

Lehigh & Northampton OBSERVER



*The Arc of Lehigh and
Northampton Counties.*

*Telephone:
610-849-8076*

www.arcoflehighnorthampton.org

Published six times a year to inform persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and the community about intellectual disability services in Lehigh and Northampton Counties.

If you participate in Lehigh County's FD/FSS program, you can continue using your allocation without approval or an extension from the county. Invoices for services must be submitted to Easter Seals within 6 months of a purchase or service.

If you participate in Northampton County's FD/FSS program, check with your Supports Coordinator before submitting invoices for expenses starting January 1. Vouchers for services for the first half of the fiscal year must be received by Easter Seals by the close of business (4:30pm) on January 8th, 2021.

LEHIGH COUNTY INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY COMMITTEE

**Regular in-person meetings
are suspended until further
notice.**

**Meetings are normally held
the second Wednesday in
January, April, July, October**

Noon—1:30 PM

**The Clubhouse
1437 Gordon Street
Allentown, PA**

**Consumers, parents, and
anyone interested in the care
and welfare of persons with
intellectual and
developmental disabilities are
welcome to attend.**

**Contact Bob Madden for
information. Phone 610-849-
8076 ,ext. 317**

Dear Families, Friends and Colleagues:

As we start a new year, many people will certainly look back at the past 12 months. Everything started off normal: holidays, family & friends, eating at restaurants, attending concerts, vacations, school and sports. Suddenly COVID-19 upended our lives. We lost so much time, so many jobs and so many Americans since last winter; it would be easy to focus on all we are missing.

With that in mind, I think we can have hope and recognize some amazing developments that help us move forward. We can keep ourselves and loved ones safe as possible by following guidance from scientists and physicians. Keeping distance, washing hands sanitizing surfaces and wearing masks correctly are still very important. Visit the CDC web site www.cdc.gov or the PA Department of Health website www.health.pa.gov for updated recommendations and guidance.

With the promise of a vaccine coming, many people may see a light at the end of the tunnel. In the meantime, school is in session – though it looks very different. We've learned new skills like navigating Zoom meetings and other virtual get togethers. Many employers adapted in order to continue working. It seems as though we are slowly, carefully moving forward. Even when we can gather again in larger groups, there will likely be changes to protect ourselves and the general public. We all look forward to better times ahead.

Wishing everyone a healthy and safe new year.

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As you may know, March is designated *Developmental Disability Awareness Month* in Pennsylvania. To recognize individuals with developmental disabilities who have made great strides in their lives, the Celebration Committee of Lehigh and Northampton County is pleased to hold the 15th Annual Celebration Awards on March 25, 2021.

In order to promote a safe and responsible event, the Celebration Awards Committee of Lehigh and Northampton Counties will be holding a virtual Celebration event on the Zoom platform this year. We hope to resume the in-person awards luncheon in 2022.

Details of the virtual celebration event are still in the planning phase at this point. Information on the Zoom celebration will be made available in the next newsletter.

Take a moment to nominate someone you know with a developmental disability for recognition. Awards are for individual nominations only; you can nominate someone for more than one award. Award descriptions and a nomination form is on page 3 and 4 of this newsletter.

The Celebration Awards Committee of Lehigh and Northampton Counties is made up of community members and representatives from service providers and county human services offices. The committee is accepting information from individuals interested in joining the committee. Email the committee at celebration.committee.15@gmail.com if you would like information about volunteering. To submit an application to join the committee, follow this link: <https://form.jotform.com/203286013120035>.

This year the Celebration Awards Committee of Lehigh & Northampton Counties updated awards categories and introduced the Self Advocacy Achievement award. The new award will be presented to someone who has advocated for themselves to make a positive difference in their life and the lives of others.



**Fifteenth
Annual**

Celebration Awards

March 25, 2021

This event was developed to recognize March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. Just about every day, individuals with disabilities accomplish amazing things, and this is our chance to honor their achievements!

To be eligible for a Celebration Award, a person must be diagnosed with a Developmental Disability and must receive a disability-related service in either Northampton or Lehigh County (*ex: Support Coordination, Waiver, FD/FSS, Education, etc.*).

At the ***Celebration 2021*** event, awards are given to individuals with developmental disabilities who demonstrated success in one of these areas: 1) Educational Achievement; 2) Employment Achievement; 3) Exemplary Citizenship ; 4) Personal Achievement; 5) Self Advocacy Achievement; 6) Transition Achievement. Individual awards in each category are given to one person from Lehigh County and one from Northampton County.

You can nominate someone for an award by either using the form on page 4 or visiting <https://bit.ly/nominations2021>. If you want to nominate an individual in more than one category, use a separate form and narrative for each nomination. Deadline for nominations is February 1, 2021.

- ◆ **Education Achievement** is presented to an individual who made significant educational progress, is motivated to learn, and is a positive influence on others.
- ◆ **Employment Achievement** is presented to someone who has been successfully employed with or without supports over the past year. This may include someone who made great progress over the past year, acquired a new skill, attained a new position/promotion, has good attendance, and a positive attitude about work.
- ◆ **Exemplary Citizenship** is presented to someone who volunteered or made contributions to their family, school, or community, specifically with actions that put others first.
- ◆ **Personal Achievement** is presented to individuals who made great strides in reaching personal goals and who have enriched their own capabilities.
- ◆ **Self-Advocacy Achievement** is presented to someone who has advocated for themselves to make a positive difference in their life and the lives of others. (new category!)
- ◆ **Transition Achievement** is presented to someone who mastered a significant life transition, which may include transitioning after high school or between different living situations, etc.

PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR AWARD NOMINATION FORM

School Districts across Lehigh and Northampton Counties continue updating information on safe ways to provide education to students. This is a developing situation that needs regular monitoring .

Please find a listing and links to public schools in Lehigh and Northampton Counties below. School district links contain information on school district opening plans and other important topics.

LEHIGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

[Allentown School District](#)

[Bethlehem Area School District](#)

[Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit 21](#)

[Catasauqua School District](#)

[East Penn School District](#)

[Northern Lehigh School District](#)

[Northwestern Lehigh School District](#)

[Parkland School District](#)

[Salisbury School District](#)

[Southern Lehigh School District](#)

[Whitehall-Coplay School District](#)

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

[Bangor Area School District](#)

[Bethlehem Area School District](#)

[Catasauqua Area School District](#)

[Colonial Intermediate Unit 20](#)

[Easton Area School District](#)

[Nazareth Area School District](#)

[Northampton Area School District](#)

[Northern Lehigh School District](#)

[Pen Argyl School District](#)

[Saucon Valley School District](#)

[Wilson Area School District](#)

Carbon Lehigh IU Local Taskforce 21

- January 20, 2021: Early intervention to School Age Transition
- February 17, 2021: Transition to Adulthood: Process/Services/Linkage
- March 17, 2021: AT for Students and BrainSteps Information

[Click here](#) for information on the task force and zoom meetings.

All meetings are 10 AM to Noon on Zoom. [Click here](#) to join the Zoom meeting

Meeting ID: 537 878 6005; Passcode: CLIU21

Contact Amanda Robbins, Chairperson with questions mandaphd1@gmail.com.
Visit www.cliu.org for more information

Colonial IU 20 Right to Education Task Force

- January 11, 2021 (snow date January 12)
- March 15, 2021 (snow date March 16)
- May 3, 2021

All meetings will be held on the Zoom platform until further notice.

[Click here](#) for the meeting schedule and links to join Zoom meetings.

Anyone interested and wanting information for the virtual meeting is invited to contact Leslie McKelvey, leslie.mckelvey@yahoo.com

Visit www.ciu20.org for more information.

In order to continue helping people with important information, The Arc's Advocacy Department is developing an on-going series of virtual workshops, using the Zoom Platform.

You can access Zoom with smart phones, tablets, laptops or desktops. You may need to download the Zoom app for smart devices. If you don't have a computer or other device, you can call in and hear the audio.

For those who have never used Zoom, here are some basics.

- Zoom is a internet based, remote meeting platform.
- With a desktop computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone, you can see and hear the presenter. The presenter can show visuals such as PowerPoint slides, printouts and spreadsheets to participants.
- Some Zoom meetings allow participants with microphones on their devices to actively participate.
- Zoom meetings have a chat box allowing participants to write questions or comments for all participants to see.
- When you register for a Zoom meeting you must supply an email address. Zoom will confirm your registration and send reminders and a link to your workshop. All you need to do is click the link on the day and time of the workshop. There are telephone numbers listed with email reminders in case you want to call in.
- If you don't have access to a computer, laptop, smart phone or tablet you can phone in for Arc workshops. Call Jessica McKenty, Advocacy Director at 610-849-8076, ext. 330 for assistance.



To register for an Arc sponsored Zoom workshop, visit the Arc website: www.arcoflehighnorthampton.org. Open the **events** tab, find your workshop and click the "register here" link to register for your workshop. Check The Arc website and The Arc's Facebook page events section for more training announcements and other information!

Questions can be sent to Jessica McKenty. Email: jmckenty@arcoflehighnorthampton.org or phone: 610-849-8076 ext. 330.

Zoom Workshops Coming in January and February: (all times are US Eastern Standard)

K-12 Special Education during COVID-19
Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Guest Presenter: Angela Murphy, Esq.
6:30 - 8:30PM via Zoom

Transitioning from EI to K during COVID-19
Monday, January 25, 2021

Guest Presenter: Jane Stadnik from PEAL
6:30 – 8:30PM via Zoom

COVID Compensatory Services (CCS) vs. Extended School Year (ESY)
Wednesday February 10, 2021

Guest Presenters: Heather Hulse, Esq. and Michael Connolly, Esq.
6:30PM via Zoom



WOLF ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES [KinConnector.org](https://www.kinconnector.org)

PA KinConnector provides guidance, advice, and support for grandparents raising grandchildren and other relative and non-relative Kinship Caregivers.

What is Kinship Care?

Authored By: PA Court

Kinship care is the full-time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives or any adult who has a “kinship” bond with the children. These caregivers may include grandparents, aunts or uncles, siblings of the children requiring care, cousins or non-blood “relatives,” such as a teacher, coach or family friend.

Kinship care has been on the rise in Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Courts have produced this new video (<https://youtu.be/jCJKvHPggLY>) to help potential kinship providers learn about and understand kinship foster care, navigate the dependency court system and take the necessary steps to become a kinship parent.

**If You're a Kinship Caregiver in One of Pennsylvania's 67 Counties,
We're Here to Help.**

PA KinConnector is an information, referral and education program for kinship caregivers in Pennsylvania. Kinship caregivers are blood and non-blood relatives (i.e. teachers, coaches, and family friends) who care for children when their biological parents can't.

There are an estimated 202,000 children in Pennsylvania who live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. More than 80,000 grandparents in Pennsylvania are responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren, which accounts for about 164,000 children in kinship care.

The KinConnector Navigators seek to assist these caregivers by providing information on financial assistance, legal information and referrals, and other issues caregivers face when raising children to provide stability and permanency in the home.

Visit www.kinconnector.org for links or call 1-866-546-2111 for more information.



Assistance with Heating and Electric Bills

Heating and Electric companies are providing assistance with paying bills this winter. Both PPL and UGI have information about payment options, budgeting and grants.

UGI Customers:

Current customers can Contact UGI for information for low income customers and people financially affected by COVID-19. Customers with specific questions can call 1-800-276-2722 to speak with a UGI Customer Service Representative. You can visit with UGI website at www.ugi.com for other information and to register for a program.

PPL Electric Utilities Customers:

PPL has different programs to assist with paying their electric bill. Call PPL's Residential Customer Service at 1-800-342-5775 or apply on line to find a plan that will be helpful to you. Visit www.pplelectric.com for more information and to apply.

Contact your heating and electricity provider for specific information.

LEHIGH COUNTY CARES RENT RELIEF ASSISTANCE

Lehigh County residents can seek assistance with rent repayment by contacting the following agencies:

- **New Bethany Ministries**, Phone 610-691-5602, ext. 213
- **Catholic Charities:** Contact Tom Miller, Phone 610-435-1541, email: Tmiller@allentowndiocese.org (Catholic Charities also administers the CARES Rent Relief Program).
- For low- to moderate-income households who feel that they are being illegally evicted or foreclosed upon, please contact **North Penn Legal Services** at 610-317-8757 for free advice, referrals, and advocacy.
- For residents who are **14 days or less away** from losing their residence and have either a **Notice to Quit** or a **Lockout Order/Notice**, or are **currently homeless**, call 211 to be connected to the Coordinated Entry Referral System; or visit Lehigh Conference of Churches:
 - ◆ 1031 West Linden Street, Allentown, Monday to Thursday 9-11 am and 1-3 pm
 - ◆ 740 East Fourth Street, First Floor, Bethlehem, call for hours at 610-419-8282

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY CARES RENT RELIEF ASSISTANCE

If you live in Bethlehem, Bethlehem Township, Hellertown, Lower Saucon Township :

- **New Bethany Ministries**, Phone: 610-691-5602, ext. 213

If you live in Easton there are 2 agencies you may contact:

- **Easton Area Neighborhood Center**, Phone: 610-253-4253 or email Ross Marcus at rmarcus@eastonanc.org.
- **ProJeCt of Easton**, Phone: 610-258-1100 ext. 13; email Michael Banas at mbanas@projecteaston.org

All other municipalities of Northampton County, contact:

- **Third Street Alliance**, Phone: 610-438-1763, email Ziana Keith at zkeith@thirdstreetalliance.org

For Residents who are 14 days or less away from losing their residence and have either a Notice to Quit or a Lockout Order/Notice:

- **Call 211** to be connected to Northampton County Tenant Eviction Assistance program seeking rental assistance.

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Pennsylvania's CHIP program was signed into law on December, 2 1992. The CHIP program is designed to provide insurance coverage to children whose families do not qualify for Medical Assistance and cannot afford private insurance. You can find general information about CHIP by visiting the PA Department of Human Services web page at www.dhs.pa.gov, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the [CHIP](#) link under the **Get Help** heading.

Eligibility and Benefits

Most kids receive CHIP for free. Others can get the same benefits at a low cost. If your income is below the lowest amount listed, your child or teen may be enrolled in Medical Assistance.

Use the COMPASS website www.compass.state.pa.us to see if your family qualifies for CHIP and other human services in Pennsylvania.

Qualification Guidelines

Based on your family size and income, your child may be eligible if they meet the following requirements:

- Under 19 years of age
- A U.S. citizen, U.S. national or qualified alien
- A resident of Pennsylvania
- Uninsured and not eligible for Medical Assistance

Information for Grandparents

If you're a grandparent, coverage for your grandchildren is not based on your income, unless you have legally adopted the children. Visit www.chipcoverspakids.com/Eligibility/Pages/InfoForGrandparents.aspx find out if you are covered.

Information for Immigrants

Children legally residing in Pennsylvania are eligible for CHIP regardless of their parents' immigration status. Visit: chipcoverspakids.com/Eligibility/Pages/InfoForImmigrants.aspx to find out if you are covered.

Benefits

CHIP is there for your kids with quality, comprehensive health insurance coverage for routine doctor visits, prescriptions, dental, eye care and much more, including:

- Immunizations
- Routine Checkups & Well Visits
- Prescription Drugs
- Dental, Vision, Hearing Services
- Emergency Care
- Mental Health Benefits
- Hospitalization
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Partial Hospitalization for Mental Health Services
- Rehabilitation Therapies
- Home Health Care
- Maternity Care
- Hospice and Palliative Services
- Medically Necessary Orthodontia
- Autism Spectrum Disorder and Related Services



PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SOCIAL SECURITY SCAMS

Be on the lookout for fake calls, texts, and emails

Scammers are pretending to be government employees. They may threaten you and may demand immediate payment to avoid arrest or other legal action. Do not be fooled!

Be Alert

Social Security may call you in some situations but will **never**:

- Threaten you.
- Suspend your Social Security number.
- Demand an immediate payment from you.
- Require payment by cash, gift card, pre-paid debit card, or wire transfer.
- Ask for gift card numbers over the phone or to wire or mail cash.



Social Security may email or text you about programs and services, but will never ask for a return call to an unknown number. Social Security only sends emails or text messages if you have opted in to receive them and only in limited situations, including the following:

- When you have subscribed with Social Security to receive updates and notifications by text or email.
- As part of Social Security's enhanced security when accessing your personal my Social Security account.

If you receive a suspicious call, text, or email:

- ➔ Hang up.
- ➔ DO NOT return unknown calls, texts, or emails.
- ➔ DO NOT give money or personal information.
- ➔ Report the scam to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) by visiting oig.ssa.gov/scam

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- The caller or sender says there is a **problem** with your Social Security number or account.
- Any call, text, or email asking you to pay a fine or debt with retail gift cards, wire transfers, pre-paid debit cards, internet currency, or by mailing cash.
- Scammers **pretend** they are from Social Security or another government agency. Caller ID, texts, or documents sent by email may look official but **they are not**.
- Callers threaten you with arrest or other legal action.

BE ACTIVE

Protect yourself, friends, and family!

- If you receive a questionable call, hang up and report it at oig.ssa.gov.
- Do not return unknown calls, emails, or texts.
- Ask someone you trust for advice before making any large purchase or financial decision.
- Do not be embarrassed to report if you shared personal information or suffered a financial loss.
- Learn more at oig.ssa.gov/scam.
- Share this information with others.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

COVID-19 SCAMS

- Social Security Office of the Inspector General is aware of COVID-19 scams involving Social Security. The Office of the Inspector General will continue monitoring and provide updates on these scams.
- Scammers may offer a benefit increase due to COVID-19. Be very cautious of any unsolicited calls, letters, emails, or texts offering a benefit increase. Social Security will never offer a benefit increase in exchange for payment.
- The Social Security Administration has a web site listing frequently asked questions about Coronavirus and a person's Social Security. Visit www.ssa.gov/coronavirus for information.



- **Why do birds fly south for the winter?** It's too far to walk.
- **What do you say to your friend on new year's day?** I haven't seen you since last year.
- **What did the cat say on new year's eve?** Meow.
- **Do you know why when geese fly, one side of the V shape is usually longer than the other?** The long side has more geese.
- **My new year's resolution is to procrastinate.** I'll wait till tomorrow to start.

**BI-COUNTY
OBSERVER:**
Lehigh County Edition

Published six times a year for persons receiving services from the Intellectual Disabilities Departments in Lehigh and Northampton Counties.

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Funded by Lehigh & Northampton Counties' MH/ID Departments under contract with The Arc of Lehigh and Northampton Counties, Inc.

Thank you for choosing to receive the newsletter by email. Feel free to share the information to anyone that might find it useful.

We can always add someone to the bulk mail or email distribution list.

Contact Bob Madden to be included in the newsletter.

Phone: 610-849-8076 (ext. 317).

E-mail: bmadden@arcoflehighnorthampton.org

