



Supporting and empowering individuals with disabilities and their families through Education, Outreach, Networking, and Future Planning Services.



JANUARY 2018



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Bipartisan Bill Strengthens Social Security's Representative Payee Program

In December, Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee Chairman Sam Johnson (R-TX) and Ranking Member John Larson (D-CT) introduced the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017 (H.R. 4547), bipartisan legislation to improve and strengthen the Social Security Administration's (SSA) representative payee program.



The SSA's representative payee program helps approximately 8 million Social Security beneficiaries manage their benefits, if they are unable to do so themselves because they are children or have a condition that prevents them from handling their own benefits. In light of reports from nonpartisan government watchdogs and stakeholders raising serious concerns about how the SSA administers the program, the Committee held a two-part hearing series to examine the challenges facing the agency and identify solutions to help ensure representative payees are serving the best interests of Social Security beneficiaries.

[Read more here](#)

New Tax Law Highlights for Older Adults and the Disabled

Jeffrey Marshall, Esq.

The new tax law (the Tax Cut and Jobs Act or TCJA) is getting a lot of coverage by the news media. A main thrust of the TCJA is to reduce corporate tax rates. For individuals tax brackets are reduced modestly. The standard deduction is increased but the personal exemption is gone and itemized deductions are limited.

The TCJA is a sweeping law which will take a while for tax experts to fully digest. And don't be surprised if Congress makes changes through "technical corrections" legislation to deal with unforeseen consequences. Most of the tax changes for individuals don't take effect until the 2018 tax year and will apply to returns filed in April 2019 (but a notable exception is the medical expense deduction which is changed retroactively as discussed below). Most of the individual tax changes are scheduled to end on December 31, 2025.

[Read more here](#)

Community HealthChoices (Southwest) Started January 1st



Community HealthChoices (CHC), Pennsylvania's new Managed Long Term Services & Supports Program, began in the 14 county Southwest region on January 1st. The new program will affect over 80,000 older adults and persons with disabilities who are: dual eligible (on Medicare and Medicaid), getting long term care services at home through an Office of Long Term Living waiver, or in a nursing home paid for by Medicaid. Specifically, CHC changes how these individuals get their Medicaid coverage. For those getting long term care services, it also changes that coverage.

Nearly half of the affected population chose a CHC plan for themselves by the initial enrollment deadline of November 13th. The rest were auto-assigned to one of the three CHC plans available: Amerihealth Caritas, PA Health & Wellness or UPMC Community Health Choices.

Confirmation/assignment letters have been sent to those moving to CHC. These consumers should have received their CHC plan ID cards and Member Handbooks at the end of the month. If people are having problems with their CHC plan, accessing providers, or getting their needs met under this new program, they can contact OLTL's Participant Helpline at 1-800-757-5042.

In addition, consumers can contact:

* APPRISE (1-800-783-7067) - for help with questions or concerns about Medicare coverage or about how Medicare works with CHC.

* PHLP's Helpline (1-800-274-3258) - for help with problems getting care under CHC or understanding CHC coverage and consumers' rights when accessing care or services under CHC.



**Please join us on Friday January 12, 2018, for a presentation on
'Everything You Need to Know About Community Health Choices.'**

Time: 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Speaker: - Janice Meinert, MSW, Paralegal Pennsylvania Health Law Project

Location: ACHIEVA, 711 Bingham St., Pittsburgh, PA 15203

Attend in Person

Attend Via Live Webinar

For questions, please call 412-995-5000 x589 or email pyerina@achieva.info



2018 SPEAKER SERIES - REGISTRATION OPEN
Future Planning Series
Presented by ACHIEVA Family Trust and ACHIEVA Advocacy

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 9, 2018

Housing Options for Individuals with Disabilities
9 - 11 A.M.

Speaker - Michelle Stockunas, Program Manager,
ACHIEVA - "A Home of My Own"

Attend in Person
Attend Via Live
Webinar

FRIDAY MARCH 9, 2018

Understanding Guardianship and Power of Attorney
What's Best For My Loved One?
9 - 11 A.M.

Speaker - Nora Gieg Chatha, Esq.

Attend in Person
Attend Via
Live Webinar

FRIDAY APRIL 13, 2018

Update on Medicaid Services in Pennsylvania
9 - 11 A.M.

Speakers - Janice Meinert, Paralegal, Pennsylvania Health Law Project
and Erin Ninehouser, Pennsylvania Health Access Network

Attend in Person
Attend Via Live
Webinar

All programs held at ACHIEVA Offices
711 Bingham Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15203
412-995-5000 x589

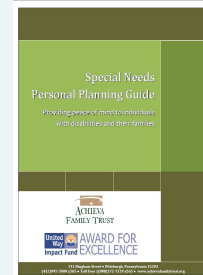
Free and accessible parking
Light breakfast provided

Sponsored by:

SPECIAL NEEDS FUTURE PLANNING RESOURCES

Special Needs Personal Planning Guide ([DOWNLOAD](#))

The Future Planning Guide is a resource and profile of your family member containing all of the information that makes them unique. The details of this picture include your family member's health history as well as their experiences with life and learning, family and friends and likes and dislikes. The Future Planning Guide assists in developing a plan to help ensure that your family member's needs are met day-to-day, on special occasions and in times of emergency.



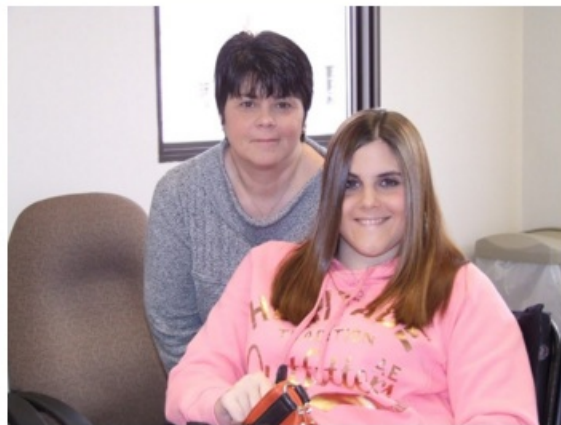
Future Planning Attorney List (Greater Pittsburgh Area) ([DOWNLOAD](#))



See our list of attorneys located in Pittsburgh and the surrounding area who have expressed an interest and are willing to assist families and individuals with disabilities regarding their future planning needs.

These attorneys can assist families in determining the types of future planning that will best meet their needs. In addition, these attorneys are able to draft future planning documents that may include a Last Will and Testament, Special Needs Trust, Power of Attorney and Living Will. If you are interested in future planning, please feel free to contact one or more of the attorneys listed in order to discuss your needs.

ACHIEVA Family Trust for Special Needs Trusts ([WEBSITE](#))



“ ACHIEVA protects her money from her going out and blowing it, or anyone else getting their hands on it. It helps her use that money and feel normal to do the things she likes. With the trust, Kara can do the same things that other kids do. ”

ACHIEVA Family Trust has been providing services to help families and individuals with disabilities plan for their future for more than 17 years. Individuals with disabilities and their families face significant challenges in planning for their financial stability. ACHIEVA Family Trust provides information to individuals and can serve as trustee for several kinds of trusts benefiting individuals with disabilities.

- Serves as Corporate Trustee for Common Law Trusts, Pooled Trusts and Payback Trusts to benefit individuals with disabilities.
- Distributes trust funds to increase individuals' quality of life while preserving eligibility for essential government services.
- Adds case management and social work expertise to the traditional role of corporate trustee.
- Utilizes the expertise of PNC Bank and Capital Group for Investment Management.

VIEW ARCHIVED WEBINARS

I WANT TO WORK BUT I AM AFRAID OF LOSING MY GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

Presenters: Bill Frase, Assistant Director of Community Employment, ACHIEVA, Joy Smith, Area Manager AHEDD, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Marci Katona, and Josie Badger, #IWantToWork Campaign Manager

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION

Presenter: Jeff Ruder, Esq., Ruder Law

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

WHAT'S NEW WITH THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS (ODP) - WAIVER RENEWALS FOR THE CONSOLIDATED AND PFDS WAIVERS, INCLUDING THE NEW SERVICES

Presenter: Kristin Ahrens, Director, Bureau of policy and Quality Management, ODP

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

MANAGED LONG TERM CARE AND WAIVERS

Presenter: Janice Meinert, Paralegal, Pennsylvania Health Law Project

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

HIPAA LAWS AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION/MENTAL HEALTH ADVANCED DIRECTIVES

*Presenters: Mark Zacharia, Esq., Associate Counsel, UPMC Corporate Legal Department
Julianne Washington, Esq.*

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

TURNING 26? HAPPY BIRTHDAY AND HAPPY NEW WORLD OF HEALTH INSURANCE

*Presenters: Sally Jo Snyder and Leslie Bachurski, Consumer Health Coalition
Libby Powers and Susan Saule, CHANGE Children's Hospital*

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

EDUCATIONAL TRANSITION PLANNING FOR CHILDREN AGES 14 - 22

Presenters: Dr. Erin Grimm, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Eric Jankoski, Baldwin Whitehall School District Transition Coordinator, Mary Hartley, 21 & ABLE, United Way of Southwestern PA, Sarah Vogel, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

GUARDIANSHIP & POWERS OF ATTORNEY

Presenters: Heidi Rai Stewart, Esq. and Matthew Lautman, Esq., Houston Harbaugh

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SSI, SSDI & REPRESENTATIVE PAYEES

Presenter: Elaine Cole, Public Affairs Specialist, Social Security Administration

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

MEDICAID, MAWD, & WAIVERS

Presenter: Erin Guay, Paralegal, Pennsylvania Health Law Project

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MEDICARE

Presenter: Bill McKendree, Team Leader, APPRISE State Health Insurance Program

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

ACHIEVA Family Trust

711 Bingham Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15203
(412) 995-5000 x 565

[Visit Our Website](#)

[Email Us](#)

ACHIEVA is an agency that is dedicated to providing the best quality services for people with disabilities in "celebrating abilities and exceeding expectations."

STAY CONNECTED

