# **Options Update**

# It has been awhile since Options has put out a newsletter, so let me update you on what is happening…Options closed its doors on March 17 due to the pandemic, but has continued to provide services virtually since that date. Although our offices and LEND equipment program are closed to the public, staff continue to provide all services virtually from home. All the phone numbers and contact information remain the same. During this unprecedented time in our nation when there is a lot of uncertainty looming, please know we are all in this together. So if you need us, please contact us, we are here!

# I also wanted to mention we celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26. This monumental civil rights law continues to remove barriers for people with disabilities. Although there is more work to be done, the accomplishments of the ADA cannot be overlooked. Happy 30th ADA!

# This addition of our newsletter contains voting resources, a consumer spotlight, social security updates, exciting assistive technology devices, mental health resources, and more. Enjoy!

# Take care and be safe,

# Sandy Popp, Director of Independent Living Services

# **HAPPY 30th Anniversary to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)!!**

**AND**

**Don’t Forget to VOTE!!**

# **Remember to Vote on November 3rd!**

# If you have not voted yet, there is still time! Early voting began in many communities on, October 20.  For those who want to vote early in-person, the Disability Vote Coalition encourages voters to wear a mask, and to check with their clerk or on [MyVoteWisconsin](https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/) for early voting locations and hours, and consider use of curbside voting.

# If you are not registered, you can register at your polling place. Remember you will need a picture ID to vote, or to register. If you are registering to vote you will also need proof of residency such as a utility bill or bank statement with your name and current address on it.

# Remember the words of Justin Dart Jr., (known as the Father of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Disability Advocate). “Vote as if your life depends on it! Because it does!” Please VOTE!

# Available Resources to help you with Voting

# Call your municipal clerk’s office or <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-US/MyMunicipalClerk>

# Disability Rights WI Voter Hotline at 1-877-347-8683 or email at [info@disabilityvote.org](mailto:info@disabilityvote.org).

# Disability Vote Coalition: <https://disabilityvote.org/>

# Dept. of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Voter Hotline at 1-844-588-1069 to apply for a free Photo ID for voting.

## **Self-Care tips During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

## Mayo Clinic – April 7, 2020

## [*Sarah Reichert*](https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/providers/sarah-reichert-licsw)*is a clinical social worker in*[*Behavioral Health*](https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/services-and-treatments/behavioral-health)*in*[*Red Wing*](https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/locations/red-wing)*, Minnesota*

## The COVID-19 pandemic can feel overwhelming due to new information, long work hours, and caring for your family and yourself. It's important to pause for a moment and collect your thoughts, as worldwide pandemics can be taxing. Remaining calm can help.

## It is normal to feel stressed or overwhelmed during uncertain times. Emotions in response to uncertainty may include anxiety, fear, anger and sadness. You also could feel helpless, discouraged and, occasionally, out of control. Physical responses may include headache, muscle tension, fatigue and sleeplessness.

## Taking care of yourself is important so you are equipped to help your family through this time.

## **Here are a few tips you can use to take care of yourself:**

## **Physical health:**

## Fuel your body by eating a healthy, well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water.

## Aim to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

## Exercise every day.

## Take deep breaths and stretch often.

## Avoid risky or destructive behaviors, such as abusing alcohol or drugs, excessive gambling or ignoring public health recommendations.

## Spend time outside, such as going for a walk in the park, but follow social distancing guidelines.

## **Mental health:**

## Set and maintain a routine at home.

## Focus on things you can control.

## Use technology to maintain social connections with your loved ones. Consider a regular check-in schedule to give you something to look forward to.

## Focus your thoughts on the present and things to be grateful for today.

## Listen to music or read books.

## Consume reliable news sources that report facts, and avoid media that sensationalizes emotions. Limit your exposure or take a break from news and social media if you find that it makes you anxious.

## Lean on your personal beliefs and faith for support.

## Look for ways to help your community, such as blood donations, checking on older people in your neighborhood, or donating supplies or money to local organizations.

# Acknowledge and appreciate what others are doing to help you and your community.

# **Do you feel …Alone? …Sad? …Anxious? …Unsure? …Angry? …Numb?**

# You’re not alone! Millions of Americans throughout the U.S. are struggling with many different feelings, thoughts and reactions to the challenges associated with COVID-19. How people respond to different situations is unique to each person and there is no “right” or “wrong” way to cope. Just like taking care of our physical health is important, so too is taking care of our emotional and mental health. Everyone has emotional and mental health needs. Being aware of available sources of support can be a helpful start to taking care of YOU!

# **Resources**

## ***Warm-Lines******Iris Place Warm Line*:** (920) 815-3217, or (920) 740-7473 (Cell) <https://www.namifoxvalley.org/iris-place/>

# ***Milwaukee Warm Line*:** (414) 777- 4729 (Statewide) Sunday, Monday, Wednesday & Saturday 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM email: [mkewarmline@mail.com](mailto:mkewarmline@mail.com) for Mary Kay Wagner ***Solstice Warm Line*:** (608) 244-5077 Call for details and hours [http://soarcms.org](http://soarcms.org/) ***A Kind Voice*:** (800) 876-2399 7-days a week 8:00 AM – 9:00 PM Topic based call-in line staffed by volunteers <http://www.akindvoice.org/>

# ***National Hotlines (Available 24/7)***

# **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**: (800) 273-8255 - For TTY Users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 1-800-273-8255 *Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio*: (888) 628-9454 (Espanol) ***RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline*:** (800) 656-HOPE (4673)

# ***National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline***: (866) 331-9474

# ***The Trevor Project* (LGBTQIA+ youth):** (866) 488-7386

# ***Disaster Distress Helpline*:** (800) 985-5990 ***SAMHSA Treatment Referral Hotline for Substance Abuse*:** (800) 662-HELP (4357)

# ***TEXT HOTLINES:* Text TALK to 741741** (*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)* **Text 838255 for Veterans or Service Members (*National Suicide Prevention Veterans Crisis Line)* Text TALKWITHUS to 66746 (*Disaster Distress Hotline*)**

# ***ONLINE CHATTING WEB RESOURCES:*** <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/> (LGBTQIA+ youth)

# **Consumer Spotlight**

# Ken is a father who lives in Door County and had a stroke 2 years ago. His adult children live across the country. The closest adult child, who lives in Milwaukee, noticed Dad needing a little more support and was told to contact Options.  After Options IL Coordinator, Stacie Scheibe, had a Zoom meeting with the whole family it was decided they would try an Amazon Echo show for the “Drop-in” feature, as it allows a video phone call to go thru with the other person excepting the call. Family members would be able to call through their I-Phones or their Echo Show and have 2- way virtual check-ins with their father.  Devices were ordered and with the assistance of Calvin Richtig, Options Assistive Technology Specialist, and Stacie Scheibe, Ken and the family were virtually trained on the set up and use of the Echo Show.

# Since that time, all family members have taken turns “dropping-in.” They are thrilled at how easy the process was for them. It allowed them to see their Dad when talking to him through the Echo Show, giving them the ability to provide virtual caregiving in a fun way.  A short time later the son from Milwaukee contacted Stacie Scheibe to let her know his daughter is getting married and they were going to “Drop-in” on their Dad, Ken, so he could see and be a part of the wedding service and the dance. Because of the COVID pandemic and Ken’s stroke the family did not think it would be safe for him to travel. Hence, as a result of Options work with Ken, his family, and the Echo Show, Ken was able to virtually attend his granddaughters’ wedding. Isn’t technology great!

# **Want to Get Involved in Legislative Advocacy? Join Act Now!**

# Do you want your voice heard, but feel just your voice alone would not be enough? Join *Options* legislative advocacy network, **Act Now!** Individuals in the network receive legislative alerts and updates on issues impacting people with disabilities. When an alert or update is received, everyone on the network is encouraged to pursue the issue by contacting their area legislators, combining your voice with many! Act Now alerts can be delivered either through email or US Postal Mail.

# Contacting your legislators about issues that may affect you, or someone you know, is important. Your legislators want to hear firsthand how legislation being considered can impact your life positively or negatively. It helps in their decision making. Joining **Act Now** will assist you in those efforts. This network will educate you on the issues and help you to advocate more effectively. The more people in the network, the greater the impact.

# If you are interested in joining Act Now, contact Sandy Popp at *Options* (920) 393-1043 or toll-free at (888) 465-1515, ext.179.

# **Benefits Buzz--** **2021 SOCIAL SECURITY CHANGES**

# Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for approximately 70 million Americans will increase 1.3 percent in 2021, the Social Security Administration announced today. The 1.3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits payable to more than 64 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2021. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2020. (Note: some people receive both Social Security and SSI benefits). The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics. Some other adjustments that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to $142,800 from $137,700.

# Social Security and SSI beneficiaries are normally notified by mail starting in early December about their new benefit amount. Most people who receive Social Security payments will be able to view their COLA notice online through their personal *my* Social Security account. People may create or access their *my* Social Security account online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount).

# Information about Medicare changes for 2021, when announced, will be available at [www.medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov/). For Social Security beneficiaries receiving Medicare, Social Security will not be able to compute their new benefit amount until after the Medicare premium amounts for 2021 are announced. Final 2021 benefit amounts will be communicated to beneficiaries in December through the mailed COLA notice and *my* Social Security's Message Center.

# The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. To read more, please visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/cola](https://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola).

# **Tech Closet News** Image of Wistech Assistive Technology Program Logo

Options AT Specialist can assess an individual with a disability to determine the role assistive technology can play in achieving greater independence. For more information on the pictured technology or other assistive technology that can help you reach your goal of independence, contact Calvin Richtig, Options AT Specialist, at 920-393-1037 or toll-free at 888-465-1515, ext.130. (*Assistive technology* p*artially supported by the WisTech, Assistive Technology Program. Telecommunication partially funded by the Universal Service Fund (USF))*.

**Echo Show-** Is a voice active personal assistant device that can support a person or their caregiver in the home or remotely. Voice activated video phone calling allows to visual talk with your loved ones without dialing the phone. Also the caregiver can remotely use the “Drop-in feature” to ensure a loved one’s safety. You can use the Echo show to voice activate or control remotely from your smart device lights, thermostat, door locks and so much more. You can use your Echo show to set up prompts and reminders to support tasks, medication management, general health and safety in the home.



**Locked medication dispenser-** To help regulate medication to ensure the right dosage at the right time the locked medication dispenser is the answer. You can program up to 4 dosages at a time over a 24-hour time period. Plus, dispenser will keep sounding its alarm until the medication is removed from the tray to ensure medication is being taken.



# ***Options* has HOME funds for Home Accessibility, Rehabilitation, or Repair**

# The HOME Loan Program provides deferred payment/ no interest second mortgage loans to make homes accessible or make home repairs. The loans are focused on providing resources to households that include someone who has a disability or is older and is at low-to-moderate income status. *Options* receives funds for the HOME from the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development through the State of Wisconsin Dept. of Administration, Division of Housing to administer the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME Loan Program).

# The loan must be paid back when the property is sold, transferred or ceases to be the borrower's principal place of residence. Types of projects include (but not limited to) ramp construction, bathroom, kitchen and bedroom modifications, along with general housing rehabilitation and repairs. The counties served by this program include Brown (outside Green Bay City limits), Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara, and Winnebago Counties. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements to be considered for a loan. For more information contact Steve LaFrombois at [stevel@optionsil.org](mailto:stevel@optionsil.org), 920-393-1044, or toll-free at 1-888-465-1515, ext. 122.

# **Options’ Medicaid Personal Care Program**

# *Options* offers a Personal Care Program for people with permanent physical disabilities who are: Medicaid beneficiaries, medically stable, require personal care services, and have identified an individual to provide personal care. The program is consumer-directed and includes personal care assistance with: bathing, dressing/undressing, prosthetics, grooming, eating, mobility in home, toileting, transferring, and incidental services (laundry, light housekeeping, meal prep).

# The consumer must agree to responsibly use personal care services and have back-up support available as needed. *Options* does not provide emergency or back-up personal care services.  Consumers utilizing *Options* Personal Care Program must have chosen an individual who they are interested in hiring. The Personal Care Worker (PCW) candidate must be at least 18 years-old and be trained in the skill(s) necessary to provide cares to the consumer. The PCW cannot be a parent/guardian of a minor child or a spouse.

# If you have a referral or would like more information on *Options* Personal Care Program please contact Valerie Tschampl, RN Supervisor at 920-393-1036 or toll-free at 888-465-1515, ext. 182 or e-mail at [valeriet@optionsil.org](mailto:valeriet@optionsil.org).

**Wisconsin WisLoan Program**

WisLoan is a statewide alternative loan program helping Wisconsin residents with a disability purchase assistive technology that assists them in living more independently and productively. Any Wisconsin resident with a disability over the age of 18 in need of assistive technology or home modifications is eligible to apply for a loan. Some examples of assistive technology include wheelchairs, hearing aids, Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTV’s), and vehicles with modifications, or the modifications necessary to make a vehicle accessible. For more information or to apply for WisLoan call Options at 920-490-0500 or toll-free at 1-888-465-1515.

# *WisLoan is a federally-funded project of the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation, and a cooperative service of the Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, IndependenceFirst, and BMO Harris Bank.*

# **Telework Loan Program**

# The Wisconsin Telework program is a statewide, alternative loan program that allows Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to work from home or from other remotes sites, e.g. work on the road or at a telework center. Loan funds can be used to purchase equipment, training to use equipment, extended warranties, and cost of maintenance and repairs. For more information contact the staff at *Options* for Independent Living at 920-490-0500 or toll-free at 1-888-465-1515.

# *This program is made possible through a grant from Rehabilitative Services Administration and authorized by Section (303)b of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and implemented by subsequent program regulation 34 C F R Part 373. The Department of Workforce Development-Division of Rehabilitation received the grant and provides programmatic and fiscal oversight. IndependenceFirst, a community based and consumer-controlled independent living center based in Milwaukee, administers the program in partnership with BMO Harris Bank and Wisconsin Independent Living Centers.*

**MISSION STATEMENT:** *Options* for Independent Living, serving people with disabilities in 17 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, is the pre-eminent non-profit organization of choice to empower people with disabilities. *Options* provides opportunities, through advocacy and education, for individuals with all disabilities and ages, to actively access their communities, maximize their independence, and connect with the resources and funding available to them.

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