

New Horizons

Housing | nat Supports Independence



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Congressman Chris Smith leads on Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAAID) disaster response bill

Government Report and Bipartisan Legislation Call for More Action on Disaster Preparedness

Washington, Jun 11, 2019 -



Following a newly released report on disaster response from the nonpartisan Government and Accountability Office (GAO), U.S. Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ-4) and Jim Langevin (D-RI-2) introduced legislation to help Americans before, during and after natural disasters strike.

The Langevin-Smith Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAAID) for Disasters Act would help with the development of emergency and disaster preparedness plans to address the unique needs of older Americans and people with disabilities.

U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) was the prime author of REAAID and introduced the Senate version with Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME); they are the ranking member and chairman respectively of the Special Committee on Aging. Casey and U.S. Representative Donna Shalala (D-FL-27) also introduced the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA) into both chambers. DRMA Medicaid-eligible people with disabilities who are displaced due to natural disasters are guaranteed continued access to Medicaid health care and supported services.

"National disasters strike indiscriminately, and a better informed, coordinated and inclusive federal response is needed to ensure that everyone—especially the elderly and people with disabilities—has access to essential recovery and support systems," said Rep. Chris Smith. "The National Commission envisioned by the REAAID Act will address the gaps in our federal response programs and give vulnerable populations a stronger voice to promote communication, rescue, housing and other provisional activities that are truly inclusive of special needs and thus more effective for all."

"Inadequate planning for disasters can mean life or death, so it is critically important that every community is prepared to meet the needs of all citizens—including older adults and people with disabilities—before, during and after a disaster strikes," said Senator Casey. "We must ensure that seniors and people with disabilities are active participants in developing emergency preparedness plans that will keep them safe."

Project Freedom's Norman A. Smith has worked with Rep. Smith on emergency preparedness issues affecting people with disabilities since Hurricane Katrina. Norman spoke during the introduction press conference as co-chair of the NJ Statewide Independent Living Council saying in part: "Without this legislation, people with disabilities will continue to die in and after disasters in far greater numbers than need be. We need to stop these needless deaths now."

Norman's full statement can be read within.

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“My Two Cents”

By *Tim Doherty, Executive Director*



As some of you know, many of our tenants receive Personal care attendant services from outside agencies. These people are generally known as “home healthcare attendants” who help disabled people with their daily needs-- be it cooking, cleaning or personal care. In the past, the State of New Jersey has funded these services through a contract with an outside service agency providing a complete program to help that individual live an independent life-style. This home care service allowed the individual to live within the community and stay out of more expensive and constraining nursing home alternatives.

However, now with the changes under the Community Care Waiver, funding for these kinds of services are combined with State and now Federal funds under Medicaid and Medicare programs. This new arrangement is known as “Fee for Service” and is very similar to the process for billing of doctor services. It is basically a “time and material” contract for service for which agencies bill only on the completion of time sheets and only for billable hours. Only those services covered under this process qualify for funding and each individual stands on their own, when it comes to receiving hours of service.

In previous times, agencies would combine hours for individuals, for which they would be able to care for more than one person under a single contract, such that all clients would be able to access the hours that they needed. This arrangement allowed for greater flexibility on the part of the service agencies to service more clients and provide a greater measure of coverage.

Now however, as the State is changing over to this new “Fee for Service” methodology, each client is being re-evaluated using a tool called the NJ Cat. This process is supposed to measure the person’s disability, and then prescribe the required hours for which that person needs to continue to live independently. This however is where the train runs off the tracks.

The NJ Cat is just a series of questions, asked of the client, about their ability to do certain tasks. Usually filled out by the clients support Broker and or Agency staff, this evaluation is then reviewed by DDD, from which a decision is made as to the number of hours a person requires. For some folks it has resulted in more hours, however for most it seems that it is resulting in less hours, which will ultimately have an impact on a person’s independence. This is because, just like with any educational test, it cannot define the “whole “ of a person, or capture their complete life condition. This test doesn’t take into consideration all the previous experience former agencies staff may have in dealing with their clients needs. There are also, many things which clients can perform somewhat independently as long as they have assistance, but could never do if solely on their own. As a result, the budgets for many individuals who have been receiving services in the past, are being cut back, based upon only one evaluation tool. This is now impacting the quality of life for many individuals who had been previously living independently.

From Norman's Desk



Statement of Support for Inclusive Emergency Planning
and Support Services
From Norman A. Smith, Chair
New Jersey Statewide Independent Living Council June 10, 2019

Greetings from New Jersey! It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of the New Jersey Statewide Independent living Council in support of these two bills being introduced today.

Twenty years ago the NJ Office of Emergency Management started outreach to people with disabilities. In those 20 years, emergency planning involving people with disabilities has evolved to where the idea is not novel or unusual, but the implementation and the practice varies greatly state by state. In my state, for example, some counties are very inclusive and supportive while others are still learning what inclusive means in practice.

The REAADI in Disasters Act will change this by focusing a bright national spotlight on the issue through funding research and by creating a national commission with people with disabilities, older adults, experts on disability inclusive emergency management and government and community stakeholders to provide guidance on disability and aging issues before, during and after disaster.

After New Jersey was hit by Superstorm Sandy, many of my colleagues from our 11 Centers for Independent Living worked in disaster recovery centers assisting those with disabilities. One of the biggest issues they dealt with was the fear of people with disabilities being forced into institutions because they lost their homes.

The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act will prevent this in several ways, but the one that I like to highlight is funding of grant to help states develop an emergency response corps to provide home and community-based services to keep people living in the community. New Jersey has made attempts to address this issue, and a planning grant will make this happen.

Without this legislation, people with disabilities will continue to die in and after disasters in far greater numbers than need be. We need to stop these needless deaths now.

Thank you

Norman A. Smith,

Follow me on Twitter @normansmith02



Federal Proposal Would Ease Path From Special Ed To College

by Michelle Diamant | Reprinted from Disability Scoop / June 4, 2019



Lawmakers are looking to make it easier for students with disabilities to transition to college.

Legislation introduced by a bipartisan group of senators late last month would ensure that individuals with disabilities have the information they need to choose the right school and that they don't have to go through too many extra steps to access supports once they get there.

The bill known as the Respond, Innovate, Succeed and Empower, or RISE, Act, S.1585, spells out that students who already have documentation of a disability can continue to use that same documentation when they enter higher education. If passed, the measure would free individuals who have received special education services from having to undergo additional diagnostic testing, lawmakers said.

"The RISE Act will help eliminate unnecessary barriers for students with disabilities and ease their transition to higher education," said U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., the bill's sponsor. "No student with a documented disability should have to jump through extra hoops or incur extra costs to prove their disability."

The legislation, which would amend the Higher Education Act, would also increase transparency of school policies and data so that students with disabilities can best identify a college that meets their needs. And, the bill calls for the federal government to provide technical assistance to guide colleges and universities on how to serve those with disabilities.

In addition to Casey, the RISE Act was introduced by Sens. Todd Young, R-Ind., Bill Cassidy, R-La., and Maggie Hassan, D-N.H.

Sharon Shine at Sharon School Gets A Lesson

Project Freedom Robbinsville was recently invited to Sharon Grammar School to present some information about Project Freedom at their Sharon Shine program. Mary Edmondson, an office secretary in Robbinsville, volunteered to do a presentation about why our apartments are needed to help people with physical disabilities have accessibility. In order to make this more understandable to the young children, she thought about creating a coloring book that the students could take home and color. Together with Judy Wilkinson, a booklet was produced that she was able to hand out at the program. If anyone is interested in receiving copies of the booklet, please contact Mary at 609-448-2998.



Students made these flowers for our tenants





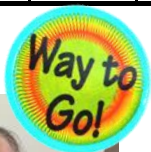
Hamilton Happenings

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
3-Jul	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
8-Jul	Mon	"Day-Rec Program"	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
15-Jul	Mon	"Day-Rec Program"	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
22-Jul	Mon	"Day-Rec Program"	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
29-Jul	Tue	"Day-Rec Program"	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM



Lawrence Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
3-Jul	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
3-Jul	Wed	Massages	Sign up time
11-Jul	Thur	Tenant CPR training	3-4 pm
17-Jul	Wed	Nutrition	7 pm
23-Jul	Tue	Adult Coloring	2-4 pm



Becky is proudly showing off 3 metals won this past weekend at the Special Olympics. She brought home a silver metal and TWO GOLD! Her silver metal was for the Softball throw. Her 4x100 relay team brought home the gold and Becky crushed her individual 100 meter dash earning herself the GOLD! We are so proud of Becky and everyone who participated in the Special Olympics.



Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
3-Jul	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
Check bulletin board for additional recreation programs to be added			



Hopewell Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
2-Jul	Tues	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	1:15 PM to 3:30 PM
9-Jul	Tues	Renters Insurance Presentation by Pennington Insurance Agency	1:30 PM
12-Jul	Fri	Mercer Home Health Hosting Pokeno	3:00 PM
26-Jul	Fri	Tenant Family Movie/Game Day	1:30 PM

Flying Tips for Wheelchair Users, From Wheelchair Users

By Barbara and Jim Twardowski Reprinted from The New York Times / March 8, 2019

Air travel can cause a great deal of apprehension for both seasoned and novice travelers. If you're taking that flight with a wheelchair — that's an added level of stress. People often say that traveling is all about the journey and not the destination, but for wheelchair users, navigating air travel is often more of an adventure than they would like. Rolling through large crowded airports, hauling luggage, waiting in long lines, receiving a pat down, being strapped into a tiny aisle chair and then sitting for hours unable to move is exhausting. We've learned that the best way to circumvent some of the inevitable issues is to know what to expect, and prepare accordingly.

What to remember before you book

Before clicking the purchase button, even seasoned travelers should review the airline's policies regarding passengers with disabilities. John Morris, a triple amputee who has flown more than 850,000 miles in the past five years, writes about accessibility for his website **WheelchairTravel**. He discovered, after reading AirAsia's website, that he cannot fly with the airline because his battery-operated wheelchair weighs more than the airline allows.

When choosing a seat, Mr. Morris prefers a window to avoid being crawled over by other passengers. Other travelers, particularly those who cannot transfer from a wheelchair to their seat independently, may prefer the aisle seat. The roomier bulkhead seating might be an option for some, just be aware the armrests do not raise.

Also, keep in mind that wheelchair users exit the aircraft last. The deplaning process can easily take 25 minutes or more, so when booking a connecting flight, always allow ample time. Mr. Morris recommends a minimum of 90 minutes. Considering that quick layover might be your only opportunity to visit a restroom, those extra few minutes are precious.



After booking your flight, contact the airline at least 48 hours in advance of departure and let them know you will need special assistance. If you must change airlines, which can be common on international flights, be sure to notify them, too.

Avoid wheelchair damage

"The way the airlines treat our equipment causes some wheelchair users to not travel at all, and that breaks my heart," said Sylvia Longmire, a former U.S. Air Force officer who travels the world solo on her small power wheelchair. Ms. Longmire also writes Spin the Globe, an accessible travel website. You can help prevent wheelchair damage by attaching written instructions explaining how to operate your chair, as well as how it folds and tilts. Before turning a wheelchair over to airport personnel, take off any removable parts such as the seat cushion, removable wheels and footrests. These items may be carried on the plane and do not count as baggage.

For your own baggage, carry as little luggage as possible. The airline's curbside baggage check can be helpful if available, or consider purchasing a rolling suitcase designed to attach to a wheelchair. Finally, always carefully inspect your wheelchair for damage when it's returned to you and immediately notify the airline if there is a problem. Document any damage you find with photos that you can send to the airline, as well to file a compensation claim.

How to navigate bathroom concerns

Many domestic flights are on single-aisle planes which rarely have accessible bathrooms onboard. Even though wide-body planes (those with two aisles) are required to have an accessible lavatory, the tight configuration doesn't work for many travelers with disabilities. To avoid embarrassment, always confirm before departure that the plane has an onboard wheelchair. Flight attendants can push you to the bathroom. They do not assist with transferring to a toilet or providing personal care. Better yet, consider that domestic airports are required to have accessible restrooms in all terminals; you will definitely be better off using the toilet before you depart. However, some small or older airports in the United States, and others abroad may not have them. Staff at the information desk in the airport can guide you to an accessible or family bathroom, or you can review the terminal layout on a nearby map or on your smartphone before you depart to find the closest accessible restroom. Although it isn't healthy, Ms. Longmire stops eating and drinking the day before a flight. Other travelers might choose to use a catheter or wear protective undergarments.

What to do once you get to the airport

Upon arrival at the airport, remind your airline that you need wheelchair assistance. At the Transportation Security Administration checkpoint, passengers who cannot stand or walk go through a pat-down administered by an officer of their same gender. The T.S.A. website explains the process in detail. You may also call the T.S.A. Cares help line (855-787-2227) at least 72 hours before flying with any questions. Once you get to the gate, tell the agent you have a disability and want to pre-board. Unfortunately, you cannot roll on the aircraft and remain in your wheelchair. Passengers who are unable to walk are transferred to a narrow, high-backed aisle chair with security straps. The preboarding is a safety measure that allows people with disabilities the additional time or assistance they need to get to their seats. The **Air Carrier Access Act** (A.C.C.A.) states individuals with disabilities are to board "before all other passengers, including first class passengers, elite-level passengers, members of the military, passengers with small children, etc."

What to do if things go wrong

The A.C.C.A. prevents discrimination on the basis of disability and applies to all U.S. airlines and flights on foreign carriers that fly into or out of the United States. The Department of Transportation enforces the A.C.C.A. If you encounter an access problem at the airport and the airline is unable to resolve it, ask to speak with the Complaint Resolution Official. Each air carrier is required to have one or more available on site or by phone. This specially trained individual has the authority to problem solve on the spot.

Barbara and Jim Twardowski write about travel, lifestyle and Baby Boomer topics. Given that Barbara uses a wheelchair and Jim is a registered nurse, they frequently cover accessible travel. Follow Barbara on Twitter at @BTwardowski.

Actress With Disability Wins Tony Award

by Ashley Lee, reprinted from Los Angeles Times/TNS | June 11, 2019

The Tony Awards can't say no to Ali Stroker, who made history Sunday by becoming the first actor in a wheelchair to win the biggest honor in theater.

The actress took home the Tony for featured actress in a musical for her performance as Ado Annie in an edgy revival of "Oklahoma!"

"This award is for every kid who has a disability, a limitation or a challenge who has been waiting to see themselves represented in this arena," Stroker said after wheeling from the stage wings to accept her Tony.

While playing the bubbly and flirty character, Stroker wheels around tables, the on-stage band and other cast members while singing her comedic crowd-pleaser "I Cain't Say No," which she also performed on the Tonys telecast.

"I hope they see that anyone can be on Broadway if they're great, and if they hurl themselves at it with the passion and soul and intelligence that Ali Stroker has," "Oklahoma!" director Daniel Fish told the Los Angeles Times before the ceremony, in anticipation of Stroker's telecast number. "There should be no barriers."

"How I move in my chair is one of the most thrilling parts for me of doing this revival," Stroker recently told the Los Angeles Times. "All of a sudden, without needing to talk about it, we were addressing disability and sexuality. People are so unsure about how to tackle these subjects, and what I loved is that we didn't need to talk about them. We just got to see them in action."

Stroker, who is paralyzed from the chest down from a car accident when she was 2, previously made history as the first Broadway actor who uses a wheelchair (in Deaf West Theatre's "Spring Awakening" revival in 2015). In the new staging of the landmark 1943 Rodgers & Hammerstein work, Stroker views her character's song as "an anthem for not apologizing for who we are and what we want, and I think we all need a little bit of that."

Stroker won the Tony over fellow nominees Lilli Cooper of "Tootsie," Sarah Stiles of "Tootsie," Amber Gray of "Hadestown" and Mary Testa, also of "Oklahoma!"



July

General Recreation

Club Freedom Events Highlighted

3-Jul	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
4-Jul	Thu	Independence Day PF Offices CLOSED	
8-Jul	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Hamilton	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
9-Jul	Tue	Parx Casino - Philadelphia - 5 Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
10-Jul	Wed	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
13-Jul	Sat	Aquatics Hamilton YMCA	Bus Leaves PFR 11:30 AM
15-Jul	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Hamilton	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
16-Jul	Tue	Shore Trip - Seaside 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
20-Jul	Sat	Trenton Thunder Baseball Game	Bus Leaves PFR 5:00 PM
22-Jul	Mon	"Day-Rec Program" -- Hamilton	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM
23-Jul	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
24-Jul	Wed	Dine Out - Dinner - Red Robin	Bus Leaves PFR 4:30 PM
25-Jul	Thu	Columbus Farmers & Flea Market	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
27-Jul	Sat	Aquatics Hamilton YMCA	Bus Leaves PFR 11:30 AM
29-Jul	Tue	"Day-Rec Program" -- Hamilton	Prog. Time 2 PM-4 PM

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