



THE CNMI DESIGNATED PROTECTION & ADVOCACY SYSTEM:

Providing legally - based advocacy services on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families

Advancing the understanding of and appreciation for P&A services and disability related issues

Enhancing the quality of P&A services and efficiency of the organizations operations

Posse

Charging through the Barriers of Discrimination

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020

Happy Anniversary IDEA!



45 years ago, the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) was passed into legislation that ensures all children with Disabilities are entitled to a free Public Education that is personalized to their individual needs. I through the IDEA was able to avail of an AT device/ manual wheelchair from the Public

School System (PSS) Special Education (SPED) program. With the manual wheelchair I was able to socialize with other abled bodied students, which made me become more independent, and allowed me to focus on class lectures and assignments. I availed of additional SPED services like Physical Therapy and recreational rehabilitation in elementary, throughout Junior High and High School. I went on to enroll in the Northern Marianas College where I also availed of the Disability Support Services. Which included such services like a note taker, extra time, assistance with and early registration, to make it accessible for all Individuals with mental or physical disabilities. With all these IDEA services that

were provided to me, I was able to gain and maintain competitive employment. It all would have not been possible if it wasn't for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Below is a link to IDEA and a video on the history of the IDEA.

idea@ed.gov and <https://youtu.be/6prXbZm07m4>

Happy 45 years IDEA!

By: JOHN CABRERA
Program Aide

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The return of the Posse

Years ago our organization created and disseminated a newsletter that was meant to provide our CNMI community with information and stories about people with disabilities and the promotion of Protection & Advocacy. Protection & Advocacy systems (P&A) were established by the United

States Congress to address public outcry in response to abuse, neglect, and lack of programming for people with disabilities. P&As are located in each state and territory providing direct representation to qualified people with disabilities. Our goal is to publish our newsletter on a quarterly

basis in order to provide meaningful interaction with our community. To reserve a copy please contact our offices at 235-7273/4 or visit us online at www.nmpasi.org.

This publication is paid for in full through federal funds from the US Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the US Department of Education (DOE), and the Social Security Administration (SSA).



Wellness

By: DAWN MARGARET SARMIENTO SABLAN
Projects Specialist

With all the changes we all encountered this year, it is a good time to take our wellness into consideration as we enter into the new year. Wellness is a term thrown out often, but what does it really mean and what does it cover? According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration or SAMHSA, wellness is a “whole-person, strength-based approach to health.” SAMHSA focuses on eight dimensions of wellness that would be beneficial for improving a person’s quality of life. They are 1) **Emotional**, 2) **Environmental**, 3) **Financial**, 4) **Intellectual**, 5) **Occupational**, 6) **Physical**, 7) **Spiritual**, and 8) **Social**. By focusing on our individual strengths of the eight dimensions of wellness, we would be able to optimize our health and build resiliency when faced with traumatic events such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. Here are some ways we could optimize our health by balancing the eight dimensions of wellness.

1. **Emotional wellness** deals with how we feel and how we cope with day to day stressors. To do that, we need to be able to check in with our relationship with ourselves and others. We need to be comfortable with taking time to ask ourselves how we are feeling and what can we do to improve our quality of life. Some ways to manage our emotional wellness may include listening to music, writing down our feelings, or meditating.
 2. **Environmental wellness** deals with our surroundings. Our surroundings will affect how we feel. We need to feel safe and welcomed in order to be at peace or maintain wellness. Some ways to manage our wellness may include going out in nature, cleaning and decluttering, or working with our communities to feel safe at home.
 3. **Financial wellness** deals with how we manage our money. Being financially secure, especially during times of crisis, will help take away some of the worry because we would have the financial means to keep going. Some ways to manage our financial wellness may include having an emergency savings fund, limiting the amount of money we borrow, or by choosing to stay at home to cook instead of going out to eat.
 4. **Intellectual wellness** deals with our knowledge and skills. Honing on one specific skill set and choosing to learn everyday will help keep our minds active. Some ways to manage our intellectual health may include completing puzzles, reading, or talking with individuals who agree or disagree with our viewpoints.
 5. **Occupational wellness** deals with the satisfaction or enjoyment of the job you have or are doing. We spend a majority of our time at work so finding meaningful work and building workplace relationships is important to balance our overall wellness. Take time to eat lunch with coworkers, schedule family outings, and maintain meaningful communication throughout the week.
 6. **Physical wellness** deals with how much physical activity we do, how healthy we eat, and how much sleep we get. Exercising, eating a well-balanced diet, and getting enough quality sleep at night are simple ways to balance our physical wellness.
 7. **Spiritual wellness** deals with our own set of values and beliefs. By having principles, we may be able to find purpose in our life. Helping others, meditating, or joining a religious group are ways to manage spiritual wellness.
 8. **Social wellness** deals with our connection with others. Creating positive healthy relationships with others helps bring a sense of connection and support. Having a support system will make balancing the 8 dimensions of wellness easier to maintain.
- When going down the list of the eight dimensions of wellness it is obvious that they are all interconnected because wellness is the holistic approach to our overall health. The pandemic surely has affected and left a majority of us to think constantly about the negative; but, with support and determination to live a better life, we must take the time to take care of ourselves. By interconnecting and balancing the eight different dimensions, we would be able to improve our quality of life that is focused on our strengths.

A Parent's Guide to Virtual Learning



By: **ELSIE TILIPAO**
Projects Specialist

In this time of pandemic, we are all facing challenges in receiving services, particularly students receiving special education services. While we all probably prefer face to face instruction, many parents in our community face additional anxiety surrounding the impact of this interruption of classroom learning time in this time of so much uncertainty.

The National Center for Learning disability came out with a great guide to help parents improve their child's experience with online learning. This guide highlighted four actions that parents need to take to help their child succeed in virtual learning:

1. There are research based best practices for children with disabilities who are engaged in online learning. Encourage your child's teacher to use them.

- Face-to-face interactions are key. It's important for children with disabilities to have virtual face-to-face interactions with their teachers. Using video will allow teachers to pick up verbal and physical cues and gauge your child's confidence and understanding during online instruction.

- Measuring understanding needs to be ongoing. Frequent surveys, online quizzes, chats, and other ways to check understanding will be particularly important when using distance learning.

- Students need multiple ways to engage with curricula. Online information needs to be represented in different formats, and students need options for engaging with and demonstrating their understanding. These are the hallmarks of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Encourage teach-

ers to integrate UDL into their online instruction.

2. Your child may need help organizing time.

- Consider setting up specific spaces in the home where your child will engage in schoolwork. Create a calendar and clear expectations for work and play. Start with more rather than less structure, and make adjustments as your child establishes new routines.

3. Your child will need new ways to access needed services.

- Look at your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan to identify the individuals providing your child's services. Connect with them to ask about compensatory services to support your child – their plans for the short, medium, and long term – and how you might help.

4. You and your child still have rights!

- COVID-19 did not erase your child's rights to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Schools and districts are working hard to identify how key processes that support education are going to be implemented until schools reopen their doors. These include having a way to hold IEP and 504 meetings virtually, and ensuring that your child is making progress in the core curriculum and receives needed accommodations to access information and demonstrate mastery of content. You can access this guide for further details at <https://www.ncl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/A-Parents-Guide-to-Virtual-Learning-4-Actions-To-Improve-your-Childs-Experience-with-Online-Learning.pdf>

SURVIVING AND ENJOYING *the Holidays*



By: SHARLEEN SABLAN
Client Advocate

What thoughts about the holidays do you find surging through your head right now? Christmas in the CNMI is usually filled with religious celebrations, long lines at the post office and back-to-back parties filled with food and drinks... always lots of food and lots of drinks. This year has been rough. At this point of 2020, I think we're all ready to celebrate for a change. It is, after all, "the most wonderful time of the year."

For some, the holidays can be more than your average headache than it is for the rest of us. People who have suffered from a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), can find this time of year to be overwhelming and even painful. A TBI is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a disruption in the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or penetrating head injury. Just a few symptoms of a TBI are headaches, dizziness, nausea, difficulty remembering and sensitivity to light. In all the Christmas hustle and bustle, here are some tips for people with a TBI or for those who would like to understand more and help them cope with the chaos of Christmas.

15 Tips for Surviving and Enjoying the Holidays with Brain Injury

1. Identify — in advance, if possible — a quiet place to go at gatherings if you are feeling overwhelmed. This gives you a chance to take a break and lets your loved ones stay involved in the festivities.
2. Avoid crowded stores and order gifts online instead.
3. If you are shopping in stores, remember to make a list in advance and plan your trips on weekdays — either early in the morning or late at night when there are fewer crowds.
4. Wear a cap with a brim or lightly tinted sunglasses to minimize the glare of bright lights in stores or flashing lights on a tree.
5. Wear noise-reducing headphones or earbuds. These are also great gift ideas for loved ones with TBI if they don't already have them.
6. Ask a friend to go with you to stores or holiday parties. They can help you navigate crowds and anxiety-producing situations.
7. Plan in advance as much as possible. And ask your hosts what their plans are so you aren't surprised by anything.
8. Volunteer to help with the holiday activities that you enjoy the most and are least stressful for you.
9. Remember to ask for help and accept help if it is offered to you.
10. Ask someone you trust to help you with a budget to avoid overspending on gifts.
11. Take a nap if you need a break.
12. Remember that it's okay to skip the big parties and plan to celebrate in a way that makes you comfortable and happy.
13. Check in advance to see if fireworks are part of outdoor celebrations — and skip them if they make you uncomfortable.
14. If flashing lights bother you, ask your friends and family to turn off the flashing feature on Christmas tree lights or other decorations when you visit their homes.
15. You can let your host know in advance that you may need to leave early. It will help you feel comfortable if you need to get home or to a quiet place and it can also help avoid any hurt feelings

BrainLine is a national multimedia project offering authoritative information and support to anyone whose life has been affected by brain injury or PTSD. The article can be found at:
<https://www.brainline.org/article/15-tips-surviving-and-enjoying-holidays-brain-injury>.

These are just a few tips you can use to help get through the holidays with a traumatic brain injury. For more information including resources, statistics and symptoms, visit the CDC's TBI page at <https://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/index.html>. If you feel like you are struggling with a traumatic brain injury and need professional help, please consult your primary care physician or call CHCC Family Care Clinic at (670) 234-8950.

Safe Christmas Celebration



By: LUIS MACARANAS
Client Advocate

As we enter the Christmas month, it is the time we want nothing more to do than to make the holiday more magical and memorable. From families visiting from the states to celebrating a big island BBQ Christmas party. Many families around the islands will come together to celebrate the holiday, but this year it may not happen. While the global pandemic is a main topic this year, Christmas will be different from all the others we have experienced in the past. This year's holiday season may also be difficult both mentally and emotionally during the holidays, although by following these guidelines from Center for Disease Control (CDC) may ease your anxiety about COVID-19 during the holiday celebration:

- Check the COVID-19 infection rates our area through the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation website. Based on the current status of the pandemic, consider if it is safe to hold or attend a gathering on the proposed date.
- Limit the number of attendees as much as possible to allow people from different households to remain at least 6-feet apart at all times. Guests should avoid direct contact, including handshakes and hugs, with others not from their household.
- Host outdoor events rather than indoor gatherings as much as possible. Even outdoors, require guests to wear masks when not eating or drinking.
- Avoid holding gatherings in crowded, poorly ventilated spaces with persons who are not in your household.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible based on the weather, or by placing central air and heating on continuous circulation.
- For additional information on increasing ventilation, visit the CDC's information on Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home.
- Winter weather can be cold, wet, and unpredictable. Inclement weather makes it difficult to increase ventilation by opening windows or to hold an event outdoors.
- If setting up outdoor seating under a pop-up open air tent, ensure guests are still seated with physical distancing in mind. Enclosed 4-wall tents will have less air circulation than open air tents. If outdoor temperature or weather forces you to put up the tent sidewalls, consider leaving one or more sides open or rolling up the bottom 12 inches of each sidewall to enhance ventilation while still providing a wind break.
- Require guests to wear masks. At gatherings that include persons of different households, everyone should always wear a mask that covers both the mouth and nose, except when eating or drinking. It is also important to stay at least 6 feet away from people who are not in your household at all times.
- Encourage guests to avoid singing or shouting, especially indoors. Keep music levels down so people don't have to shout or speak loudly to be heard.
- Encourage attendees to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Provide guests information about any COVID-19 safety guidelines and steps that will be in place at the gathering to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Provide and/or encourage attendees to bring supplies to help everyone to stay healthy. These include extra masks (do not share or swap with others), hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and tissues. Stock bathrooms with enough hand soap and single use towels.
- Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items, such as serving utensils.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and any shared items between use when feasible. Use EPA-approved disinfectants.
- Use touchless garbage cans if available. Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands after removing gloves.
- Plan ahead and ask guests to avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.
- Treat pets as you would other human family members – do not let pets interact with people outside the household.

Now although our numbers of Positive COVID-19 cases are low, taking these extra steps may help ease your mind and reduce stress during the holiday events. Stress comes in many forms. There are normal and predictable stressors, such as a new job, moving, getting married, and even getting ready for the holidays. Then there are sudden stressors such as a disaster or a loved one's death. What kind of stress is in your life? And are you coping with it in a positive way? NMPASI provides services such as information and referral we can send you to the proper agency that can assist you. Hope everyone has a safe and joyful Christmas.

For more information about safety procedures relating to COVID-19, please visit www.cdc.gov.





By: JEANNE RAYPHAND, ESQ.
Legal Counsel

POSITIVE AGING

In September 2020, Dr. Mark E. Agronin wrote an article entitled “4 Components of Positive Aging.” He pointed out that we “need to celebrate the strengths that only aging can confer.” Instead of viewing older individuals as potential victims in terms of decline, disease, and death, perhaps we should focus on the “strengths that enable us to make better decisions, cope better, and even thrive during adversity:

WISDOM

RESILIENCE

PURPOSE

CREATIVITY

CHOICES

At the same time, as we grow older, we face various health issues and eventually death. We should consider taking actions and making decisions in advance and in writing regarding issues of medical treatment and real property ownership, for example. This will insure our wishes are recognized and at the same time protect our loved ones from having to make those difficult, emotional and often expensive decisions.

In 2011 the CNMI legislature enacted the “Medical Consent Act of 2010” which recognizes that an adult person

has the functional right to control decisions regarding his or her own medical care, “including the decision to have life-sustaining treatment withheld or withdrawn in instances of a terminal condition or permanent unconscious condition.” 3 C.M.C § 2861 (commission comment). The law authorizes individuals to execute a declaration in advance “governing the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment.” 3 C.M.C § 2862.

Similarly the CNMI Administrative Code set forth “Living Will Policy”

which likewise recognizes the fundamental right to control decisions about one’s own medical care. NMIAC § 140-10.5-005.

With regard to disposition of real property upon one’s death, one might consider choosing in advance to execute a will or an inter vivos trust so there are no disputes.

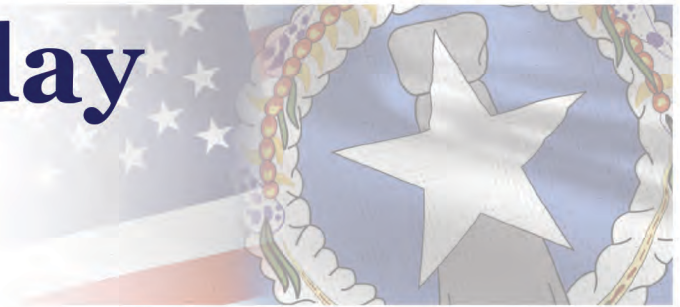
CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES

It is important to remember that, when you make a choice, you also choose the consequence. In choosing an advance directive, living will, or inter vivos trust, it is important to consider the consequences, including not only the effect of the document but also whether the document may be revoked.

REMEMBER:

Everything in your life is a reflection of a choice you have made. If you want a different result, make a different choice.

Happy Birthday Marines



By: GREGORY BORJA
Program Manager

November 10, 2020, marks the 245th birthday of the United States Marine Corps. Happy birthday to my fellow CNMI Devil Dogs!

November 11, 2020, is Veterans Day. Happy Veterans Day to my fellow service members.

Veterans Day's origins date back to the ending of the World War I in which President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11, 1919, as Armistice Day. He said in his

commemoration speech, "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory..." In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first Veterans Day Proclamation honoring American veterans of all wars. (va.gov)

American service members have made sacrifices throughout the history of the United States and laws have been created to protect and support our service members and veterans who have been injured while serving our country. In 1918 the Soldiers Rehabilitation Act was created to provide services for vocational rehabilitation of veterans who became disabled during World War I. Through the years this law has been changed and improved to ensure veterans with physical disabilities were eligible for services. The law was expanded to also provide services to those with mental health needs and to

civilians.

The Soldiers Rehabilitation Act evolved to a point where in 1973, the Rehabilitation Act was created to address equal access of people with disabilities through the removal of architectural, employment, and transportation barriers. Also included in this law is Section 504, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical and mental disabilities in programs receiving federal funds.

The Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc (NMPASI) is the CNMI designated organization established to "Protect the Civil, Legal, and Human Rights of people with disabilities." We use laws like the Rehabilitation Act to ensure people with disabilities in our community, including our veterans with disabilities, are free of discrimination based on their disability.

Professional Development

In December 2020, good times were had by all as NMPASI staff participated in a professional development, honing our Time-Management Skills, Learning about Fringe Benefits, including 401K, conducted Strategic Planning of activities, and finished the day with an Art Therapy Session.



FY 2020 Services	PADD	PAIMI	PAIR	PAAT	CAP	PABSS	PATBI	RP	TOTALS
Information & Referral	18	10	75	2	8	8	0	1	122
Outreach Activities	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
# Participants	940	940	940	940	940	940	940	940	940
Trainings*	18	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
# People Trained	292	292	292	292	292	292	292	292	292
Individual Cases (Issues)									
Abuse & Neglect	4	16	3	0	0	0	0	0	23
Access	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	20
Employment/VR services	2	1	8	0	3	4	0	0	18
Assistive Technology	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Transportation/Housing	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	5
Education	14	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	16
Health Care	1	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	24
Government Benefits/Services	8	1	18	0	0	0	0	3	30
Total People Served	30	18	77	2	3	4	1	3	138
Carry Over from Fy19(included)	16	7	37	2	2	1	0	0	65
	PADD	PAIMI	PAIR	PAAT	CAP	PABSS	PATBI	RP	TOTALS
Age									
0-4 Years	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
5-22 Years	16	2	2	0	0	0	1	3	24
23-59 Years	9	16	42	1	3	4	0	0	75
60+ Years	0	0	33	1	0	0	0	0	34
Gender									
Male	16	14	60	2	2	2	0	2	98
Female	14	4	17	0	1	2	1	1	40
Ethnicity**									
White	4	1	7	0	0	1	0	0	13
Black or African-American	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	8	8	8	0	0	0	1	0	25
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	29	29	69	2	3	3	1	3	126
Hispanic or Latino	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disability***									
Autism	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Heart/Circulatory Impairment	1	0	19	1	0	0	0	0	21
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	10
Developmental Disability	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Neurological Impairment	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	19
Learning Disability	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	8
Mental Illness	7	18	5	0	0	1	0	0	31
Cognitive Impairment	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4
Muscular/Skeletal	0	0	12	0	0	1	0	0	13
Physical - Orthopedic	2	0	26	1	0	1	0	0	30
Visual Impairment	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	11
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other	3	0	17	0	2	2	0	0	21
Island									
Saipan	28	17	63	1	3	3	1	0	116
Tinian	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Rota	1	1	14	0	0	1	0	0	17

* Some activities were conducted and reported in more than one program, but the TOTALS are unduplicated counts.

** Totals may be higher than client numbers due to self identification of 2 or more ethnicities

*** Totals may be higher than client numbers due to self identification of 2 or more disabilities

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“To protect the civil, legal, and human rights of individuals with disabilities”