recipients are required by law to switch to an electronic payment option by March 1, 2013. (Since May 2011, new Social Security beneficiaries have been required to choose an electronic payment option.) Check users can switch to direct deposit or the Direct Express Debit MasterCard prepaid card. The debit card is primarily for unbanked beneficiaries and can be arranged by calling the GoDirect hotline at (800) 333-1795. For direct deposit, people can sign-up online <https://www.godirect.gov/gpw/index.gd> or at their bank or credit union. The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Go Direct® campaign provides more information at <https://www.godirect.gov/gpw/index.gd>.

Social Security offices have reduced their office hours. In November 2012, they began closing 30 minutes early everyday and in 2013, the offices close at noon every Wednesday. SSA is making more services available online. As of January 7, Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries can get a statement of their benefits (benefit verification letter) in addition to other personal information online. Before using this service, beneficiaries must first register for their own my Social Security <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount/>. Social Security has developed a new website http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/thirdparty.html?utm_source=January+2013+Observer&utm_campaign=Observer+January+2013&utm_medium=email for advocates, social service agencies, and other third parties, that contains a wealth of information on the expanded online services that are now available by using the my Social Security <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount/> portal. The Social Security Administration also updated its SSI < <http://www.ssa.gov/pgm/ssi.htm>.



Governor Corbett Signs Executive Order Creating Alzheimer's Disease Committee

There is a growing concern for people who have dementia, specifically Alzheimer's disease. It is an issue that leaves many people wondering whether or not there are enough resources available to properly address people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease. In response, Governor Corbett signed an Executive Order establishing the Pennsylvania Alzheimer's Disease State Planning Committee. This interdisciplinary group will consist of people who are affected by Alzheimer's the most from people who suffer from the disease, caregivers, researchers, nursing home employees, and so forth. To read more about the committee and the governor's proposal please visit <http://www.pahomecare.org/links/articles/governor-corbett-signs-executive-order-creating-alzheimers-disease-committee.html>

Co-Occurring Mental Disorders Such As PTSD And Panic Disorder Prompt The Depressed To Seek Earlier Treatment

People who suffer from Major Depressive Disorder usually take about eight years before they enter treatment. However, people who suffer from multiple mental illnesses are more likely to enter treatment sooner than others. Males were also more likely than women to delay entering treatment. To read more visit <http://www.ahrq.gov/research/feb13/0213RA25.htm>

Dementia Care and Reduction of Antipsychotic Drug Use in Nursing Homes

The Department of Health is focusing a grown effort to reduce the amount of antipsychotic drugs used in nursing homes, and especially in dementia patients. For a listing of links and resources regarding care of older adults and behavioral health medications use please visit

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/nursing_home_care/14152/dementia_care_and_reduction_of_antipsychotic_drug_use_in_nursing_homes/1328934

Who Pays for Long-Term Care in the U.S.

As people age, they often require long term care services. This often can occur in a nursing home, assisted living, or even in home services like hospice care. Of course with any type of medical care there is a cost associated with it. The most frequent questions that people usually ask are: What is the cost? Who is going to pay for it? Will Medicare or Medicaid help me? It is scary enough when needing long term care, but the worry of the financial breakdown can be hard to understand. To read more about the financial breakdown, please visit

http://www.thescanfoundation.org/sites/thescanfoundation.org/files/who_pays_for_ltc_us_jan_2013_fs.pdf



Mental Health Medications Vital for People on Medicare- Report:

People on Medicare who have bipolar disorder or schizophrenia are hospitalized less often if they maintain access to their medications when they hit the coverage gap-called the "donut hole"-for prescription drugs, according to a new study. Researchers looked at how much Medicare patients cost if they had plans that gave them coverage during the gap, if they had plans that provided coverage only for generic medications, and if they were on Medicare's low-income subsidy plan that would pay for all their medications in the gap with no co-pays or office visit fees by the patient. They looked at 87,747 patients with bipolar disorder and 92,523 with schizophrenia. Hospitalization rates, the researchers found, were highest for patients with no gap coverage. Medication costs, the report said, were higher for low-income patients, but their total medical costs were similar to other patients because they weren't hospitalized as often. (USA Today<<http://takeaction.mentalhealthamerica.net/site/R?i=JSAn4fT2HCQQI-oiwROQQq>>, 2/19/13)

Mental Health Services Still Lag at VA:

Mental health services at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) don't seem to be improving despite increases of nearly 40 percent in both staff and budget in the last 6 years, a congressional committee charged. Veterans still wait on average 50 days for an evaluation through the VA and the suicide rate for veterans increased for the third time in 4 years in 2012, members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee said. (Stars and Stripes<<http://takeaction.mentalhealthamerica.net/site/R?i=SxbKh-ZWPh6FdYwAqOZfDg>>, 2/13/13)

National Resource Center On LGBT Aging

The National Resource Center On LGBT Aging has just created a brand new website that specifically covers elder abuse for the LGBT community. Older adults who are gay and lesbian may experience elder abuse differently than the rest of the aging community. While it is true that any older adult can experience abuse, it can be experienced differently especially when it is fueled by hate or homophobia. For a complete list of resources, as well as fact sheets and publications regarding elder abuse in the LGBT community please visit the website at <http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/index.cfm?s=5>

Essential Health Benefits Standards: Ensuring Quality, Affordable Coverage

On February 20, 2013 groundbreaking work was established to promote consistency across plans as people research health insurance options. All insurance plans will cover the Ten Essential Health Benefits. This is to ensure equality across the board and to prevent discriminatory actions for certain medical conditions. To view the complete list of medical provisions covered under the Ten Essential Health Benefits, and specifically what it means for you please visit <http://cciio.cms.gov/resources/factsheets/ehb-2-20-2013.html>



Coalition News

“What it Means to Grow Old”

Join the Coalition’s 2012/13 training series “[What it Means to Grow Old](#),” now being offered at the following remaining sites across the state:

[April 24, 2013 in Luzerne County](#)

[May 15, 2013 in Clarion County](#)

[May 13, 2013 in Montgomery County](#)

Gambling and Older Adults

Funded by the PA Department of Aging, the Coalition is offering a half day training on Gambling and Older Adults. The remaining date is [June 14 in Dauphin County](#).

Substance and Medication Abuse/Misuse in Older Adults

Funded by the PA Department of Aging, the Coalition is offering a half day training on substance and medication abuse and misuse in older adults at sites across the Commonwealth. Remaining dates are as follows:

[June 12, 2013 in Westmoreland County](#)

[June 19, 2013 in Clarion County](#)

Online Suicide Prevention Training Now Available!

The Coalition was selected by the QPR Institute to provide online suicide prevention gatekeeper training at a discount. Regularly \$29.95, you can take the online gatekeeper course through us for only \$25.00 (or \$20.00 if more than four people register from one organization). **QPR Online** is hosted by actress and author, **Carrie Fisher**, and uses Web-based technology, compelling graphics, streamed video and interactive learning dynamics to teach:

- How to get help for yourself or learn more about preventing suicide
- The common causes of suicidal behavior
- The warning signs of suicide
- How to Question, Persuade and Refer someone who may be suicidal
- How to get help for someone in crisis

Email Rebecca@olderpa.org for more information or to get online access.

Did You Know??? Customized Behavioral Health and Aging Training is Available

Training topics Below is a link to the training topics we currently offer through the Coalition. We can come to your site and offer the trainings, or we also have regular training opportunities available that you will receive notice about as a member of the Coalition.

<http://www.olderpa.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1080869>

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