WE WANT TO STAY IN TOUCH
if you have not been receiving breaking news emails and invitations to meetings, please send me your email address so we can add you to the email list. Write me at ldunshee@linkassociates.org

KEEP CURRENT
Check out our website at www.linkassociates.org
Hello all,

I think we as a group are more than ready for spring and some nice warm weather. Over the winter we have been busy finishing the new house for Link, which will be called the Bankers Trust-Gehm Home. It is a 4 bedroom fully accessible home and we are very thankful for all the donors who made this a possibility. We will be having our grand opening of this home in early April and are very excited to see the first people move in. As our population ages and as we see new admissions who have more physical limitations it is becoming more and more clear how critical accessible and affordable housing is in this community. We will continue to evaluate more of our current properties and seek more locations that can better serve the needs of those with physical limitations and our elderly population.

Later in this newsletter you will see information and a photo about Link’s GEM (good enough for me) Award winners. I could not be more proud of the ever changing GEM wall on the first floor of our building highlighting some of our amazing staff. Each week staff have the opportunity to submit comments about their peers for things that go above and beyond to make Link the best it can be for everyone. It is so much fun to read all of the wonderful submissions. From these submissions, the members of the Positive Behavioral Supports Committee select from those candidates a winner to earn a place on the GEM wall. I congratulate each of our GEM Winners, who are all very deserving and are truly amazing examples for all of us to follow.

As the Executive Director of Link Associates I am also so very proud of the diversity we have and the welcoming community we have built. Sometimes people ask “what can I do to help?” I have an answer for that - encouraging and supporting all of the diversity we have in our employees, those we serve and their families is critical. As with all matters of diversity – we cannot understand how another person feels or the story of their life that has brought them to where they currently are. These things are not about us - they are about the other person. What we can do – is treat each and every person in our Link family with all the dignity and respect possible and be proud of how we represent and support each other. We have some amazing people on our team who have not given up and quit with a higher wage beconed them away. They chose to stay and provide amazing care for those we support and that is worth our backing.

To each and every one of you who received and responded to our Holiday Appeal Letter - thank you so much. We were able to accomplish so many more things because of your generosity. I also want to thank Renate Shotwell, Program Development Case Manager at Link for coordinating that fundraising event. She does amazing work for the betterment of this organization.

You can always find new and updated information on our website at www.linkassociates.org. You can also see lots of fun photos, posts and updates on our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/linkassociates .

Finally, we need good employees and we know you are the connection to those who would be good enough to care for someone you love. Please encourage people who are interested to visit our website where they can see a full list of all openings and shifts.

Have a wonderful spring!

*Linda Dunshee*, Executive Director
COVID-19

I have already sent out an update to families and am adding that basic article here - there are a few new links for you to look at if you are interested.

We at Link are concerned about the lives affected by COVID-19 and the health and well-being of the persons served and our staff.

Link continues to monitor and assess this evolving situation and appropriately respond based on guidance issued by public health authorities and other known information. Current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization indicate that the immediate risk of being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low for most people and recommend everyday preventative actions to prevent spread of exposure. Link also is a member of Polk County Emergency Management and with Multidisciplinary Emergency Planning Committee thru Polk County Emergency who is also actively monitoring the situation.

Accordingly, at this time, Link’s operations continue to provide services and support persons served at other events as usual, subject to uniquely identified location- or individual-specific infections, or health risks. This includes any upcoming leisure sponsored events and community activities in both our residential and employment and day programs. However, Link understands that some people may have individualized risks or other reasons not to attend or participate in activities or programs, so please feel free to contact your supervisor at Link for additional planning and coordination.

The following is a summary of the consistent recommendations from local and governmental agencies to minimize your risk to any infectious disease, such as COVID-19;

- Wash hand frequently for 20 seconds
- Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands
- Use standard universal precautions
- Stay home if you are not feeling well
- Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing "with a tissue"

Should any person served be diagnosed with COVID-19 they should remain home, follow the advice of their doctor, separate themselves from other people in the home as much as possible and wear a facemask when in the presence of others outside of their bedroom.

At Link, we are ensuring staff are using the appropriate personal protection equipment when there is a risk for exposure and regularly cleaning and disinfecting all “high touch” surfaces.

We will update our website and provide further communication if guidance issued by public health authorities or other known information necessitates any change to Links services. For more coronavirus information, please visit:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- [https://idph.iowa.gov](https://idph.iowa.gov)

If you have any questions, please contact your supervisor and know that we are all committed to the health and safety of those we serve and employ.
WE NEED YOUR HELP

Link has been given an opportunity to compete in the Syverson Strege Giving Club and possibly win about $4,000!

Link and 2 finalists will present at the Syverson Strege Giving Club on Tuesday March 24th. After the presentations, Giving Club members/attendees will vote for the winner, who will receive the entire amount (usually around $4,000) minus $500 which is split between the two runners-up.

Any Link family member or advocate of Link may attend the Giving Club and participate - however each individual or family comes prepared to donate $250 to the Club. They then get to vote on the winner!

In addition to showing your support for Link, the Syverson Strege Giving Club is an opportunity to network with others and learn about worthwhile organizations. By attending and voting for Link, you will help us get one step closer to winning and helping us better serve those in the Day Habilitation program!

To register please visit: http://www.onlyworkforyou.com/resources/giving-club

Link Council

The Link Council is a group of persons served by Link Associates who give input to Link staff and participate in activities to better the agency. Most recently, the Link Council hosted a Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser. The Link Council also distributes birthday cards to persons served as well as winter holiday cards. The Link Council has made suggestions to the safety committee, purchased puzzles and games for Leisure and Day Hab services, and helped out in many other ways over the years.
Link has been given an opportunity to compete in the Styverson Strege Giving Club and possibly win about $4,000!

Link and 2 finalists will present at the Styverson Strege Giving Club on Tuesday March 24th. After the presentations, Giving Club members/attendees will vote for the winner, who will receive the entire amount (usually around $4,000) minus $500 which is split between the two runners-up.

**Here is how you can help** - Any Link Board Member, family or advocate of Link may attend the Giving Club and participate - however each individual or family comes prepared to donate $250 to the Club. They then get to vote on the winner!

Here are the details for the Giving Club afternoon, Tuesday, March 24th:

- **4:00-4:30 pm: Social Time and Refreshments** for Syverson Strege Giving Club participants.
- **4:15 pm: Three nonprofit representatives arrive** at Syverson Strege, 4125 Westown Parkway, Suite 104, West Des Moines.
- **4:30-5:15 pm: Introductions and Presentations**
  - Nonprofits in alphabetical order: ChildServe, Link Associates, On With Life, will present for 7 minutes with three additional minutes to answer questions.
- **5:15-5:30 pm: Voting and Awards**

In addition to showing your support for Link, the Styverson Strege Giving Club is an opportunity to network with others and learn about worthwhile organizations. By attending and voting for Link, you will help us get one step closer to winning and helping us better serve those in the Day Habilitation program!

If you want to participate, please register at [http://www.onlyworkforyou.com/resources/giving-club](http://www.onlyworkforyou.com/resources/giving-club)

**What is the Giving Club?**

**Giving Club**
The Giving Club...where we come together to share values, resources, and have fun!

Every generous person has a desire to make a difference, leave lasting change in the world, and put others’ needs before their own. The Giving Club provides the perfect opportunity to bring together generous people with outstanding charities in an informative and fun atmosphere.

**How does the Giving Club work?**

- Each individual or family unit comes to the Giving Club prepared to donate $250 (tax-deductible).
- Three charities will each make a 7-minute presentation
- Participants will anonymously vote for their favorite charity
- The charity with the most votes receives the entire amount donated (usually around $4,000) less $500 which is split equally between the two runners-up
- 100% of all donations go to the charities
SPECIAL ISSUE FOCUS: GUARDIANSHIPS IN 2020

Iowa legislators made some big changes to Iowa's guardianship laws in 2019. These changes took effect January 1, 2020 and have people asking a lot of questions. Our friends at Disability Rights Iowa have written an article to help you understand how these changes may impact you. Before we start, we wanted to make sure you understand the difference between a guardianship and a conservatorship.

In both a conservatorship and guardianship, a court appoints a substitute decision-maker for a person who does not have the capacity to manage their own affairs. While guardianships are designed to assist with personal and health-related needs, conservatorships are designed to assist with financial needs. A guardian will typically make decisions about medical treatment, safety, and living arrangements; a conservator makes financial decisions.

There were 2,603 guardians appointed in Iowa during 2018, about half of which were for adults. As you will read below, a video is being produced to help you learn more about these changes and will be posted on our website as soon as it is available. The Iowa Developmental Disability Council's guardianship and conservatorship guide is also being updated and will be available soon. We hope this information will help you better understand these changes.

The Iowa Legislature starts on Monday, January 13, so we'll be switching gears and beginning our biweekly publication schedule on January 24. Happy New Year - we hope you've resolved to find new ways to advocate for the issues that are near and dear to you.
NEW GUARDIANSHIP LAWS TAKE EFFECT IN 2020
By Scott Lyon, Staff Attorney for Disability Rights Iowa

In the 2019 session, the Iowa Legislature unanimously passed House File 610, which changes many things about how guardianships and conservatorships in Iowa will be established or maintained. The changes to the law took effect January 1, 2020. These reforms were years in the making, dating back to 2015 when the Iowa Supreme Court appointed a task force of over 70 attorneys, judges and citizens to review the law and make recommendations for reform in this area. The goal of the new law is to improve protections for people who are under guardianship or are alleged to lack decision making capacity, since appointing a guardian for an adult means stripping them of some of their basic rights and freedoms. Here are a few things you should know about the new law if you are a guardian or a person who has a guardian.

New Terminology

The new law eliminates use of the term “Ward” and “Proposed ward.” It replaces “ward” with “protected person” and “proposed ward” with “respondent.”

Elimination of “Voluntary” Guardianships

The old law distinguished between “voluntary” and “involuntary” guardianships. A voluntary guardianship was where a person could sign a form agreeing they need a guardian and courts could appoint a guardian for that person without a hearing. This occasionally resulted in vulnerable people being coerced into consenting to guardianship and losing their rights without a hearing. Now, all new guardianships will require a hearing and a record of the reasons why the guardianship is necessary. A person can still ask the court for a guardian for him or herself, but a hearing must be held before a guardian is appointed. For people who have existing guardianships that were set up as voluntary before the changes to the law took effect, those guardianships will continue but may be subject to some other additional requirements discussed below.

Initial Care Plans

One intent of the new law is to get guardians to think in detail about what they plan to do for the protected person, and to make a plan for achieving those goals. To that end, guardians must file an initial care plan with the court containing information about how the guardian will use their decision making authority and what the guardian plans to do for the protected person. In response to some confusion about how existing guardianships would be affected, the Supreme Court issued an order stating that for guardianships in existence prior to 1/1/2020, “Guardians […] have continuing authority to perform acts concerning the protected person that were authorized prior to January 1, 2020 through the date of the guardian’s previously scheduled annual report.” The Supreme Court has also provided an Initial Care Plan form that is mandatory for use by guardians who are filing reports without assistance from an attorney. Currently serving guardians should plan to file this initial care plan with their next annual report.

Changes to Annual Reporting Requirements

Under the old law, courts could and frequently did set the reporting period for guardianships at three or five years, or in some cases waived reporting requirements entirely. This led to a lack of a reliable record of decisions made and actions taken by the guardian on behalf of the protected person, which can be a problem if there’s ever a question about the protected person’s history or the guardian’s conduct. The new law requires annual reports on every guardianship – waivers or extended reporting periods are no longer permitted. Although existing guardians will now have to file reports annually, it is not clear whether those who previously had a waiver should do so before the end of the year, or just beginning with their next scheduled report. A guardian in this situation can call the clerk of court in the county where their guardianship is established and ask how the court would like them to proceed. As with the initial care plan, the Supreme Court has also issued a form for annual reporting.
Background Checks
As of January 1, 2020, all new prospective guardians will have to undergo a background check for criminal history, sex offender, and abuse registries prior to appointment. Courts have discretion to review the results of a background check when deciding whether to appoint a guardian – there is nothing that automatically disqualifies a person from serving. This requirement does not affect guardians who were appointed prior to January 1, 2020 – those guardians do not have to complete a background check.

Bonding
Finally, the new law now requires conservators (but not guardians) to post bond or a bond alternative. A bond is similar to insurance, where a bonding company charges a premium to guarantee that it will reimburse the protected person or their estate in the event of misuse of the person’s assets by the conservator. In the past, courts frequently waived conservatorship bonds which meant the protected person often had no way to recover money if a conservator stole from them, since bad acting conservators tend to not have much money of their own that could be sought in a judgment after that fact. This subject is more complex than this article is capable of addressing, but all guardians need to know is that bond or a bond alternative is not a requirement in guardianships, only in conservatorships.

These are just a few of the changes that will affect how adult guardianships in Iowa are established or maintained. Other changes to the law will have different effects on guardianships for children, as well as conservatorships for children or adults. Those subjects are beyond the scope of this article.

There is some misinformation and misconceptions about the new law. For those interested in learning more about the new law, a video for guardians containing accurate information about the new guardianship and conservatorship laws will be available later this month from the Institute on Guardianship and Conservatorship, a collaborative effort of the University of Iowa and Drake University law schools. If you are interested or have questions, you can contact the Institute via email at law-gcinstitute@uiowa.edu.

This information is not legal advice. Individuals should contact an attorney for advice on their specific situation before proceeding.
Iowa Guardianship Resource

Iowa Legal Aid and The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) have developed a guide to help further your understanding of guardianship and conservatorship in Iowa. In this publication, questions like "What is Guardianship and Conservatorship?", "Who Needs a Guardian or Conservator?" are addressed. The criteria for establishing a guardianship or conservatorship and how to set up a guardianship are explained, as well as how to determine the actual need.

We have added this to our website to make it easy for you to fine. It is on the information tab under stakeholder information or you can click the link below:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51ac0356e4b0be9ceadb4745/t/5e46f2cfa43f6e0674c6f2e1/1581707990327/Guardianship-and-Conservatorship-in-Iowa-2020.pdf

These materials are a general summary of the law. They are not meant to completely explain all that you should know about guardianship and conservatorship. You should see a lawyer to get complete, correct and up-to-date legal advice. Iowa’s law on guardianship and conservatorship is found in Iowa’s Probate Code starting at section 633.551

Submitted by: Joan Osborn, Link Case Management Director
Link Associates is a member of the The Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) held their Hill Day on March 5, 2020, at the Iowa State House. Although the event is for provider organizations it is a good day to visit with elected officials about our world and how we have been impacted. They will be geared up for many conversations.

Details:

- **Key Issue: Workforce!**
- IACP is Asking for a 10% increase with 75% passthrough for wages
- **Fiscal Impact:** $33M appropriation based on Governor Reynold’s fiscal request of 1%=$3.3M for HCBS (all waivers) and Habilitation
- **Why workforce is our #1 Priority:**
  - 99% of disability service providers have vacancies.
  - DSP turnover has nearly doubled since 2015.
  - DSP wages, funded through Medicaid, are directly impacted by rates set by the State of Iowa.
  - DSPs impact services, clients and communities.
  - Community providers are a $1.3 billion sector of the Iowa economy and operate in every county in Iowa. Our organizational impact reaches beyond the point of interaction in service delivery.

Please encourage your elected officials to pay special attention to the issue of the direct care workforce. In the next pages you will find the details of what they are asking for.
Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)

DSPs provide mental health and disability supports and services. They provide supports to Iowans to live, learn and work in their communities, not institutions. Some of the supports include cooking, cleaning, budgeting, shopping, banking, job development and coaching, transportation and community activities.

DSPs support over 160,000 Iowans.

99% of Disability Service Providers Have DSP Vacancies

Current DSP turnover has nearly doubled since 2015.

In August 2019, IACP conducted a survey of its 131 members; Community-Based Mental Health & Disability Service Providers – 71% response rate.

Impact

- Unable to accept referrals due to a lack of staff capacity leading to costly alternative placements.
- Negative consequences to people being served of workforce shortage:
  - Diminished quality of service
  - Reduced progress to individual goals
  - Exposure to possible harm
  - Decreased access to individualized community services

Report to the President 2017, Presidents Committee for People with Intellectual Disability
Raising Wages is the First Step in Addressing the DSP Workforce Crisis

Why
- Studies found employee morale and work ethic increase when employees believe they are paid a fair wage. Higher wages result in better physical and mental health and reduced “decision fatigue” leading to higher productivity.
- Higher wages lead to lower employee turnover.

Results
It is estimated the cost of replacing low-wage workers is equal to about 16% of the employee’s annual salary.
- Reduced turnover recruiting costs
- Reduced training costs related turnover
- Reduced absenteeism
- Increase in effective and consistent support

### Amount to Raise DSP Hourly Wage

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<tr>
<th>Request</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$4</td>
<td>$63,880,960</td>
<td>$102,519,040</td>
<td>$166,400,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$3</td>
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<td>$124,800,000</td>
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</table>

Dollar Amounts Listed Above are Based on FMAP SFY’2021 Rates for 20,000 DSPs
Which Medicaid Programs Would Be Impacted?
- Habilitation
- Home and Community-Based Services/Intellectual Disabilities (HCBS/ID)
- Home and Community-Based Services/Brain Injury (HCBS/BI)
- Intermediate Care Facility/Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/ID)

How do we ensure the funding goes to DSPs?
IACP recommends a 10% rate increase in the above services with a 75% pass-through for wages going to DSPs directly supporting individuals in services. 25% at employer discretion to cover FICA, benefits, administrative and overhead costs.

An $4/hour increase would raise the average DSP wage by $3.00

What is a Comparable Starting Wage?
As Advertised 10/21/2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Job Description</th>
<th>Current Wage</th>
<th>Comparable Wage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALDI</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>$13.50</td>
<td>$15.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>WOODWARD &amp; GLENWOOD</td>
<td>Resident Treatment Worker</td>
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<td>$13.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESOURCE CENTER</td>
<td>Patient Care Technician</td>
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<tr>
<td>KWIK STAR</td>
<td>Customer Service - Retail</td>
<td>$12.65</td>
<td>$15.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCDONALDSDS</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>$11.28</td>
<td>$13.50</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IACP Urban DSP Wage</td>
<td>$11.28</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IACP Rural DSP Wage</td>
<td>$10.94</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

$10.94 IACP Rural DSP Wage
What Have Other States Done to Support DSPs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Implementation Years</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>5% increase to rates</td>
<td>Majority passed through to wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>2020-2021</td>
<td>HCBS rate increase</td>
<td>19% increase in wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>2018-2019 2019-2020</td>
<td>3% increase to rates 3% increase to rates</td>
<td>Majority passed through to wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>2018-2020</td>
<td>8.5% increase to rates</td>
<td>No direct pass-through requirement, state reports vast majority utilized to increase wages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why separate Iowa’s community-based service providers from other health care providers?

- Nearly all of the services provided are funded through Medicaid
- Very little third party and private payment
- Lifelong Supports and Services
- Services are provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP)

IACP represents over 130 community-based organizations, employing more than 30,000 employees in Iowa who offer community-based mental health and disability services. Those organizations support over 160,000 Iowans in need of mental health and disability services. IACP members provide services in all 99 Iowa counties and annually contribute over $1.3 billion to Iowa’s economy.
Words just can’t express how thankful we are!

Forever Grateful

Thank you to the Meredith Corporation Foundation

The Meredith Corporation Foundation has donated $700 to Leisure Services to help persons served enjoy a Broadway Musical at the Civic Center. Thank you, Meredith Corporation, for your support of persons served by Link Associates so they can experience a very popular musical, Wicked!

Thank you to the William C. Knapp Charitable Foundation

The William C. Knapp Charitable Foundation is donating $5,826 to Link Associates to help with repairs and renovations for the Pebble home. The Pebble home was purchased by Link in 1988 and has been a home to Link Persons Served ever since. This is an amazing boost to help renovate this home!
In January, Link Associates celebrated our employees who had milestone anniversaries in calendar year 2019.
Check out our wall of superstars! The Link GEM recipients are on the main floor of the building right by the elevators.
Link’s Leadership

we say thank you for believing in us!
LINK ASSOCIATES 1452 29TH STREET
WEST DES MOINES, IA 50266

515-262-8888 PHONE
515-225-1631 FAX WWW.LINKASSOCIATES.ORG

MISSION ~ VISION ~ VALUES

MISSION
PROVIDING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR PERSONAL GOALS

VISION
LINK ASSOCIATES WILL BE THE RECOGNIZED LEADER IN PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

VALUES
DIGNITY AND RESPECT-QUALITY SERVICES-CARING ENVIRONMENTS PERSONAL CHOICE-LONG TERM COMMITMENT