

CAP NEWSLETTER

Inside this issue: *ANN DEVELOPS HER PLAN*
(Part 3 of our ongoing series)

ANN DEVELOPS HER PLAN 1
OVR/BBVS SCHOLARSHIP POLICY 2
CAP WELCOMES ADVOCATE LEE LIPPI 3
CALENDAR OF EVENTS 4

By Margaret Passio McKenna & Jennie Philip

Anne had not heard from her counselor in awhile so she decided it would be a good idea to give her a call. After speaking with her counselor they set up a meeting to discuss Anne’s vocational goals and develop her plan.

During the meeting Anne’s counselor asked her what she would like to do as a vocational goal. Anne replied that she has always had an interest in working with children and believes this would be a good match for her strengths and limits. The counselor replied, “Would you like to become a teacher’s aide or a childcare worker?” Anne stated that she would like to be a teacher and not an assistant. Anne believes that because her communication and organizational skills are one of her strengths, combined with her love for children, teacher would be the perfect fit. The counselor was concerned that Anne might not be able to handle the daily stresses of being a teacher because of her disability. Anne explained that she has volunteered at her local elementary school and has gotten positive feedback from the teachers at the school. The counselor suggested that Anne provide verification from her treating physician that this type of work would be consistent with her limits. Before they parted the counselor suggested that Anne investigate different colleges that provide the necessary training for her to be certified as a teacher. After she gets both pieces of information they will develop her plan.

Anne wanted to know exactly what is supposed to be

included in her plan and if this is something that could be changed once it is written. The counselor briefly described some of the items that need to be spelled out on her Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). An IPE must contain:

1. Your chosen vocational goal which should be consistent with your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests
2. This information determines the specific VR services that you will need to achieve this goal
3. The counselor then discusses with the client the different choices of providers who are available as resources for the client (i.e. training facilities and other vendors)
4. Evaluative process that is agreed upon to measure the achievement and progress the client is making toward their goal
5. The responsibilities of both the client and the counselor should be listed
6. Any comparable benefits which the client would be required to explore and use should be listed (i.e. health insurance and financial aid), and;

Any projected post employment services

Anne asked, “What will happen if I do not agree with some of the things you put on my plan?” The counselor informed Anne that she does not have to sign the IPE if she does not agree with it. She also mentioned that if she has any concerns about the plan to discuss them with her or call CAP. The counselor also added, “if your needs change you can amend your IPE.”

4 weeks later...

Anne and her counselor met again to develop her IPE. Anne brought a letter from her doctor stating that employment as a teacher would be within her capabilities. She also researched some colleges in the area that she would be interested in attending. The counselor asked her if she had a listing of those and if she found out the requirements to become certified as a teacher. Anne did bring a list of schools and the certification information. The counselor asked Anne how she went about getting the certification information. Anne stated that she went to the school that she used to volunteer at and asked a couple of teachers’ about the certification process. They referred her to the Department of Education’s website that listed the specific information she needed to become a certified teacher. The counselor informed Anne that as part of her responsibility to search out comparable benefits in her plan she will need to apply for financial aid. Anne has no problem with this and even had thought about contacting the schools’ financial aid office to see if they offer any other financial assistance. The counselor suggested to Anne that she narrow down her choice of school by finding out more specific information regarding cost, financial aid, location and help with job placement. It will also be a good idea to apply to each school she is interested in attending along with the applications for financial aid. After Anne has more information she will contact her counselor so they could meet again to sign on the dotted line.

CAP CHALLENGES OVR/BBVS SCHOLARSHIP POLICY

By Attorney Jamie C. Ray



Under current OVR/BBVS policy, a post-secondary student who receives a scholarship or scholastic award based upon academic merit may find that this award is actually used against her in calculating the amount of financial support that vocational rehabilitation will contribute toward her education. This is because vocational rehabilitation is viewing these awards as *comparable benefits* and therefore, substituting them for financial support that would otherwise be provided by

OVR or BBVS. As a result, students with disabilities who receive these awards are often denied the opportunity to attend a college that is consistent with their informed choice.

Comparable benefits are benefits other than those that may be provided by OVR/BBVS. They can be viewed as an alternative source of a particular vocational rehabilitation service. While the Rehabilitation Act allows these kinds of benefits to be considered in some instances, it specifically says that merit scholarships are *not* comparable

benefits. On May 28, 2004, CAP advised OVR that this policy violates the Rehabilitation Act and demanded that it be stopped immediately.

If you or someone you know has been negatively impacted by this policy, please contact us at (215) 557-7112, or toll free at 1-888-745-2357 (voice/TTY). Your calls are important to us! If we hear from you, we can help to ensure that vocational rehabilitation is open and responsive to your needs as a person with a disability!

CAP WELCOMES ADVOCATE LEE LIPPI



Effective May 1, 2004, Advocate Lee Lippi joined the CAP staff. Lee replaces Jennie Philip, who has moved on to pursue her law school aspirations. CAP is pleased to announce that Lee will be working directly from our **new Harrisburg office location**. Our Harrisburg office is lo-

cated at **2 N. Second Street, Suite 100, Harrisburg, PA 17101**. Lee can be reached in Harrisburg by phone at **(717) 364-1733 or 1-888-972-7452 (TDD)**.

Lee recently retired from the City of Harrisburg where he was the Assistant Director of Neighborhood

Services. Lee has over twenty years of managerial experience, and is actively involved in his community. We welcome Lee, and invite you to contact him in our Harrisburg office, if you have questions about vocational rehabilitation!

CAREERLINK ACCESSIBILITY: WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



By Attorney Jamie C. Ray

Did you know that Pennsylvania has more than 90 one-stop employment centers across the state? These centers are called Careerlinks. Did you know that by visiting one of these centers in your community you can:

- Register for services

including access to a jobs database and notification of available jobs in your community;

- Send your resume out on-line;
- Meet prospective employers at job fairs;
- Participate in resume writing, interviewing, and

other workshops and trainings;

- Apply for unemployment benefits by phone, and;
- Apply for and receive vocational rehabilitation services, just to name a few!

Under a federal law called the Rehabilitation

Continued from Page 2

Act, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Careerlinks must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Accessibility means more than simply allowing a person with a disability a physically accessible way

to get inside. Careerlinks must provide accessible services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, and those who are blind or have vision impairments too. TTYs or telephones for the deaf, and computers with voice

activated or other accessible software are just a couple of examples.

If you would like more information about Careerlinks, or if you are a person with a disability and you have recently visited



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council Meeting, Philadelphia, PA**
June 9, 2004, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
- **Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council Public Forum, Philadelphia, PA**
June 9, 2004, 4pm – 6pm
- **State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Meeting, Johnstown, PA**
June 16, 2004, 9:30 am – 12 noon
- **Statewide Independent Living Council Meeting, Harrisburg, PA**
June 21, 2004, 9:30 am – 5pm, and June 22, 2004, 9:30 am – 12 noon.

* For additional information on these events, please contact us.

Contacting the Pennsylvania Client Assistance Program

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