

Moving On Up With MEPD

Self-Employment Seminars Held in September

Iowa MEPD members once again had the opportunity to attend a seminar to help them bring to life their plans for starting a small business. Cary Griffin, of Griffin, Hammis and Associates, made his third trip to Iowa to present his valuable and informative "how to" session.

Thirty MEPD members attended one of the sessions offered in Mason City on September 12-13 or Council Bluffs on September 14-15. The businesses being developed covered a wide range of ideas, including: lawn service, cleaning service,

engraving, and welding, plus various crafts and on-line businesses. We even had a dog doo removal service called the Scooper Doopers!



Cary Griffin presenting his Business Plan Model in Mason City.

During each seminar Cary went through his Business Plan Guide and discussed numerous real life examples from his work with people with

disabilities in setting up a business.

The MEPD members who attended each meet with Cary one-on-one to talk about their individual business or business concept. Together in this session they were able to individualize the information presented to the group. Most participants found this very helpful.

Here are some of the comments of the seminar participants:

"I feel more confident in starting my own business. I will write a business plan and present it to my counselor using the chart Cary presented."

"I liked the real life examples applied to the information. Sessions with Cary were a great resource."

"The most valuable from this seminar was the information I received to start up a business and the resources I learned that I did not know existed."

"I have already started my business, this helped my understand some more taxation and banking issues, Very Good."

"Thank you so much for including me—this was really inspiring and definitely worthwhile."

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MEPD Success Story

Hi, Jeri. Just wanted to thank you again for all your help and encouragement.

It took awhile, because I was completely overwhelmed with school, but I'm now registered w/MEPD and don't have to pay either Medicare B & D OR Medicaid premiums!

The best thing of all is that I can finally get the medical care I've needed for some time but couldn't afford. I don't think I realized until now how much that was weighing on me. A fall? Can't get an x-ray because I don't have coverage. A kidney stone (which I've had

for a year)? Can't have the recommended surgery. And on and on.

Now all that has changed. I've found a great internist in Iowa City, and she's scheduled me to see a number of specialists, have a bunch of tests, start physical therapy--in short, things I couldn't have dreamed of before. I have found that some professionals (like every dentist I've contacted in Iowa City) won't take Title 19 patients. I feel for them, since I know they've been squeezed so tightly by the government that they often lose \$

because of low reimbursements + all the paperwork required. Thankfully, my primary care doc has been setting up all the main referrals, and none of those have refused me yet.

In general, now that I have both the medical and the financial assistance, I realize how much I was struggling to stay afloat before.

I am very grateful for these services, and for your help in connecting me with them.

I hope you're having a great summer.

All my best,

Consumer Choices Option Coming Soon!

The Consumer Choices Option offers MEPD members who are also HCBS waiver consumers more choice, control and flexibility over supports and services.

The Consumer Choices Option gives you control over a targeted amount of Medicaid funds available under your HCBS waivers. You can use these dollars to develop an individual budget plan to meet your needs by directly hiring employees and/or purchase other goods and services. If you choose this option, you will pick an

Independent Support Broker who will help you develop your individual budget. You will also work with a Financial Management Services to manage your budget, pay for services and pay your workers on your behalf.

Consumer Choices Option allows you to self-direct your personal care services, your community living supports, and your employment supports and services. It allows greater flexibility to direct waiver funds to where you need them most.

If you feel the Consumer Choices Option is right for you, your case manager/service worker can provide help with accessing this option. More information can also be found at the website:

www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/HCBSConsumerOptions.html



Tax Time? - Let's Celebrate the Holidays First!

For many lowans, tax time can be a time to give yourself a gift of sorts, thanks to the **Earned Income Tax Credit** or **EITC**.

The EITC is a **refundable** federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families. Congress originally approved the tax credit in 1975, in part to offset the burden of social security taxes and to provide an incentive to work. A "**refundable**" credit means you get the money even if it is more than the tax you owe and even if you owe no tax at all!

To be eligible for a full or partial credit, the taxpayer must have **earned** income of at least \$1 but less than:

- \$36,348 (\$38,348 if married filing jointly) and 2 or more qualifying children

- \$32,001 (\$34,001 if married filing jointly) with no qualifying children
- \$12,120 (\$14,120 if married filing jointly) with no qualifying children

For tax year 2006 the maximum credits are:

- **two or more qualifying children \$4,536**
- **one qualifying child \$2,747**
- **no children \$412**

To get the credit **you must file a return** even if you do not have to one otherwise. The IRS won't send you the money if you do not file!

For **free** help in filing a return you should contact a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or AARP Tax Counseling

for the Elderly (TCE) site. These will be available mid January 2007. You may even be able to claim the EITC from the last two years, if you would have qualified! For further information, or to find a free tax preparation site near you, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 or to find an AARP site near you, check their website at www.aarp.org, and type *tax help* in the search box. VITA/TCE Site information will be available after January 1, 2007.

Records show as many as 20% of lowans fail to claim this tax credit, don't you be one of them!

P.S. You may want to ask about other state and federal tax credits or deductions designed for persons with disabilities.

Happy Holidays!

2007 MEPD Member Survey

The Department of Human Services will be conducting the third annual survey of MEPD participants beginning in January 2007.

Some of you may receive a letter letting you know that you may be contacted for the

survey. Not everyone who gets that letter will be contacted. The actual survey will then be conducted by phone.

If you do take part in the survey, your responses will be confidential.

Information gathered in this process is reported to state and federal policy makers and used to highlight the successes of MEPD and to make improvements. The participation and input of MEPD members is extremely valuable.

Help Wanted: Independent Support Brokers

Independent Support Brokers are needed across Iowa. People with disabilities and older Iowans that choose to enroll in Consumer Choices Option are looking to hire Independent Support Brokers. Consumer Choices Option is a new program for people receiving Medicaid waiver services. Through Consumer Choices, people may purchase their own services and supports using a monthly allotment of Medicaid funds.

Independent Support Brokers are key to helping people live their lives according to their personal aspirations and preferences. Support brokers help their clients design a personal budget for their services, hire their own workers and make any future

adjustments to their budget. For each client, support brokers work about 20-26 hours per year for up to \$15 per hour.

Training is available to potential support brokers at no cost. The 12-hour training sessions are offered throughout the state. Training includes hands-on experience in creating individual budgets and working with clients. **Training is limited to the first 25 applicants.** You must attend *all three* training sessions, 4:30 to 8:30 pm, and complete the necessary assignments to become a certified Independent Support Broker.

Training sessions are planned for the following cities in January:

- Sioux City, Tuesday January 9th, 16th and 23rd

- Marshalltown, Wednesday, January 24th and 31st and February 7th
- Council Bluffs, January dates to be determined

All support brokers must be 18 years or older and able to pass background checks. To learn more about becoming a support broker or to get the schedule of training sessions, please call toll free 1-866-691-4246 ext. 203 or send an email to e-epg@uiowa.edu.



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“Working together so all can work”

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People with disabilities, advocates, policy administrators, employers, and medical professionals working together to enhance opportunities for Iowans with disabilities to work and live as they choose.