




# The Link

A Community Mental Health Services of Livingston County Newsletter

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## Your Right To Vote: What you need to know

Voting is perhaps the most fundamental of all rights in American society. It is the foundation of our democracy. And votes count: in 2000, President George W. Bush won the presidential election by winning in Florida by a margin of 930 votes - out of six million cast.

People with psychiatric disabilities sometimes lose the right to vote because of state law voter competence requirements or because election officials, poll workers or service providers improperly impose their own voter competence requirements.

### ***Michigan State Voting Laws***

Every citizen in the state of Michigan has the right to register to vote and vote regardless of psychiatric disability or guardianship status unless another state law that prohibits you from voting applies.

### ***The Administrative Rules indicates the following:***

A consumer of mental health services has the right to vote. A consumer has the right to participate in the electoral process, including primaries and special recall elections.

A consumer determined incompetent, shall have the right to exercise his or her right to vote, except those the legislation may exclude from the electoral process by defining mental competence in any law of the state constitution.

### ***Practices of Election Officials, Service Providers and Others***

People with psychiatric disabilities often lose opportunities to vote when they are told by staff of nursing homes, hospitals and other service providers, guardians, family members, or others that they are not capable of voting and must not vote.

This practice is unlawful in the state of Michigan. Determination of incapacity to vote must be made by a court.

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## Your Right to Vote...

...Continued from page 1

### ***A Provider of Mental Health Services Shall do the Following:***

Provide enough time for a consumer 18 years of age or over, to register to vote.

Provide enough time for a consumer to obtain an absentee ballot or provide a consumer an opportunity to leave the premises to vote.

They shall not prevent a recipient from receiving campaign literature.

They shall permit a consumer to place political advertisements in his or her personal quarters.

Please note, if a provider violates your civil voting rights, this violation will be regarded as a violation of recipient rights.

### ***Voter Challenges***

If someone at the polling place challenges your right to vote, you should not leave without asking to vote a provisional ballot. Your provisional ballot should be counted if there are not proper grounds for the challenge.

### ***Helping Voters with Disabilities***

Some people with psychiatric disabilities may need some help with voting. People with disabilities have the right to get help with voting. People with disabilities can also decide who will help them vote, including friends or family members, service providers, poll workers or an agent of the employer, or, if the voter belongs to a union, an offer or agent of the union.

### ***If Someone Said I Cannot Vote, Who Can Help Me?***

The National Campaign for Fair Elections provides a link to online voter registration and information about what to do if you experience problems voting.

A call line staffed by lawyers is available to give individuals, including those with mental illness, advice and help with registration questions and any problems with voting.

The number is 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683).

If you are denied the right to vote because of a state voter competence law or because an election official, service provider or other person told you that you could not vote, you may wish to contact the Michigan Protection and Advocacy at (800) 288-5923 to see if they can provide legal assistance to you.

You may also contact the Rights Office of Livingston County Community Mental Health at 517-546-4126 if you believe your rights have been violated.



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Nicole Clark, LMSW our Hospital Liaison/Intake Clinician, has been recognized by the statewide Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) organization for her personal dedication and efforts as the volunteer Livingston County facilitator for the past 10+ years! CISM is designed to help people deal with trauma one incident at a time by allowing people to talk about it when it happens. Nicole has been able to help numerous families, police and fire organizations over the years.



Congratulations Nicole!

### Seeking a JOB?

√ Are you presently seeking employment?

√ Have you recently been down-sized?

√ Is the stress of finding a job getting to you? √ Confused about how to find employment?

Help is available regarding networking, interviewing and job research skills, career counseling, budget and finance issues, and dealing with the stress that comes with this major life-changing time in your life.

#### ***Job Seekers Support Network***

St. Patrick Catholic Church ~ 710 Rickett Road, Brighton

1st & 3rd Wednesday mornings 9:30 am to 11:30 am

2nd & 4th Wednesday evenings 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Call the Parish Office at 810-229-9863 or email ray\_blush@ameritech.net



### Group Corner



This column will be dedicated to informing you about the various support groups available in Livingston County

#### **NAMI** {National Alliance for the Mentally Ill}

##### **Support Group Meetings**

**Every Second & Fourth Tuesday**

**7 pm to 9 pm**

**First Methodist Church**

**400 E. Grand River**

**Brighton, MI**

Family members and consumers alike are welcome!

Call Barb at 810-231-6011 for more information.

NAMI Educational Meetings are cancelled for July & August.

They will resume Tuesday, September 2nd.

#### **Family And Community Training Series**

This series will provide education and support to families with loved ones who are mentally ill.

(Mentally ill family members are also welcome to attend, but the focus of these groups will be on the families)

Begins: NOW

Ends: November 18, 2008

6 Weekly Sessions on Tuesdays

From: 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Location: CMH Main Building

- ◇ Various Topics with Presenters
- ◇ Question & Discussion Period
- ◇ Confidentiality will be respected
- ◇ Any family member or friend is welcome to attend
- ◇ Sponsored by CMH at NO COST

Call 517-546-4126 for register

## HEALTH CORNER: Tips from our Medical Staff

### Managing Your Medications

*Managing your prescription medicines can be a challenge. Use these ideas to keep tabs on your tablets:*

#### Packaging is Important

- √ Use day-of-the-week pillboxes to organize what you should take and when.
- √ Don't ever mix different pills in the same bottle.
- √ Color code the bottles according to the time you take the medication. Your pharmacist should be able to help coordinate this.
- √ Keep medicine bottles away from moisture, heat, and light - which generally rules out bathrooms.



#### Know What to Take

- ⇒ Take your medicine at the same time every day, during another part of your daily routine, like brushing your teeth.
- ⇒ Avoid taking the same medicine twice - jot down each dose on a daily calendar.
- ⇒ Tape a reminder note on your fridge or somewhere else you'll spot it. Or buy timer caps that beep when it's time to take your pills.
- ⇒ Remember to take your medications with you if you'll be away from home.
- ⇒ Always double-check to make sure you're taking the right pill.



#### Keep the Facts Straight



- \* Keep a list of all the medicines you take, including vitamins, herbal supplements, an over-the-counter (OTC) medicines.
- \* Update this list regularly and share copies with your doctors and pharmacist.
- \* Bring all your bottles, including OTC medications and dietary supplements, to you next doctor visit. Your doctor can review them for interactions that could be dangerous.
- \* If you medicines become difficult to manage, ask your case manager or doctor to help you simplify your routine.

## Teen Mental Health Problems: What are the Warning Signs

The teen years can be tough for both parent and child. Adolescents are under stress to be liked, do well in school, get along with their family and make important life decisions. Most of these pressures are unavoidable and worrying about them is natural. But if your teen: is feeling extremely sad, hopeless or worthless, these could be warning signs of a mental health problem.

Mental health problems are real, painful and can be severe. They can lead to school failure, loss of friends, or family conflict. Some of the signs that may point to a possible problem are listed below. If you are a Parent or other caregiver of a teenager, pay attention if your teen:

### ***Is troubled by feeling:***

- very angry most of the time, cries a lot or overreacts to things;
- worthless or guilty a lot;
- anxious or worried a lot more than other young people;
- grief for a long time after a loss or death;
- extremely fearful-has unexplained fears or more fears than most kids;
- constantly concerned about physical problems or appearance;
- frightened that his or her mind is controlled or is out of control.

### ***Experiences big changes, for example:***

- does much worse in school;
- loses interest in things usually enjoyed;
- has unexplained changes in sleeping or eating habits;
- avoids friends or family and wants to be alone all the time;
- daydreams too much and can't get things done;
- feels life is too hard to handle or talks about suicide;
- hears voices that cannot be explained.

### ***Is Limited by:***

- poor concentration; can't make decisions;
- inability to sit still or focus attention;
- worry about being harmed, hurting others, or about doing something "bad";
- the need to wash, clean things, or perform certain routines dozens of times a day;
- thoughts that race almost too fast to follow;
- persistent nightmares.

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## Teen Mental Health Problems Continued...

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***Behaves in ways that cause problems, for example:***

- uses alcohol or other drugs;
- eats large amounts of food and then forces vomiting, abuses laxatives, or takes enemas to avoid weight gain;
- continues to diet or exercise obsessively although bone-thin;
- often hurts other people, destroys property, or breaks the law;
- does things that can be life threatening.

To find help, discuss your concerns with your teen's teacher, school counselor or others such as a family doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, religious counselor or nurse.

Free information about children's and adolescent's mental health is available through the CARING FOR EVERY CHILDS MENTAL HEALTH: Communities Together national public education campaign of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Call SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647; (TDD) 866-889-2647.

## 7 WONDERS OF CHICKEN SOUP

**Remember the saying "treat a cold and it lasts seven days, leave it alone and it's gone in a week?"**

Rest and patience may be the only "cures" that really work, but that hasn't stopped humankind from trying to find fixes, including the old familiar chicken soup. Here are seven reasons to "treat" your cold with chicken soup:

1. The broth - and all liquids - help loosen mucus and therefore ease congestion.
2. Warm liquids ease sore throats.
3. The steam from a hot bowl of soup provides warm, humid air that can ease coughing and stuffiness.
4. A 2000 University of Nebraska study found that chicken soup containing chicken and vegetables inhibited inflammation associated with colds, but chicken broth alone did not.
5. An amino acid, cystine, found in chicken is chemically similar to a drug prescribed for pulmonary illnesses such as bronchitis.
6. People have relied on it for hundreds of years. Chicken soup was prescribed for cold symptoms as early as the 12th century.
7. Don't discount the placebo affect: As a comfort food, chicken soup is by definition soothing.



## HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

### TRICK-OR-TREATERS

- \* Carry a Flashlight
- \* WALK, Don't Run
- \* Stay on Sidewalks
- \* Obey Traffic Signals
- \* Stay in Familiar Neighborhoods
- \* Don't cut across yards or driveways
- \* Wear a watch you can read in the dark
- \* Make sure costumes don't drag on the ground
- \* Shoes should fit (even if they don't go with your costume)



- \* Avoid wearing masks while walking from house to house
- \* Carry only flexible knives, swords or other props
- \* (If no sidewalk) Walk on the LEFT side of the road facing traffic
- \* Wear clothing with reflective markings or tape
- \* Approach only houses that are lit
- \* Stay away from and don't pet animals you don't know.

### PARENTS

- ✓ Make your child eat dinner before setting out
- ✓ Children should carry quarters so they can call home
- ✓ Ideally, young children of any age should be accompanied by an adult
- ✓ If your children go on their own, be sure they wear a watch, preferably one that can be read in the dark
- ✓ If you buy a costume, look for one made of flame retardant material

- ✓ Older children should know where to reach you and when to be home
- ✓ You should know where they're going
- ✓ Although tampering is rare, tell children to bring the candy home to be inspected before consuming anything
- ✓ Look at the wrapping carefully and toss out anything that looks suspect



### HOMEOWNERS



- ◇ Make sure your yard is clear of such things as ladders, hoses, dog leashes and flower pots that can trip the young ones
- ◇ Pets get frightened on Halloween. Put them up to protect them from cars or inadvertently biting a trick-or-treater
- ◇ Battery powered jack o'lantern candles are preferable to a real flame
- ◇ If you do use candles, place the pumpkin well away from where trick-or-treaters will be walking or standing
- ◇ Make sure paper or cloth yard decorations won't be blown into a flaming candle

- ◇ Healthy food alternatives for trick-or-treaters include packages of low-fat crackers with cheese or peanut butter filling, single-serve boxes of cereal, packaged fruit rolls, mini boxes of raisins and single-serve packets of low-fat popcorn that can be micro-waved later
- ◇ Non-food treats: plastic rings, pencils, stickers, erasers, coins



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[www.childrensafetyzone.com](http://www.childrensafetyzone.com)

CMHSLC  
2280 E. Grand River Ave.  
Howell, MI 48843

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Toll Free: 800-615-1245  
Fax: 517-546-1300

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Check Out Our Website at:

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

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## Autism 101 Resource List Web Links

Below are some resources for forums for parents of children who are newly diagnosed:

1. Growing Up Together - Autism Society of America: A Booklet About Friends with Autism  
[www.autism-society.org/site/DocServer/growinguptogether06.pdf?docID=4202](http://www.autism-society.org/site/DocServer/growinguptogether06.pdf?docID=4202)
2. Next Steps– Autism Society of America: A Guide for Families New to Autism  
[www.autism-society.org/site/DocServer/nextsteps06.pdf?docID=4203](http://www.autism-society.org/site/DocServer/nextsteps06.pdf?docID=4203)
3. Stress on Families-Autism Society of America  
[www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=life\\_fam\\_stress](http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=life_fam_stress)
4. Advice for Parents of Young Autistic Children (2004)  
[www.autismtoday.com/AdviceForParents.pdf](http://www.autismtoday.com/AdviceForParents.pdf)
5. Autism Overview: What We Know (National Institute of Child Health & Human Development)  
[www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/autism/overview/index.cfm](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/autism/overview/index.cfm)