Concerns, questions surround reopening

Procedures, safety and funding all concerns, leaders say

Massachusetts human service providers say they are proceeding cautiously - with as many questions as answers - as they carefully plan to reopen programs and services shuttered more than two months ago by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most Providers Council members have been providing essential services for the duration of the pandemic, though many day programs and other community-based initiatives were halted in mid-March, when state officials issued stay-at-home orders and implemented social distancing recommendations. Gov. Baker announced plans on Monday, May 18 for a phased reopening of the Massachusetts economy; many human services programs consider themselves part of phase 2, which, at the earliest, will begin sometime in mid-June.

July 1 is a general target date for when Katie Terino, executive director of House of Possibilities (HOPe), hopes her organization will be able to restart some services, even on a limited basis. Her organization quickly pivoted its day programs to remote classes on Google Classroom, which worked well when in-person programming was prohibited.

“We are working hard now to frame what reopening looks like for us and how we can be successful. We have lots of questions and need more guidance from the state, but we are keeping safety concerns of our staff and our members at the forefront,” she said.

HOPe’s program offerings for 250 adults and children with developmental disabilities will change, depending on the results of a survey to members and families about which services and configurations would be most valuable, Terino said. HOPe will likely place a greater emphasis on outdoor activities, perhaps building new shelters at its facilities on the Stonehill College campus in Easton.

“It will all be determined by what our members and their families say they need most from us,” Terino said. One of her main concerns is the lack of clarity from the state on billing for remote services. HOPe has not been able to get reimbursement since March, and it needs the DODs funds to move forward.

“We have been innovative, and we really need the state’s support,” Terino said.

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By U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton

Thank you for continuing to serve in the midst of such a challenging time. As a long-time member of your local YMCA in Salem, I have never had to look far to understand the importance of your work. You provide a steady light to lift up those in need, and have done a remarkable job adapting to our rapidly changing reality in order to help to more people in more places.

This is obviously a tough time to run a human services organization. Many of you lost revenue because of the shutdown, you’ve had to furlough staff, and you’ve watched as the stock market’s uncertainty has caused donors to hold on to their money — challenges that were completely unexpected and are likely to stubbornly remain after the immediate crisis subsides. When the head of my local Y shared some of these challenges with me, I asked my team to find a solution.

That’s why we wrote the Save the Organizations that Serve (SOS) America Act with my colleague Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick in March. The SOS America Act is a relief plan to help you keep serving without having to worry about keeping the lights on. It calls for $60 billion in emergency funding for nonprofits, a universal charitable deduction to incentivize donations, and assurance that charitable nonprofits can access key small business relief programs. Over the course of this pandemic, this bill has rightly become a top priority for me and many of my colleagues, and many of you have joined me in pushing for relief.

Thanks to our work together, I am proud to announce that the most important parts of the SOS America Act were included in the HEROES Act, which the House passed a few days ago. The bill expands access to capital by setting aside specific PPP funding for nonprofits, including mid-sized nonprofits that were previously excluded from relief. It’s a victory I share with all of you, but I recognize we have more work to do. The bill still has to make it through the Senate, and I know that every day in the meantime, the financial pain you’re feeling increases.

You’re the heart and soul of the Commonwealth’s communities, and I’m going to keep fighting for you. Thank you for all you’ve done to serve so many people who are counting on you in this pandemic — for providing decisive leadership at a time when it’s been largely absent from the national stage. The work you do matters, and it is helping us get through this together. Keep it up!

PROVIDERS’ NEWS AND NOTES

Berkshire AHEC names new executive director

Berkshire AHEC has named Gena DiSimoni Johnson as its new executive director. Johnson is an operations professional specializing in event production and grant writing. She began her career in live entertainment as a stage/production manager and previously served as the director of advanced technology development for a small defense company in southwestern Pennsylvania. Born and raised in Pittsfield, Johnson and holds a degree in English from Westfield State College.

Berkshire AHEC, which celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, strives to reduce health inequities through training, public health, prevention and health promotion strategies. It is home to the Berkshire Tobacco-Free Community Partnership.

Louison House leader honored by nonprofit center

Kathy Keeser, executive director of Louison House in Pittsfield, was honored with an Executive Leadership award from the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires.

Berkshire Nonprofit Award honorees were recognized “for their outstanding commitment and contributions to the Berkshire community,” the organization said.

JRI Names Ruiz to Its Board of Trustees

JRI, a Needham-based nonprofit provider of trauma-informed care to children and families in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, has announced the addition of Maria Carolina (Caro) Ruiz of Boston to its Board of Trustees.

Ruiz, who serves as director of operations performance management at Tufts Health Plan, has been a leader in the Latino community, including past elected roles in the Association for Latino Professionals for America.

Council members awarded grants for COVID-19 critical services

The Boston Foundation, The Greater Lowell Community Foundation, MassHousing, the Harvard Pilgrim Foundation and The United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, recently awarded nearly $86 million to more than 250 Massachusetts nonprofits coping with the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Among the grantees were more than twenty Council members, including: Action for Boston Community Development, Bay Cove Human Services, Berkshire County Arc, Bridgewell, Cambridge Family and Children’s Service, Cardinal Cushing, Casa Myrna, Children’s Services of Roxbury, City Mission, Community Counseling of Bristol County, Community Teamwork, Dimock Community Health Center, Greater Lowell Community Teamwork, Hattie B. Cooper CC, Hildebrand Family Self-Help, Immigrants’ Assistance Center, International Institute of NE, Jewish Family and Children’s Service, Madonna Learning Center, M.O. L.I.F.E, New Bedford Development Action, North Suffolk MH, Sojourner House, Victim Programs, Victory Human Services and Wayside Youth & Family Support Network.

Additional Council members receive COVID-19 grants awarded by regional foundations

Community foundations based in Danvers, Fitchburg, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester announced they have also recently awarded just over $1.86 million in a new round of grants to support nonprofits in their service areas that are providing services to help mitigate the unfolding impacts of the coronavirus crisis.


Mass. Service Alliance announces Commonwealth Corps interns

The Massachusetts Service Alliance, has selected 16 nonprofits across the state to host Commonwealth Corps interns for the 2020-2021 program year.

Council members who will be hosting an intern include: More Than Words, Open Sky Community Services and International Institute of New England.

Next year’s host site partners are currently planning their programs and shifting Commonwealth Corps members’ roles and responsibilities to address the lasting impact of the current pandemic on their communities, MSA said.

Berkshire ARC staff get highway high-five

Berkshire County Arc wanted to show heartfelt thanks during the COVID-19 crisis to its frontline human services workers throughout western Massachusetts. These billboards located in Pittsfield and Westfield are dedicated to their “incredible” staff, the agency’s leaders said.

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About the Agency

REACH Beyond Domestic Violence was founded in 1981 as an all-volunteer shelter and hotline. We now support 7,000 people each year in 27 communities north and west of Boston. REACH’s acronym – Refuge, Education, Advocacy, and Change – represents the keys to addressing both the symptoms and the causes of domestic violence.

Because REACH’s services are provided free of charge, we rely on corporations, foundations, government contracts, and individual donors to support this important work. We have several contracts with the Department of Public Health, Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance and receive local grant funding. We raise well over $1 million each year from 115 private and corporate foundations, our annual gala and many generous donors.

Since our founding nearly 40 years ago, REACH has become a recognized leader in supporting survivors and preventing domestic abuse. Over the past ten years, the agency has tripled in size – in staff, program going, and many generous donors.

In 2017, REACH moved into new office space that has enabled significant growth to flourish. We created a warm, light-filled and welcoming environment for survivors and staff with confidential meeting rooms, a supervised play space for children while their parents are meeting with advocates and room to hold our trainings and community meetings.

Our education and prevention program is at the forefront of this critical educational effort. We train first responders, medical professionals, social service agencies, businesses and corporations, faith organizations and middle, high school, and college students.

Last year, we conducted 538 training sessions with a total of 6,147 people, including 1,596 adults, 149 college students, and 4,402 middle and high school students.

REACH serves all survivors regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion or income level. The majority of our clients are women between the ages of 25 and 49, and 55% identify themselves as Hispanic.

Many survivors who work with REACH experience poverty and may have substance abuse and mental health issues.

The immigrant survivors we work with are especially underserved and often suffer disproportionately from the effects of domestic violence. They are more isolated, hesitant to contact law enforcement and fear of deportation and at the mercy of abusers who use that fear as a means to maintain control over the victim.

President & CEO

Twenty years ago, Laura R. Van Zandt joined the REACH Board of Directors while working in financial services. She joined the staff in 2004. After a successful career at Wellington Management Company and Steven Invest-

Laura Van Zandt

PROVIDER PROFILES

REACH BEYOND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, INC.
P.O. Box 540024 • Waltham, MA 02454 • 800.899.4000 • WWW.REACHMA.ORG

North Suffolk Early Intervention team joins together, pivots to telehealth

When the state-of-emergency order shut down all but essential services in the Commonwealth on March 10, the North Suffolk Mental Health Association Harbor Area Early Intervention team was in a bind.

The services they were providing to children from birth to age 3 and their families were more than essential, but they could no longer go into clients’ homes.

“We quickly transitioned to tele-health in two weeks ... going from home visits with a young child and family within natural settings and daily routines, to interacting through a computer or phone screen,” said Harbor Area Director Rachael Cracknell.

“The multi-disciplinary EI team is now also very focused on family support needs and resources, in addition to creating new development communication, motor, social, art, and music therapy interventions.”

Many of the EI staff have been working remotely, but a cure group has continued to work in the office or a hybrid schedule. This core site team of Community Services Manager Debbi Eccleston; Front Desk Billing Coordinator Liz McNealy and Indira Meza, Data Coordinator/Billing; Receptionist Damaris Meza; Child Care Coordinator Mariana Torres; EI Team Leaders Aliza Llovet and Brianna Micciche; and Rodolfo Gutierrez, Facilities, has been instrumental in keeping the program going.

Working in some of the communities hardest hit by COVID-19, including Chelsea, East Boston and Revere, the families with infants and toddlers have been faced with a myriad challenges not the least of which is the stigma and worry of having the illness and for many the fear of public charge if they accept public services.

All of the changes brought on by the pandemic have resulted in a 50-65 percent drop in revenues for EI programs, including NSMHA. And so, in addition to providing services, the EI team, with the 58 other EI programs across the state, has been advocating on Beacon Hill for supplemental funding to help these vital programs survive.

“We have built trusting relationships, and most of our families have continued to stay engaged with the program,” said Cracknell, who is also the president-elect of the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium. “But the duration of services has been cut in half because parents with young children have so much on their plate right now.”

Through it all, though, the North Suffolk EI team continues to come up with new and creative ways to provide their families with the mental health and developmental support they need now more than ever.

North Suffolk Mental Health Association’s Harbor Area Early Intervention team meets via zoom, using technology to meet the needs of the clients and consumers it serves during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Reopening with guideposts

As Massachusetts and the rest of the nation begins the process of reopening during this pandemic, I’m reminded of one of Governor Baker’s most salient points: “We cannot move forward unless we commit to continuing to slow the spread.”

His four-phase reopening plan primarily shaped by his 17-member Reopening Advisory Board — co-chaired by Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Mike Keneally — was released on May 18. This thoughtful request came in the result of testimony and presentations from 75 business groups and other entities representing over 122,000 businesses with over 2 million employees. The Providers’ Council, with our friends at The Collaborative, presented to the RAB via Zoom on May 6 and is pleased to support the recommendations that address the uniqueness and essential nature of our sector needs.

When this emergency unfolded many of us were consumed with thoughts on how to protect the thousands of people we serve, and the thousands employed performing in systems of care — our state’s safety net for our at-risk residents. While many of our staff rely on public transportation, our sector needs.

The public could heed the advisory to stay at home, but this was not an option for thousands of employees who are part of state’s essential workforce, providing essential services to our most essential residents in care. While a few observers may not have immediately recognized our “essentiality,” as much attention was focused on medical workers, undoubtedly, human service workers protecting vulnerable children, elders and others were, and would continue to be “open for business.”

But some services like day programs that support those with a disability, early education providers offering childcare, family support services and others were required to temporarily close their doors, and for the protection of all they did. These were difficult decisions and now there are equally difficult decisions to reopen.

While the state’s framework for reopening is a good one, its necessary to create human services sector specific approaches developed with the sector.

I submit that we need to have at least four guideposts to reopen, assessing that data, science and experiences support it. The four guiding principles are: gradual opening, providing input, embrace of creative change and adequate funding.

To start, plans for our sector to reopen must be gradual as the first of four guideposts, funding. A difficult state budget year lies ahead, with an estimated $6 to $9 billion deficit, and the state will have to make some important decisions on funding these essential services.

While these services are often erroneously called “discretionary,” a misnomer that speaks against our societal values for caring, we must protect and care for all of our essential people in human services. In Massachusetts, this is not a discretionary value but an obligation of our fair and just society. Hopefully, the guideposts will help us advance that value.

So, let’s be deliberate as we reopen and ensure all of our vulnerable populations are appropriately supported. We know that without quality human services we are a lesser “Commonwealth.”

Let’s reopen guided by principles, funded adequately, supported creatively, with an uncompromising commitment to disease mitigation.

The MHTA and other mass transit systems must be fully operational, have flexible schedules, and be safe. The second guidepost is to ensure and respect provider input. Our systems of care are sophisticated and have linkages with other sectors. Sector providers should be included in the planning phase and involved in testing operational assumptions. For example, we have a workforce that is 80 percent female and are often single parents that need reliable, safe and convenient childcare. If the early education childcare system is not fully operational and flexible enough to address worker needs, then we diminish our reopening capability.

As our workforce is key to an optimal human services system, we must also include compensation that adequately recognizes the risks and responsibilities of the workforce. Pre COVID-19 salary levels do not reflect these responsibilities, skills and talents. Further, providers are requesting that mental health services be available for the workforce. Some have worked in settings with significant trauma and need additional support.

The third guidepost is embracing ingenuity and change. We have learned quite a bit about telehealth as an effective, and sometimes preferred, method for providing essential support services. Providers believe creative solutions like telehealth and the increase of work-from-home models, in certain situations, should be fostered and developed.

We also need to recognize that our capacity for securing PPE and testing is less than optimal. New arrangements for obtaining personal protective equipment and readily available testing for clients and staff must be arranged and funded. That leads to the fourth guidepost, funding. A difficult state budget year lies ahead, with an estimated $6 to $9 billion deficit, and the state will have to make some important decisions on funding these essential services.

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So, let’s be deliberate as we reopen and ensure all of our vulnerable populations are appropriately supported. We know that without quality human services we are a lesser “Commonwealth.”
By Cheryl Clynburn Crawford

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is a vital service for November’s election, where by-mail voting is widely expected. USPS is a federal government agency and the nation’s oldest self-sustaining business.

The USPS, meanwhile, received only a $25 billion loan, nowhere near enough to bolster the financially-strapped institution. USPS lost $8.8 billion in the last fiscal year, and the service continues to decline by as much as 60 percent due to the COVID-19 crisis, this debt is only expected to get worse.

Unfortunately, it is far from certain that the postal service will receive the financial support it needs. As USPS has rapidly and tragically become a tool of political brinkmanship. President Trump has been vocal in his demand that the service be sold, arguing that it is too “cozy” with big corporations. Trump has in the past attempted to oust the Postmaster General, claiming that it is too “cozy” with big corporations.

But who did the federal government provide assistance through the CARES Act. The United States Post Office (USPS) is a unique federal entity that is not subject to the same fiscal year, and with by-mail advertising programs are underfunded, losing millions of dollars on every dollar spent. As USPS transfers more than one billion packages of medical in typical years, that effort will become even greater during this crisis. It will also carry our medical bills, test results, personal protective equipment, and medical supplies.

With big corporations. Trump has in the past attempted to oust the Postmaster General, claiming that it is too “cozy” with big corporations. But who did the federal government provide assistance through the CARES Act. The United States Post Office (USPS) is a unique federal entity that is not subject to the same fiscal year, and with by-mail advertising programs are underfunded, losing millions of dollars on every dollar spent. As USPS transfers more than one billion packages of medical in typical years, that effort will become even greater during this crisis. It will also carry our medical bills, test results, personal protective equipment, and medical supplies.

Congress needs to understand is that the postal service is under great threat. That cannot, and will not, be ignored.

Cheryl Clynburn Crawford is the Executive Director of MassVOTE, a nonprofit, nonpartisan political advocacy organization dedicated to voting rights, voter education, and social justice.

By Michael Vance

Alzheimer’s Disease is an irreversible disease that has profound and far-reaching consequences for how important USPS is to our nation. Having been deemed an essential service, the postal service’s nearly 200,000 employees have continued to serve us. While USPS transfers more than one billion packages of medical in typical years, that effort will become even greater during this crisis. It will also carry our medical bills, test results, personal protective equipment, and medical supplies. Now is no time to play politics. Our elections take place in a safe and secure manner.

The Alzheimer’s Association estimates that more than 16 million Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer’s and other dementias valued at nearly $24 billion. Supportive caregivers are essential to total health and well-being during the pandemic and beyond. It is critical that we work together to provide resources, support, and advocacy for families and caregivers as they navigate the challenges of the pandemic.

It is also essential to protect the health and well-being of caregivers. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia, affecting over 5 million Americans and their families. Alzheimer’s & Dementia Support Programs (ADSP) and Alzheimer’s Disease Research Centers (ADRC) provide supportive opportunities for caregivers and those with dementia to connect with others and reduce isolation.

In addition to the current dementia research and clinical trials, gender and racial disparities require further study. Alzheimer’s Disease is higher among African Americans and Hispanic Americans but they are under-represented in research efforts. These disparities are evident in the under-representation of African Americans and Hispanic Americans in Alzheimer’s & Dementia Support Programs (ADSP) and Alzheimer’s Disease Research Centers (ADRC) and in the under-representation of African Americans and Hispanic Americans in Alzheimer’s Disease Research Centers (ADRC).

The mission of Central Boston Elder Services is to provide high quality, reliable in-home and community-based services and support to older adults who are able to live independently in their own residences. Our mission, which is based on enrollment in the Medicare program, and access to services is to connect with others and reduce isolation.

Michael A. Vance is the CEO of Central Boston Elder Services, Inc.
The Census Bureau has received congressional authorization to shift its operational timeline, allowing extra time to ensure a Complete Count in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current timeline calls for the bureau to resume field operations on June 1; the timing for Massachusetts, however, is still under consideration. The Bureau has delayed visits to group homes and congregate care facilities until mid-summer and reponditement counts will not be finalized and reported until April 30, 2021, four months later than initially planned. Although the new operational timeline will delay results, it is hoped that additional time will allow for organizations doing Census outreach work, including the Human Services Providers Charitable Foundation, to better reach hard-to-count communities.

When the Census Bureau set out to perform their decennial count, federal officials had already anticipated a challenging roll out in 2020. The national head count was already planned to be primarily online for the first time, amidst a Presidential election. Due to a set of complex challenges, researchers have seen their 2020 self-response rate lag behind benchmarks from 2010. Massachusetts ranks 20th among states with a self-response rate of about 62 percent. By contrast, the Commonwealth achieved approximately a 69 percent self-response rate over the same time period 10 years earlier. The 2020 figure is expected to climb as the bureau makes preparations to safely canvass households that have not responded yet.

Despite the pandemic, the Census remains crucial for the human services sector in Massachusetts. In addition to securing congressional representation, data collected is used to determine how federal funding gets allocated. Each person who fills out the Census has an impact on their community, receiving a share of $6775 billion per year for neighborhood improvements, public health education, transportation and much more. An undercount can mean Massachusetts loses millions of dollars for programs like Head Start and Section 8 Housing Assistance.

The HSPC has been at hard work to promote the 2020 Census. The Foundation used a grant from the Secretary of the Commonwealth to mail over 2,000 postcards to Providers’ Council members, issue mini-grants to several human services organizations to conduct outreach, send reminder postcards to organizations and conduct an educational webinar about the Census’ importance with representatives from the Census Bureau. More materials on the 2020 Census are available at www.providers.org/Census, including our new interactive data map, which displays self-response rates for counties and cities in the Commonwealth.

A View From the Hill

A Commentary from a Legislator on Human Services

By Rep. Nika Elugardo

While the public health impacts of the once-in-a-generation pandemic will reverberate for years, arguably the economic aftershocks will continue even longer.

On the individual level, job loss and reduced wages are not necessarily bouncing back once we have a vaccine for COVID-19. Many businesses and nonprofits that were able to hang on for six months or a year, will flounder and fail eventually.

Some colleges and training programs that were holding on through this period of shared suffering will ultimately close. Workers who were advancing their careers through higher education or professional development training will lose access and may stagnate or regress.

This grim forecast is driven by the insufficient funds in the $4.8 trillion federal stimulus packages to date. According to Census Bureau data released on April 14, nearly 8 percent of small businesses surveyed applied for relief through the CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program, yet less than 40 percent received aid.

For the smallest businesses and nonprofits, especially those run by women and people of color, the rates were much lower.

In both business assistance and unemployment insurance, the federal stimulus package is designed to help the strongest companies first. The struggling and the most down-and-out — well, they are on their own. Gig economy and self-employed workers waited for weeks to find out whether they would be eligible for unemployment insurance.

Working immigrants without documentation beyond the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) are made to pay taxes through the ITIN and the tax recovery programs funded for programs, get nada. Zero in unemployment insurance. Zero option for low-wage families in stimulus payments, despite the fact that many of our essential services from grocery to elder care are provided by members of these same families.

Even Personal Protective Equipment took months to find at its way to lower-wage frontline direct care and social services workers.

States like Massachusetts are eager to fill the gaps. Within weeks of the declaration of a state of emergency, Massachusetts legislators had filed more than 80 COVID-19 response and relief bills.

Now the number tops 100 bills and keeps climbing. These include: decarceration of prisoners, small business grants, election integrity, domestic violence prevention and bolstering the safety net for residents in deep poverty. We passed a moratorium on foreclosures as well as both residential and commercial evictions, before we’d even developed the technological capacity to hold a formal session. We have a plan, we’ve rescheduled the debate which meant the vote had to be unanimous to pass.

Yet, we still await significant relief to states and municipalities.

The Massachusetts FY20 budget is wanting to the tune of $3 to 4 billion, and some project the budget shortfall for FY21 nearly double that. This doesn’t even begin to account for the increase in costs due to COVID-19.

We have only just begun to feel the economic impacts of COVID-19, and we aren’t even counting equally. The fissures in our systems of justice, public health, housing, education and economic development have widened to the breaking point under the pressure of a global pandemic that hits already disenfranchised communities hardest.

Yet, a silver lining lingers. We have time to change the forecast. If Congress helps us close our budget gap, Massachusetts can go the distance to begin repairing the cracks to our foundation resulting from decades of structurally reinforced poverty and racism. We currently have some of the most progressive legislation in history moving through the Massachusetts Legislature in service to COVID-19 recovery.

We must take up the historic mantle of the Commonwealth, with our long history of revolution, and fight like crazy to prioritize the bipartisan funding that protect the most vulnerable residents and businesses first. We should pressurize the U.S. Congress to do the same.

In times of crisis the character of a nation is exposed. The same can be said for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. There will be no greater indicator of our shared values and morality than how we prioritize our spending and legislative programs in the midst of the corona-virus pandemic.

I have seen an unprecedented coming together of legislators across the political spectrum to get us this point, and I have every reason to believe that this will continue in the coming months. Yet, we will get through this. With a little faith, we will come out stronger and more just than we have ever been.

Rep. Nika Elugardo of Boston represents the 15th Suffolk District.
New resources for Council members

The Providers’ Council is excited to announce a new, free benefit for provider members: members-only listservs and an online portal. Individuals employed at Providers’ Council member agencies may subscribe or unsubscribe from any of the members-only listservs at any time. To join, simply email the appropriate staff member that manages the listserv.

Member Exchange Listserv: For training and human resource professionals at provider agencies to discuss professional development and HR practices. Share important resources, pose questions related to human resources and network electronically with your fellow HR professionals!

To join, email cbroughton@providers.org.

Training and Human Resources Listserv: For training and human resource professionals at provider agencies to discuss professional development and HR practices. Share important resources, pose questions related to human resources and network electronically with your fellow HR professionals!

To join, email cbroughton@providers.org.

Providers’ eAcademy Listserv: For staff of any member agency participating in the popular Providers’ eAcademy program. Ask important questions on topics related to professional development, the human services sector or the latest in training.

To join, email cbroughton@providers.org.

Providers’ eAcademy: New resources for Council members.

Council elects new directors, officers

The Providers’ Council held its Annual Membership and Business Meeting May 6 via Zoom to elect its 2020-2021 Board of Directors and Officers.

Jule Gomes Noack, HMEA’s president and CEO on July 1, 2020, is seeking re-election for another term. Noack will become chair emeritus. Five new directors, as well as Lydia Todd, NFI Massachusetts’ executive director, will be joining the Council’s board. Other new members include Nancy Munson, chair-elect; Sandra McCann, treasurer; Michael Vance, treasurer; Susan Stubbs as assistant treasurer; Diane Gould as clerk; Mia Alvarez as assistant clerk; Jackie K. Moore as immediate past chair; and Gerry Wright as chair emeritus.

The diverse, 34-member Board of Directors is representative of member agencies across the state who provide supports to one-in-ten state residents.

Bill Sprague returns as chair for a second straight year. Other officers continuing in their leadership roles include Nancy Munson, chair-elect; Sandra McCann, treasurer; Michael Vance, treasurer; Susan Stubbs as assistant treasurer; Diane Gould as clerk; Mia Alvarez as assistant clerk; Jackie K. Moore as immediate past chair; and Gerry Wright as chair emeritus.

FEDERAL: UI advocacy, org protection among big issues

Continued from Page 1

Klocke and Providers’ Council President and CEO Michael Weekes wrote to Neal on April 30.

While the federal CARES Act allowed nonprofits that self-insure for unemployment insurance to receive a 50 percent credit on those costs, federal guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Labor on April 27 indicated that states must charge nonprofits the full amount and reimburse them, rather than simply credit nonprofits half their total amount owed. The irrelevance of receiving funds up front could face a hardship for nonprofits who have incurred cash flow issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated programs being shut down.

The HEROES Act, passed by the House in May, would make a technical correction to the CARES Act and emphasize that states may simply vary half of the payments owed by self-insured nonprofits, rather than making them pay 100 percent initially and then reimbursing them 50 percent. Senate leaders, however, have indicated they will not approve the HEROES Act in its current form. At press time, the bill was stalled.

In the interim, Providers’ Council members that self-insure for unemployment insurance should use the Department of Unemployment Assistance to check their expected assessments. Organizations are urged to check assessments online and not wait for bills to be issued, as some organizations are noticing noticing errors in billing that should contact the Department of Unemployment Assistance to address any inaccuracies.

Organizations wanting more information or wishing to discuss their experience should contact Bill Yelenak at bill@providers.org.

Sale of top-level.org domain blocked

In other federal news, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) blocked the sale of the top-level.org domain name to a venture capital firm.

Ethos Capital had a deal to buy the .org domain name for more than $3 bil- lon in late 2019 from the Public Inter- est Registry and the Internet Society. ICANN received plenty of opposition to the sale from nonprofits and others; nearly 900 organizations and more than 11,000 people signed a petition at savedorg.org opposing the sale.

“After completing extensive due dili-gence, the ICANN Board finds that withholding consent of the transfer of PIR from the Internet Society to Ethics Capital is reasonable, and the right thing to do,” ICANN said in a statement on April 30.
The Providers’ Council has extended the deadline for applicants to submit an RFP to present a workshop at this year’s 45th Annual Convention & Expo: Stand Up For Equity.

The Council is seeking presentations on a diverse range of topics relevant to the field of human services, from worker safety to healthcare reform and self-care. We especially encourage topics that are conducive to this year’s theme.

Presenters receive complimentary admission to the entire Convention & Expo. Each 90-minute workshop generally has 20 to 100 attendees, but attendance may vary.

If you would like to share your professional knowledge and expertise with this diverse audience, please complete the proposal form online at www.providers.org. Please submit RFPs as soon as possible. The information requested on the application is needed for CEU applications and convention registration materials.

The Council is actively monitoring guidelines surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. In the event that we are not able to host this convention in-person, we have a contingency plan in place to offer workshops online for our members. We will keep you informed with any updates regarding our convention plans as the situation evolves.

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