

# The LINK



A publication of Disability Network Southwest Michigan

## Alternatives to Guardianship

Guardianship is the legal court proceeding which grants one person (the guardian) power to make legal decisions for another (the ward), thereby removing the right of decision-making from the ward. Removing a person's rights should only be done when absolutely necessary.

Often the decision to seek guardianship is made for minors with disabilities who are approaching adulthood or elderly persons who have acquired a disability as they've aged. In both cases, the family is generally acting from genuine concern for their loved one; however, removing someone's rights makes them vulnerable and powerless. Most people with a disability are able to take care of their own lives without a guardian.

Creating a person-centered plan for people who may need assistance in decision-making is a good way to prepare everyone—the person with a disability and the family—for the next stage in their lives. This might include executing documents such as a Release of Information, Advocacy Authorization or a limited Power of

Attorney which will allow someone else to be involved in decision-making only to the degree necessary without stripping the person of their legal rights.

Supported Decision-Making is a process in which guidance and advice are given to a person in making their own decisions. This may involve any number of people involved in the person's life providing input.

An experienced attorney in the field can help families explore other options and make a more informed decision.

Dohn Hoyle, a respected leader in the disability rights movement, has been advocating for alternatives to guardianship for more than 30 years. In his paper, *Reflections on Autonomy*, Hoyle states, "It is not permissible to remove persons' rights for the crime of having a disability or the crime of aging and gaining disabilities. Our status as a person or a citizen shouldn't change due to either circumstance. We should not be relegated to losing our "inalienable rights."



For more information and resources regarding alternatives to guardianship, visit [www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/guardianship](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/guardianship).

You can learn more about alternatives to guardianship at the upcoming presentation by Dohn Hoyle. More details inside.

517 E. Crosstown Parkway  
Kalamazoo, MI 49001  
(269) 345-1516

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

2900 Lakeview Avenue  
St. Joseph, MI 49085  
(269) 985-0111

# October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month!

The 2019 National Disability Awareness Month theme is “The Right Talent, Right Now.” The theme emphasizes the essential role that people with disabilities play in America’s economic success, especially in an era when low unemployment and global competition are creating a high demand for skilled talent. U.S. Secretary of Labor, Alexander Acosta, said, “Every day, individuals with disabilities add significant value and talent to our workforce and economy. Individuals with disabilities offer employers diverse perspectives on how to tackle challenges and achieve success. Individuals with disabilities have the right talent, right now.”

## EMPLOYMENT RELATED WORKSHOPS

### Employee Disclosure:

#### What to do when an employee discloses a disability

This workshop is designed to help employers understand their responsibilities when an employee discloses a disability. Discussion topics will include employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, under what conditions an employee must disclose a disability, why they may not want to, and how to determine what a “reasonable accommodation” in the workplace is.

This event is free and open to the public. Please register online at [bit.ly/EmployeeDisclosure2019](http://bit.ly/EmployeeDisclosure2019) or contact Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120.

**St. Joseph: Tuesday, October 29 9:00 – 10:30 AM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue

**Kalamazoo: Wednesday, October 30 9:00 – 10:30 AM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway



### A Future that Includes Employment:

What does your future hold? Possibly a job! This workshop is an overview of topics for people with disabilities to think about when considering employment. The information presented will assist in making a plan and understanding what to expect when preparing for employment.

This event is free and open to the public. To register for this event, visit Michigan Alliance for Families website at: [www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/upcoming-events](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/upcoming-events) or call (269) 364-6317. Let them know if you need an accommodation to participate.

**Kalamazoo: Wednesday, November 13 2:30 – 4:30 PM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

This workshop is being co-sponsored by Disability Network Southwest Michigan and Michigan Alliance for Families.

Disability Network Southwest Michigan has a fragrance-free policy. For the well-being of those with scent sensitivities, please do not wear scented products when visiting our office or attending events.

## Back to School for our Pre-ETS staff!

Everyone is back to school, including our Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) staff. Disability Network Southwest Michigan offers a number of programs centered on providing valuable training and experience to youth and young adults with disabilities, whether they are transitioning to employment or continuing their education.

Moving from a familiar high school environment to a post-secondary or trade school can bring a new set of expectations and stresses. We work with students to help them learn how to ask for accommodations and establish routines that will make their school experience successful.

We also offer school-to-work training programs for young adults with disabilities in both group and individual settings within schools. The curriculum focuses on pre-employment transition services aimed at getting students ready to enter the working world; topics include career exploration, employment soft skills, self-advocacy and financial literacy & budgeting.



*Disability Network Pre-ETS staff. (front row: Hank Bostic, Anne Kooy, Allison Leece, Jackie Curtis; back row: Holly Baker, Mary Fortney, Adam LaBine.)*

## Meet Our Newest Staff Members



### **Sarah Stoll**

Sarah is an Information & Referral Specialist in our Kalamazoo office. She has a wealth of knowledge of the services available throughout our region and is experienced with advocating for people with disabilities. We are excited to have Sarah join our I&R team and assist customers in connecting with the resources and services they need.



### **Adam LaBine**

Adam is working as an Independent Living Specialist in our Kalamazoo office. He has worked most recently at the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons and at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center. Adam is a native Michigander who grew up in the Niles area and went to college at Western Michigan University.

## Rethinking Guardianship With Dohn Hoyle

Dohn Hoyle is a respected leader and innovator in the disability rights movement and a long-time advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

Join us for this important presentation on guardianship from a historical perspective and learn more about alternatives to guardianship.

- How medical and financial decisions can be handled
- Power of attorney
- Self-determination
- Supported decision making
- Supporting students as they transition to adulthood

This workshop is free and open to the public. Please register in advance and let them know if you need an accommodation attend.

Thursday, November 7 | Sign In: 5:00 PM | Program: 5:30 - 8:30 PM

St. Joseph County ISD | 62445 Shimmel Road, Centerville, MI

**Registration:** To register for this event, visit Michigan Alliance for Families website at: [www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/upcoming-events](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/upcoming-events) or call (269) 364-6317.

This presentation is being co-sponsored by Disability Network Southwest Michigan, Michigan Alliance for Families and the St. Joseph County ISD.



### FROM SOCIAL SECURITY

## What is the Student Earned Income Exclusion?

The Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE) is a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) work incentive that allows certain individuals with disabilities who are under age 22 and regularly attending school to exclude a specified amount of gross earned income per month up to a maximum annual exclusion. The Student Earned Income Exclusion decreases the amount of countable earned income so it allows eligible SSI recipients to keep more of their SSI check when they work. In many cases, the SEIE allows students to test their ability to work without having any reduction in their monthly SSI check.

Currently, an SSI recipient may qualify for this income exclusion as long as he or she is under age 22 and a student regularly attending school, college, or training designed to prepare him or her for a paying job.

If you have questions or want to know more about the SEIE, contact the Ticket To Work help line at 866-968-7842.



# KNOWvember is Almost Here

We are putting the “know” in November! Follow us on Facebook to learn interesting facts about disability history, culture and the disability rights movement. We’ll do a couple of **KNOWvember** posts each week to keep you in the know. Find us on Facebook by searching: [@DNSWM](#).

If you want to learn even more, attend our Rise Up workshop in several locations throughout the **KNOWvember**. See details below.



## WORKSHOP

### Rise Up: Disability Resistance, History & Pride!

Many of us in the disability community are unaware of the depth of our culture and history and feel shame and stigma instead of pride around our disability identities. Family, friends and human service professionals also have a lack of knowledge of disability history and struggle to find ways to support our journey to disability pride.

**Let’s change that!**

Join us for discussion and activities that promote knowledge of disability history and support the journey to disability pride.



Select the location and date that works best for you. Please pre-register online at [bit.ly/dnswmRiseUp2019](http://bit.ly/dnswmRiseUp2019) or contact Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120. Let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.

**Kalamazoo:** Friday, November 15      9:30 – 11:30 AM  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

**Lawrence:** Wednesday, November 20      9:30 – 11:30 AM  
Van Buren ISD Conference Center | 490 S. Paw Paw Street

**St. Joseph:** Thursday, November 21      9:30 – 11:30 AM  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue

## Our Publications:

**The LINK** is our quarterly newsletter, available in print or emailed in electronic format and is available in alternative format upon request.

**Disability Digest** is a monthly e-publication focused on the Disability Rights Movement and upcoming Disability Network happenings. Available in electronic format only.

You can sign up online for our publications at [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org); or contact Dale at [abbott@dnswm.org](mailto:abbott@dnswm.org) or (269) 345-1516 x123. Current and past issues of our publications are available on our website at [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org).





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517 E Crosstown Parkway  
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[www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org)



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## It's Election Season

**Are you registered to vote?  
Know where to vote?**

You can find many answers to your polling questions on the Secretary of State's website:

[www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)

If you need help completing your voter registration, stop by or call our Information & Referral department. We are here to help!



**Support Our Work:** You can help support the work we do with a tax-deductible donation to Disability Network. Visit our website to donate [online](#) or call Kristen at (269) 345-1516 x119.