



*In this issue:*

How should you treat a person with mental health needs . . . . . Page 1

Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority Maintains Adjusted Service Hours . . . Page 2

CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities FY 2014 - FY 2015 . . . . . Page 3

Partners Ink Agreements . . . . . Page 6

FEMA: Four Weeks Left To Apply for Disaster Assistance . . . . . Page 7

Off the Radar, Complete Devastation . . . . . Page 8



# **How should you treat a person with mental health needs? With Dignity!**

*By: Greg Borja, Projects Specialist, NMPASI*



like having social anxieties or seeing and hearing things that may not really be there. We all deserve Dignity in our lives.

October 10, 2015 is World Mental Health Day, and this year the theme is Dignity. Webster's defines dignity as: "the quality of being worthy of honor or respect."

We all experience challenges with our mental health. Whether it comes through stresses caused by work or trying to get your home back in order after a disaster; or more severe cases

The Mental Health Foundation states, "We believe that effectively supporting people experiencing mental health problems is on target to become one of the greatest public health challenges of our time. Stigmatizing and discriminatory treatment can be particularly distressing when a person is experiencing a health crisis." The Mandt System

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**For more information about World Mental Health Day, please visit <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>. For more on issues surrounding people with disabilities, please contact NMPASI at 235-7273/4 or visit us online at [www.nmpasi.org](http://www.nmpasi.org).**

continued from page 1

states that, “Dignity + Respect + Honesty = Trust, and when trust is in place, it is easier to ask for help...”

There are going to be times when we need to seek help for ourselves or for those we care about, and showing dignity to those in need helps to eliminate stigma or fear about mental health needs. We live in a small

community and know many around who could use our help when in a time of crisis, especially relating to the recent events that shook our islands. Ask someone if they need help and speak to them with dignity and respect to build on healthy relationships, I feel this is the “island way”.

Our society has been moving forward in the ways we treat

people with mental and/or physical disabilities. As the Mental Health Foundation puts it, “We all have mental health, and by failing to treat people with mental health problems with dignity we make it more difficult to ensure that everyone takes steps to safeguard their well-being and to seek help, as it can lead to self-stigma, low confidence, low self-esteem, withdrawal and social isolation.”

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**September 16, 2015**

## **COMMONWEALTH OFFICE OF TRANSIT AUTHORITY Maintains Adjusted Service Hours**

Capitol Hill, Saipan. COTA would like to express its sincere appreciation to all its riders for their patience and understanding as we help each other through the Typhoon Soudelor disaster and recovery period. We realize that the hardships caused by the typhoon may be frustrating and at times inconvenient. In order to help our valued customers through this difficult time, COTA resumed its Call-a-Ride service on August 7, 2015 with an adjusted schedule.

Mainly because of safety reasons, COTA adjusted its service hours. Many areas of the island are still without power and experience darkness as soon as the sun sets. As such, we hope to deliver all our riders to their destinations by 4:00 p.m. each service day. As of 16 September 2015, temporary COTA service hours are:

**Call-a-Ride Hours: Monday – Friday: 7:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m.**

Paying customers, please have exact change available.

**Reservations: Monday – Friday: 7:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m.**

Call 664-2690 at least a day in advance.

**Closed: Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays**

This adjusted schedule is only a temporary measure until disaster efforts subside and things return to normal. If you have any questions, please visit our website at [www.COTA.gov.mp](http://www.COTA.gov.mp) or call 664-2682.

**Alfreda Camacho**  
Special Assistant for Public Transportation

# CNMI COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

## *Upcoming Events*



- The Commonwealth Coalition on Anti-Stigma of Mental Illness (CAMI).
- The CNMI Office of Transportation Authority (COTA)

*Paid for with funds from the Developmental Disabilities Basic Grant - Part B.*

September 2015 -- Disability Network Partners meets with JoAnn Scordino, FEMA Disability Integration Advisor at the Center for Living Independently. Partners discussed providing technical support and resources to individuals with disabilities, senior citizens and their families seeking FEMA and/or other disaster assistance at the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) in Susupe on September 28 – 30, 2015.

Representatives of the Disability Network Partners:

- The CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities (CDD)
- The University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)
- The Office of Vocational

Rehabilitation (OVR)

- The Center for Living Independently (CLI)
- The Independent Living Group (ILG)
- State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
- The Autism Society of the CNMI (ASCNMI)
- The Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. (NMPASI)
- The VOICES Self Advocacy Group of the CNMI
- The Commonwealth Respite Service Program (CRSP)
- The Trankilu Alternative Financing Program (TAFFP)

### ANNOUNCEMENT



*The Disability Network Partners on Saipan will be available at the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) in the Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe on September 28th, 29th, and 30th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. We will provide technical support and resources to individuals with disabilities, senior citizens and their families who are seeking FEMA and / or other additional disaster assistance.*

*If you need reasonable accommodation, please call 235-7273/4 or visit NMPASI by September 25th, 2015.*



## **AYUDA NETWORK, INC.**

### **COMMONWEALTH RESPITE SERVICE PROGRAM**

#### ***“Family Respite: Worthwhile Giving” Workshop***

The Commonwealth Respite Service Program, under the Ayuda Network, Inc. is inviting family caregivers, private clinics, service providers and all interested individuals for a one day workshop on “Family Respite: Worthwhile Giving” on October 02, 2015 at the Fiesta Resort & Spa from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The purpose of the workshop is to provide information for respite services from private and government agencies and availability of services for families with children and adults with developmental disabilities, primary caregivers of aging parents/ relatives, and medically fragile individuals.

To register for the workshop, please call Ayuda Network, Inc. at 322-7469 from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Registration deadline for this workshop is September 30, 2015 at 3:30 p.m. For special accommodations, please call 322-7469 by September 25, 2015.

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*Paid for with funds from the Developmental Disabilities Basic Grant - Part B.*

# Partners Ink Agreements

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) signed off on four (4) memoranda of understanding with its partners, the Public School System Special Education Program (PSS-SPED), the Northern Marianas College (NMC), the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority (COTA), and the Rota Mayor's Office (RMO) in the second half of FY 2015.

On April 21, 2015, OVR and NMC formalized their agreement to ensure that students with disabilities successfully transition from post-secondary education to employment. OVR's primary purpose is to prepare individuals with disabilities for competitive, integrated employment. NMC, on the other hand, provides students with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, and expertise consistent with their abilities.

The OVR-NMC memorandum of understanding clarifies the roles and responsibilities of both entities. The agreement aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- Enhance coordination and communication,
- Ensure consistent services are provided to students jointly served, and
- Make certain the partners understand their responsibilities in providing services to mutual clients.

Both OVR and NMC promote the practice of co-location, whereby a Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselor (VRTC) is on-site at the college campus for a few hours each month to ensure that students with disabilities are given the opportunity to access the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

\*\*\*\*\*

On May 27, 2015, OVR and the PSS-SPED have agreed to the terms and conditions of their interagency cooperative agreement, which essentially aims to provide more effective services to individuals with disabilities consistent with the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Of great interest to both OVR and PSS-SPED is the smooth transfer of assistive technology to OVR-eligible students with disabilities as they transition from secondary education to employment, continued education, or independent living. OVR may procure the assistive technology device from PSS-SPED, especially those that have been customized for a particular student, at its depreciated value for the sole benefit of the student. This best practice ensures that the assistive technology leaves high school together with the student and is put to most effective use.

In addition, consistent with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) signed into law by President



Obama in July of 2014, both OVR and PSS-SPED agree to work together to ensure that students with disabilities ages 16-21 are provided with pre-employment transition services, otherwise known as PETS, to ensure they are equipped with the skills needed to compete in the 21st century workforce. These services include: job exploration counseling, work-based learning opportunities, counseling on post-secondary educational opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. Fifteen percent (15%) of OVR's Title I-Basic Support funds must be reserved to provide pre-employment transition services.

In December of 2014, OVR hired a Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselor (VRTC) to focus on working with the high schools in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to ensure that students with disabilities and their parents/families are made aware of the program and services of the OVR so that they may apply if assistance is needed to prepare for, secure, obtain, or maintain employment. VRTC Colleen Diaz has expanded her outreach to also include students at the Northern Marianas College (NMC) and the Northern Marianas Trades Institute (NMTI).

\*\*\*\*\*

The Rota Mayor's Office (RMO) and OVR renewed its memorandum of understanding effective July 28, 2015.

Each month – weather and circumstances permitting – VRC Jane Tudela and VRTC Colleen Diaz travel to the island of Rota for the purpose of conducting outreach. Aside from meeting with current clients of OVR, Tudela and Diaz make the time to meet with other members of the community who are interested in applying for vocational rehabilitation services. While in Rota, the RMO

*continued on page 6*

*continued from page 5*

has generously provided an office space situated at the Rota Public Library where OVR counselors could meet with their clients (this kind gesture was also extended to OVR's partners-the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc.). In addition, the Rota point of contact for VR services is Jimmy Apatang who will inform OVR of new referrals, assist with intake/application, coordinate meetings, schedule counselor visits, and share information pertaining to programs, services, or opportunities in Rota that may be of benefit to consumers in pursuit of competitive, integrated employment and increased independence.

And, consistent with the MOU, OVR is mandated to ensure that applications are entertained in a timely manner with eligibility determinations being made within 60 days of application date and that the Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) are developed within 60 days of eligibility determination.

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For two (2) years now, OVR, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority (COTA) have been working together to provide Call-a-Ride services to their mutual clientele.

Under the terms and conditions of the renewed memorandum of understanding, COTA has kept its cost the same at \$3 per 1-way segment for a qualified rider, with no fee assessed for a personal attendant, child under 5 years of age, or service animal/pet. In addition, COTA does not require of OVR clients that their disability be certified by a medical professional or physician because verification or validation by OVR continues to be sufficient.

This streamlining of the process is most effective and desired, and OVR is grateful to COTA for the accommodation.

### **NDEAM Postponed**

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) would like to inform the general public that due to the internet fiber optics dilemma in July and Typhoon Soudelor in August with resulting lack of power well into September, OVR has decided to postpone the celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), which will not be celebrated in October, as it usually is, and instead to coincide NDEAM activities with those during Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in March 2016. Thank you for your understanding.

### **OVR's Temporary Phone Numbers**

Because of damages to its buildings by Typhoon Soudelor, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) would like to inform the public of its alternate phone numbers below:

- **Counseling Office** – 322-6548 or 287-6548
- **Administration Office** – 322-6449 or 287-6538

OVR may be contacted via e-mail at [nmidir@ovrgov.net](mailto:nmidir@ovrgov.net). Fax lines continue to be down. We apologize for any inconvenience and appreciate your continued understanding.

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*This article is paid for with federal funds made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*

OVR would like to extend its sincere appreciation to its partners who have helped in one way or another in the discussions, negotiations, development, reviews, and approval of the various interagency cooperative agreements:

#### ***State Rehabilitation Council Members***

(Chairperson Pamela Sablan, James Rayphand, Victorino Cepeda, Monika Diaz-Tinian, and Anna Yamada)

#### ***Northern Marianas College***

(President Dr. Sharon Hart, Counseling Director Timothy Baker, and Daisy Castro-former DSS Counselor)

#### ***Public School System***

#### ***Special Education Program***

(PSS Commissioner Rita Sablan, Ed.D and SPED Director Suzanne Lizama)

#### ***Rota Mayor's Office***

(Honorable Mayor Efraim M. Atalig)

#### ***Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority***

(Special Assistant for Public Transit Alfreda Camacho and Vince Merfalen)

#### ***Office of the Attorney General***

(AG Edward Manibusan and AAG Teresita Sablan)

Our apologies to those whom we inadvertently failed to mention or include.

**For information about OVR, please check out [www.ovrgov.net](http://www.ovrgov.net) .**



FEMA

Sep 5, 2015

NR 024

DR-4235--CNMI

FEMA News Desk: (510) 612-8691; (626) 646-6813

CNMI News Desk: (670) 237-8040; (670) 237-8041

SBA News Desk : (670) 788-1062

**FOUR WEEKS LEFT TO APPLY FOR DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

**Saipan** – Only one month remains for Saipan homeowners, renters, and business owners who suffered damages from Typhoon Soudelor to register. Commonwealth and federal officials are urging anyone who still needs to register to do so before the registration deadline of October 5th.

“The deadline is only a month away and we don’t want anyone with disaster damages to miss this opportunity for assistance,” said Commonwealth Governor Eloy Inos, “Register, get into the FEMA system and let’s find out what you are eligible for.”

Individuals and households on Saipan can register with FEMA by calling 1-800-621-3362; those who have a speech disability or hearing loss and use TTY, should call 1-800-462-7585 directly; for those who use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS), call 1-800-621-3362.

Multilingual interpreters are available at the FEMA registration number, including Chinese, Tagalog, Japanese, and Korean.

Survivors can also apply online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov).

Survivors should have the following information when they register:

- Address with zip code
- Directions to property
- Condition of your damaged home
- Insurance information, if available
- Phone number where you can be contacted
- Address where you can get mail
- Social Security Number \*\*If you do not have your SSN card, you can show a Medicare/Medicaid card, W2 form, or filed tax return.

“The October 5 deadline is coming up quickly,” Federal Coordinating Officer Stephen M. DeBlasio Sr., said. “If you know someone who was affected by Typhoon Soudelor, please encourage them to take a few minutes to register with FEMA and learn how we can help them.”

**FOUR WEEKS LEFT TO APPLY FOR DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

Disaster assistance many include grants to help pay for temporary housing, home repair and other serious disaster-related expenses not covered by insurance or other sources.

**US Small Business Administration:**

Businesses of all sizes and private nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business assets. SBA can also lend additional funds to businesses and homeowners to help with the cost of improvements to protect, prevent or minimize the same type of disaster damage from occurring in the future.

For small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture, and most private non-profit organizations of any size, SBA offers Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) to help meet working capital needs caused by the disaster. EIDL assistance is available to businesses regardless of any property damage.

Disaster loans up to \$200,000 are available to homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property.

Interest rates can be as low as 4 percent for businesses, 2.625 percent for private nonprofit organizations and 1.875 percent for homeowners and renters with terms up to 30 years. Loan amounts and terms are set by SBA and are based on each applicant’s financial condition.

For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 1-800-659-2955 (TTY 1-800-877-8339).

For the latest information on CNMI’s recovery from Typhoon Soudelor, visit [FEMA.gov/Disaster/4235](http://FEMA.gov/Disaster/4235).

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*FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*

*The SBA is the federal government’s primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners, and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For more information, applicants may contact SBA’s Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center by calling (800) 659-2955, emailing [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov), or visiting SBA’s website at [www.sba.gov/disaster](http://www.sba.gov/disaster). Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may call (800) 877-8339.*

# Off the Radar, Complete Devastation

By Josh Logue

*“No one was prepared,” said Sharon Hart.*

*The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, where Hart has worked for four years as president of its only community college (and only public institution of higher education), is a United States territory that lies 2,500 miles north of Australia. By August, the island chain had already ridden out six storms this year.*



*“This one, even in the afternoon, we were being told was only going to have winds of maybe 70 miles per hour,” Hart said. “To most of us that’s just a storm. All of us were absolutely shocked when after midnight that night, we were hit with over ... 215 miles per hour winds, which literally devastated much of the island.” That was Typhoon Soudelor. The early August storm left dozens dead in China and Taiwan, millions without power, and thousands in need of shelter.*

*The Northern Mariana Islands, where Soudelor first made landfall, escaped with no fatalities, but sustained severe damage to homes, businesses and the island’s infrastructure. And Northern Marianas College, a land-grant community college serving thousands of primarily indigenous students, saw destruction on a level not seen on an American campus since hurricane Katrina.*



*When Hart, president of Northern Marianas College, first stepped back onto the central campus on the island of Saipan after the storm, she said, “Truthfully, I started to cry.”*



*“I think sometimes when you’re on a small island like this,” Hart said, tearing up during an interview in Washington, where she is trying to rally support and funding for the college, “when you are a U.S. territory, most of the U.S. has no idea the devastation of what you’ve gone through because you aren’t on most people’s radars.”*

This article is paid for with federal funds made possible by a grant from the Pacific Basin University Centers - University Centers of Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD).