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Senior Care News

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Senior Information/Caregiver Resource Center, Southeast Senior Services

Understanding the Medicaid Waiver Program: A Key to Staying in Your Home As You Age

The Alaska Medicaid Waiver Program helps seniors over 65 to remain home while receiving the same level of care they would receive in a nursing home. Most Alaskans want to stay at home but regular Medicaid



funds only go to nursing homes. That's why we have the Medicaid Waiver Program. It lets you stay home but receive care. You have to qualify for the program both financially and medically. Caregivers applying for a senior need a durable power of attorney.

THE FIRST STEP

The first step is to apply for Medicaid at the Juneau Medicaid Office. Fill out Form Med-4 (Application for Medical Assistance for Adults and Children With Long Term Care Needs). If you want help getting and understanding this form, please contact us. After your application is submitted, you will have an interview with a Medicaid caseworker, and you will have to provide documents relating to your financial position for the last five years. Then you will be conditionally approved or denied based on financial need.

To qualify for Medicaid, the income limit is \$1,656 per month and the asset limit is \$2,000. Individuals who are married are treated separately. Medicaid does NOT count the home you are living in as an asset.

Only after the first step has been completed can you move on to the second step, demonstrating your medical need. The first step may take four to six weeks.

THE SECOND STEP

The second step is to see whether you qualify medically. Now you must have a certified care coordinator who will act on your behalf with the Division of Senior and Disability Services. To find a certified care coordinator, contact us. A nurse will come to assess you in your home.

HOW MUCH HELP?

How much help do you need with personal care? You must show a clear need for help with daily living activities, such as dressing, toileting and cleaning up after, grooming, bathing, walking or wheeling, eating, bed mobility, and transfers. Needing help with housekeeping and shopping does not count. A senior does not need to qualify in every category, but must show need for a significant amount of help in two or three areas of personal care.

To get started on this four to six month process, call **Juneau Medicaid: (907) 465-3135 or 1-800-465-3165** or **Senior Information/Caregiver Resource Center: (907) 463-6177 or 1-866-746-6177**.



Are You Ready to File Your Taxes?

February 1 is the start of tax filing season for most taxpayers. If you get help preparing your taxes, bring your photo id, social security cards, birthdates, your current year tax package or label from IRS, 1099 or W2 forms, and a copy of last year's federal tax return.

Family Caregivers, look closely at medical deductions, especially special expenses. Items such as oxygen and oxygen equipment, eyeglasses, wheelchairs, hearing aids and batteries, travel costs (including lodging) to receive medical treatment may all be deductible. Seniors 65 and older also have special treatment in three ways:

- **Standard Deduction for Seniors** is higher than for those under 65
- **Taxable Amount of Social Security Benefits**, if any, needs to be calculated carefully
- **Credit for the Elderly or Disabled** may be available.

Seniors over 60 qualify for free tax assistance. Tax aide is offered February 1 thru April 15:

Ketchikan, Rendezvous Senior Day Center, Saturdays, 10 am-1pm; Tongass Federal Credit Union, Saturdays, 11am-2pm; Parks & Recreation, Tuesdays, 6pm-8pm

Sitka, Swan Lake Senior Center. Call Jane 907-747-8617. AARP Tax-Aide Site

Juneau sites will be announced later.

Modifying Your Home For a Lifetime

By Marianne Mills, M.S.W.
Program Director, SESS

Whether you are 45 or 85, it is never too soon to begin making your home safer and more accessible to last a lifetime. Some low-cost, easy changes you can make to your home now will greatly increase its comfort and safety. Learn about these changes at the 30th Annual Home Show at Juneau's Centennial Hall from Friday, February 27 through Sunday, March 1, 2009. The Home Show is open to the general public with a \$5.00 entrance fee. This year's Home Show will feature a booth specifically on home modifications as well as a seminar: "Home Modifications for a Lifetime." The goal is to help people continue to live in their homes for a longer period of time.

Beginning **Friday, February 27th** from 4:30—8:30 pm, the home modifications booth will be open. Experts in the field of universal design and home modification will be on hand to answer questions, and displays will give the public ideas of the kinds of changes they might implement themselves. The booth will also be open **Saturday from 10 to 6 and Sunday 10 to 4.**

The "Home Modifications for a Lifetime" seminar will be offered twice **on Sunday, February 28th: from 10:30 to 11:45 am and again from 2:30 to 3:45 pm.** Marianne Mills, Program Director of Southeast Senior Services, will give an overview of resources available to help pay for home modifications. An Occupational or Physical Therapist will talk about doing a home assessment, adaptive devices for home use and what devices are best for one's unique set of needs. Continued Page 3

Modifying Your Home...

Bob Tamone, CAPS of Tamone Construction, will talk about planning your home for the future and the range of small to large choices possible. Sara Boesser, Accessibility Specialist for SAIL and Retired Chief Building Inspector for the City-Borough Juneau, will talk about universal design, regulations pertaining to home modifications, and the process a homeowner needs to go through with the City. The panel facilitator will be Doug Fanyak, Aging and Disability Resource Center Coordinator for SAIL.

The seminar was organized by a group which met monthly, led by the AARP Juneau Community Council and including Kevin Ritchie from the Juneau-Gastineau Rotary as well as staff from SAIL and SESS/CCS.



Phone Discounts Available

Low income residential customers may apply for Lifeline and/or Link Up service. Lifeline offers discounts on basic monthly residential phone service. Link Up provides discounts on the installation of phone service. The yearly income limit for one person in a household is \$16,146; for two people, it is \$21,735. Call the Regulatory Commission of Alaska at 1-800-390-2782 for an application or SICRC at 463-6177.



February is American Heart Month. At its Tuesday, February 10 meeting of the Juneau Family Caregiver Support Group, the training topic is "How to Recognize a Heart Attack." Family Caregivers need to know these warning signs both for their loved ones and for themselves. Join us at 7-8 pm, Feb. 10, at The Bridge Adult Day Center, 1803 Glacier Hwy. Call Mary Lou Spartz ,463-6177.

Other Family Caregiver Support Groups

SITKA Meets at the Pioneer Home Manager's House. Call Brave Heart Volunteers: 747-4600

KETCHIKAN Meets at the Ketchikan Senior Center. Call Nicole Esau: 225-8080

Savvy Caregiver Classes

Coming in March: Sign Up Now

The nationally recognized Savvy Caregiver series will be offered every Tuesday evening at the Juneau Senior Center March 17—April 21, 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. The six week series covers crucial topics for Family Caregivers of a loved one with dementia. To pre-register for the free classes, call Amber Smith, 586-6044. Class size is limited.

Family Caregivers Eligible for Supplemental Services Grants

Do you need a smoke alarm, lifeline system, bed protector, grab bars in the shower, liquid nutritional supplements? Would an item or service help you care for your loved one more easily? Small grants are available to Family Caregivers in Southeast Alaska communities. Possible uses of the grants include assistive devices/technology; minor home modifications; basic living needs; medical; dental; vision; and hearing. Whatever the item or service, it must help or support the Family Caregiver.

The maximum amount is \$500 per client per fiscal year. Other funding sources, including public benefits programs and private insurance, must have been exhausted and/or are not available. Priority is given to Family Caregivers with the greatest social and economic need. Goods or services already delivered can not be reimbursed.

The grant recipient must be a Family Caregiver who takes care of a person 60 years and older with physical disabilities and/or cognitive disabilities (including Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder such as dementia or Parkinson's disease). A Family Caregiver can also be someone who takes care of a person 59 years and younger who has Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder such as dementia or Parkinson's disease.

To apply, contact the Senior Information / Caregiver Resource Center at (907) 463-6177 or 1-866-746-6177 or go online to <http://www.ccsjuneau.org> to download the form.

Put on Your Calendar

Juneau Home Show Home Modifications Seminar
Sunday, Feb. 28, 10:30 - 11:45am & 2:30-3:45pm
Booth Open Fri, Feb.27, 4:30-8:30pm; Sat, Feb.28, 10am-6 pm; Sun., March 1, 10 am-4pm



Humor Helps

A laugh a day keeps the doctor away. It's no joke that laughter helps people cope with pain and stress. Stress makes blood pressure soar, heart beat faster, and breathing shallower. Laughter does the exact opposite! So you feel better. Humor can give you a different perspective on a difficult situation. It's a natural anti-depressant which helps us balance our lives and feel more in control.

Ask yourself what makes you laugh. Who is your favorite comedian? Your favorite TV comedy? Your favorite comic strip? Make time for what makes you laugh. Collect cartoons for the refrigerator. Keep a journal of funny things. Borrow a joke book from the library. Buy a "gag" gift for yourself or a friend.

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To share information or make suggestions about newsletter content, contact Mary Halloran at 463-6198 or 1-866-746-6177.

To add or remove your name from our mailing list, email seniorinfo@gci.net or call 463-6198 or 1-866-746-6177 (toll free in Alaska).