

# The LINK

*Changing Lives.  
Changing Communities.*

**A Publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan**

## **Mental Health Parity Matters: It is Time to End Insurance Discrimination Against Mental Health Disabilities!**

Historically, many health insurance companies have offered different mental health benefits compared to those available for physical conditions. In Michigan, employers of under 50 people do not have to offer plans that have equitable (fair) coverage for both mental and physical health conditions.

Senator Tonya Schuitmaker has introduced Senate Bill 204, which would level the playing field in which co-payments, maximums, and caps for mental health care, including treatments for autism, could not impose a greater financial burden on people than the costs for physical health care.

To learn more about SB 204, go to <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2013-2014/billintroduced/Senate/pdf/2013-SIB-0204.pdf> or contact Senator Schuitmaker at (517) 373-0793.

## **Stamp Out Stigma — Rally at the State Capitol!**

**Date:** May 8, 2013  
**Time:** 12:00 noon walk; rally from 1:30 - 3:00 pm  
**Where:** State Capitol, Lansing, Michigan  
**What:** 9th Annual Walk-a-Mile/Mental Health Matters Rally



Advocates with mental illness and developmental disabilities and their allies from all over Michigan will rally at the State Capitol building to help end the stigma of mental health disabilities. Advocates will speak out about the importance of mental health parity laws, more funding for mental health services, and other important issues. Your voice is needed!

Your local Community Mental Health organization should have information about this rally. You may also contact Disability Network Southwest Michigan for more details. Ask for Michele (269) 345-1516 or Joanne (269) 982-7761.

*We educate and connect people with disabilities to resources while advocating social change.*

*This issue is available in alternative format upon request.*

[www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org)

**Disability Network is the first stop for people with disabilities and their families in Southwest Michigan.**

## Take this Self-Empowerment Step: Write an Advance Directive for Mental Health Care

*(Also known as a Psychiatric Advance Directive)*

It is common for doctor's offices and hospitals to ask patients to fill out forms called Advance Directives. These forms are a set of written instructions that a person gives that specify what actions should be taken for their health if they are no longer able to make decisions due to illness or incapacity. They most often focus on physical health care and end of life decisions.

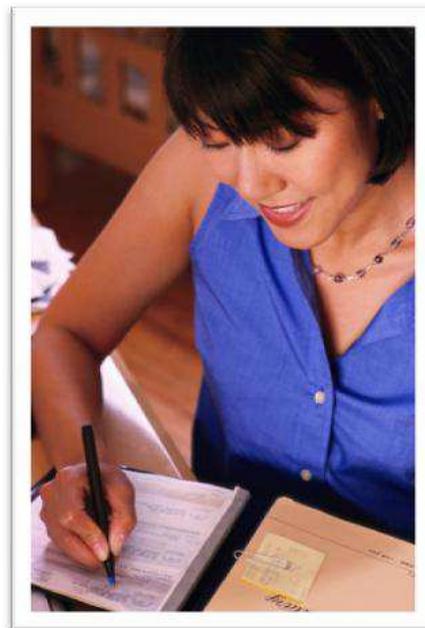
An **advance directive for mental health care**, also known as a durable power of attorney for mental health care, is a document in which you appoint another individual to make mental health decisions for you in the future, should you lose the ability to make decisions for yourself.

Advance directives can specify the treatment a person wishes to receive, such as which medications they prefer, treatments they do not wish to have or ways in which treatment may be administered (such as refusing shots and choosing pills). It also allows them to make other specifications, such as who they would like to be allowed to visit them in hospital, what arrangements they want for their children or for pets, and any financial arrangements that are need (such as how their bills should be paid). What is included in an advance directive is entirely up to the person who creates it.

You can search the **Michigan Department of Community Health** website for the link to a very basic form to use at [www.michigan.gov/mdch](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch).

There is a wonderfully complete and easy-to-use form from the **Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law** at [www.bazelon.org](http://www.bazelon.org).

If you do not have access to a computer, call Disability Network at (269) 345-1516 x116 and we can help you get a copy of one of these advance directives.



### DISABILITY NETWORK VOLUNTEER WINS PRESTIGIOUS COMMUNITY AWARD



Sharon DeHaan was honored as the Senior Volunteer of the Year at the April 2013 Annual STAR Awards in Kalamazoo.

Sharon was recognized for her 20 year volunteer commitment to Disability Network Southwest Michigan. If you've ever called Disability Network, chances are you've spoken to Sharon. She has been a volunteer receptionist for many years.

Sharon has also been a Board Member, travelled to Lansing to advocate for important disability issues, facilitated support groups, led advocacy teams, and much more.

**Congratulations, Sharon, and many thanks  
from Disability Network Southwest Michigan!**

Sign up to receive this newsletter by e-mail! Contact Michele at [mcgowenm@dnswm.org](mailto:mcgowenm@dnswm.org) or (877) 674-5209.

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES

Assistive Devices can help you increase or maintain your independence. Assistive technology can help people who have mental health disabilities cope with daily challenges such as organization, remembering key dates or events, or calming techniques.



Do you need help finding or paying for assistive technology? Disability Network is here to help! Our knowledgeable staff can point you toward resources to meet your needs. We are also an application site for the Michigan Assistive Technology Loan Fund (ATLF).

Visit [www.michiganloanfunds.org](http://www.michiganloanfunds.org) or call Lewis at (269) 345-1516 for details.

*Free Webinar from Michigan Alliance for Families:*

## WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION

How do students with emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges access needed services and supports at school? Find out on this webinar!

**Date:** Thursday, May 23, 2013

**Time:** 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm

**Register at:** [www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org)

Handouts are posted one week before the webinar date. Questions? Email [info@michiganallianceforfamilies.org](mailto:info@michiganallianceforfamilies.org)



## OUR RAMP UP PROGRAM IS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Kalamazoo County residents in need of a ramp to remain safe and independent are encouraged to call us at (269) 345-1516 and ask for Karen at extension 115.

## Assistive Technology Demonstration Project Housed at Our Berrien/Cass Office

We are excited to announce the launch of the Assistive Technology Demonstration Project in the southwest corner of our service area.

This project is designed to show people some of the inexpensive and ingenious tools and gadgets out there that can make it easier to do things. These tools and gadgets are called **Assistive Technology**, sometimes abbreviated as **AT**.



We'll show (and you can try) dozens of simple, low-cost tools for the kitchen, bathroom, and every area of life!

- ▶ Got a group of coworkers or pals? We can come to groups of 16 or more for an interactive, informative show-and-tell.
- ▶ Are you a person with a disability that would like to try out some AT? Give us a call and we can set up a time to come to you with some cool AT options so you can check out some tools on your own

If you would like more information about this project, contact Joanne Johnson at (269) 982-7761 or [johnsonj@dnswm.org](mailto:johnsonj@dnswm.org) for more information.

# 2013 Advocacy Academy Internship Applications are Available

Applications are now being accepted for Summer 2013 Advocacy Academy Internships in our Berrien County and Kalamazoo County locations.

These paid internships are a six week, 12-hour per week small group experience where participants will learn about the disability rights movement and the skills of advocacy. You will also research, choose and carry out a disability advocacy project in your local community!

We are seeking applicants that:

- ▶ Are between 16 – 29 years of age
- ▶ Have a disability
- ▶ Are able to commit to the entire 6 week internship
- ▶ Are motivated to increase their leadership skills

More information, including the full application, can be found on our website [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org). Contact Miranda Grunwell at (269) 345-1516 if you have questions.



*2012 Advocacy Academy Interns*

**BARRY ♦ BERRIEN ♦ BRANCH ♦ CALHOUN ♦ CASS ♦ KALAMAZOO ♦ ST. JOSEPH ♦ VAN BUREN**



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