

LET'S CELEBRATE LIFE



By: **JEANNE RAYPHAND**
Legal Counsel

This past year in the CNMI with the pandemic, with the election, and with all the holidays particularly throughout November and December, we have experienced significant stress and anxiety as well as great excitement and happiness. There is no question that the pandemic and its effects have resulted in uncertainty and challenges. The election campaign resulted in strong emotions and divisions. And the holiday season is often said to result in increased depression.

When routines are disrupted, fast food substituted for nutritious meals, and bedtimes delayed, children and youth especially are at risk of depression and anxiety. It has been reported that both depression and anxiety tend to be higher with older children and teenagers.

At the same time, throughout the year, we have perhaps enjoyed a closer relationship with our families and children and discovered resilience as we faced the pandemic. We have also seen great excitement and positive expressions of hope and ideas as the election campaign progressed. And, without a doubt, the holiday season always brings joy and happiness as we celebrate with our holiday traditions.

We go to the doctor when we feel sick and we should do the same with our minds. And one way to do that is by celebrating mental health holidays in the coming year.

For a start, January is Celebration of Life Month. As we start off the New Year with resolutions and to-do lists to eat healthier and exercise more, don't forget to celebrate the fact that we are here. Start off the new year celebrating life every day. Celebrate the lives of those you love and the lives of those who are important in your life.

And to keep things on a happy note, celebrate "Someday We'll Laugh About This Week" from January 2-8.

Laugh and have fun; and, if you are struggling with anxiety or depression, ask for help. You are not alone.

Keep in mind that federal statutes, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), may provide some protection and relief if you need assistance and/or accommodations at school or at work as you attempt to deal with anxiety or depression.

For more information, please contact NMPASI, (670) 235-7273/7274.



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"TO PROTECT THE CIVIL, LEGAL, AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES"



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 organization's operations

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POSSE

Charging through Barriers of Discrimination

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 9

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022

47 YEARS OF IDEA



By: **ELSIE TILIPAO-REBUENG**
Programs Manager

November 29, 2022, marked the 47th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, which was signed into law, Nov. 29, 1975.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disability are provided with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs. IDEA was previously known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) from 1975 to 1990. In 1990 the United States Congress reauthorized EHA and changed the title to IDEA, in line with the people first movement.

Overall, the goal of IDEA is to provide children with disabilities the same opportunity for education as those students who do not have a disability. IDEA is composed of four parts: Part A covers the general provisions of the law; Part B covers assistance for education of all children with disabilities; Part C covers infants and toddlers with disabilities including children from birth to age three; and Part D consists of the national support programs administered at the federal level. Each part of the law has remained largely unchanged since the original enactment in 1975.

In practice IDEA is composed of six main elements that illuminate its main points. These six elements are: Individualized Education Program (IEP); FAPE; Least Restrictive Environment (LRE); Appropriate Evaluation; Parent and Teacher Participation; and Procedural Safeguards. To go along with those six main elements, there are also a few other important components that tie into IDEA: Confidentiality of Information, Transition Services, and Discipline.

NMPASI is the CNMI agency responsible for protecting and advocating for students with disabilities. One of our main purposes is to ensure that students with disabilities receive FAPE. We also educate parents on their rights under the IDEA procedural safeguards.

What are procedural safeguards? Procedural safeguards protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents. These safeguards include the right to participate in all meetings, to examine all educational records, and to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) of the child.

If you need further information on the IDEA or you want to know your child's rights and how to protect those rights in education, contact NMPASI at (670) 235-7273/4 or visit us on the web at www.nmpasi.org.

This publication is made using Federal funds from the US Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), the US Department of Education (DOE), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), and the Social Security Administration 9SSA). The views set forth are from the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the DHHS, DOE, SAMHSA/CMHS, or SSA.

DIABETES

Diabetes is one of the top five causes of death in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI). People living with diabetes are at higher risk of severe illness and death than from other diseases. On December 04, 2022 in observance of diabetes month, Tinian held a Family Beach Day event at the Fiesta Grounds. The Zumba FitBeat performers opened up this event by encouraging others to join them as they burn some calories by doing some dance moves. Various agencies came out to spread awareness and educational information about their department and their networking partners.



Furthermore, I was able to provide important information about NMPASI regarding assistance and referral to everyone in our community, including educating individuals about people with disabilities and technical assistance that may be provided. In addition, information was provided regarding other services offered by numerous agencies for people with disabilities.

Moreover, there were many games and prizes for our children during this event. The community was given some light refreshments, such as variety of fruits, and a volleyball tournament was held for our teenagers. Everyone was also given a chance to get free blood pressure and blood glucose screenings. Around noon we had our first food demonstrator that promoted a healthier way of eating rather than not caring about the amount of sugar on our daily intakes. Some of our Tinian Elementary students entertained the crowd with an amazing performance embracing our culture as they sang a Chamorro song “Adahi I famagu’on ta” by: KC DLG. Overall, taking care of our wellbeing is an important way to encourage others to do the same. The prevention of getting diabetes can change worldwide and stop the numbers rising in our society today. Here are some tips to share on what we can do to prevent diabetes every day:

Tips on prevention of diabetes:

- 01. Cut all refined carbohydrates and added sugar from your diet.**
- 02. Lose extra weight and be more physically active on a daily basis**
- 03. Choose eating healthier food such as asparagus, mushrooms, spinach, broccoli, tofu, fish, eggs, chicken, yogurt, brown rice and many more.**
- 04. Eating less salt**
- 05. Eating less red and processed meat**

If you or someone you know has faced discrimination as a result of being a person with diabetes or for more information on disabilities resulting from diabetes, please contact NMPASI at our main office numbers (670)235-7273/4, text message (670) 287- 9937 or by email at jcruz@nmpasi.org and for additional information you may visit our webpage at www.nmpasi.org.



By: **JENNIELYN CRUZ**
Intake Specialist-Tinian

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Tis the season! On behalf of our organization, we would like to honor the International Day of Persons with Disabilities dated December 03, 2022. The observance of International Day of Persons with Disabilities aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and enhance support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Each year, a theme is provided and it focuses on how society can strive for inclusivity by removing barriers for people with disabilities. This has been occurring since 1992 when the General Assembly announced December 03 as the International Day of Disabled Persons. Furthermore, it also pursues ways to spread and increase awareness of the situation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. This includes political, social, economic, and cultural facets. Being a person with a disability may be a very challenging life to live.

Through NMPASI, we ensure that we are able to help provide assistance that will address the hardships or conflicts presented by our eligible applicants who possess any kind of disability. We offer a variety of programs and services that would address different kinds of challenges from our applicants.

Moreover, those challenges bring out the best and unique characteristics of these individuals, whether it be cognitively, socially, mentally, economically, and so on. People with disabilities play a great contribution to society and the community we live in. Let us celebrate this time of the year!

For further information, please contact NMPASI at (670) 235 – 7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org.



By: **JOSHUA MENESES**
Projects Specialist

Let's Dissect Intersectionality! What Does it Look Like to You?



By: **SHANIAH ALVAREZ**
Client Advocate

Intersectionality is an important term to learn when it comes to discrimination and oppression. Intersectionality is defined by the Oxford dictionary as “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage”. Intersectionality is the acknowledgment that everyone experiences discrimination and oppression in a unique way, and we need to consider all factors that can marginalize people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, disability, etc (Bridie Taylor). This is an ongoing issue created by society’s hierarchical nature.

I was watching a video on Intersectionality and disability, with a woman named Keri Gray. She is the founder and CEO of the Keri Gray Group and she advises young professionals, businesses, and organizations on issues about disabilities, race, gender, and intersectionality. She is black, a person with a physical disability, and a woman. She stated that, “when you live at the intersections of all three of those, then you can’t split your political and social dynamics between these different groups. It doesn’t produce real results of freedom and it doesn’t produce real results of access to employment and other opportunities that you’re looking for.” This gave an understanding of a real-life experience of intersectionality and how much more discrimination and oppression can be faced by simply having overlapping identifications as a human. She then goes on by talking about an example of how intersectionality can be built upon and highlighted in a respectable way, instead of it being a reason to be oppressed; it should be a reason to empower these already marginalized groups. She gave an example of how unique the Black Lives Matter movement is in the full scope of its message when she shared that the whole movement was expressing, “We are not just fighting for folks who are on the margins. We are fighting for black folks who are also LGBTQ, who are women, who are fem, who are trans, who are disabled.” This showed how inclusive movements can be if people stepped back and looked at the bigger picture of how marginalized people have intersections and how much more difficult it can be to function in today’s society because of it.



So, acknowledging this and standing up for these groups instead of being complacent can cause a huge positive paradigm shift in society. It is important to identify the oppression and discrimination people face, and how intersectionality is extremely crucial in recognizing real issues of it. Think of it this way: being oppressed because you are already part of a marginalized group (i.e., those living in poverty) and then adding another intersection on top of that (i.e., having a disability) can cause more obstacles in life and more discrimination precisely because of living at the intersection of those two identifiers. How can you combat these issues? Check your privilege. All

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your social identities play a huge part in your privilege. Ponder on these to recognize the discrimination you face or don’t. Do your research. Conducting your own research on these issues can broaden your knowledge of these important topics and you learn something new every day. Listen and learn. Be empathetic when learning about these societal issues and be open-minded. You are responsible too; it is not only the responsibility of the marginalized groups to teach and educate people on these important topics.

If you or anyone you know is being oppressed or discriminated against due to disability, NMPASI is the CNMI’s designated P&A, and we can help educate you on your rights or combat the discrimination you are facing. Please visit the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. (NMPASI) office or contact us at 670-235-7273/4 for more information and help. You can read more about intersectionality on <https://www.womankind.org.uk/intersectionality-101-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-important/>



By: **PAULINE MANGLONA**
Intake Specialist-Rota

Hafa Adai and Buenas!

My name is Pauline Manglona residing on Rota. I’m a Proud Mother and Self Advocate for Voices of the CNMI Rota Chapter. My son was born with ADHD and later on in 2021 diagnosed with Gastrointestinal Disease. Growing up I was taught to never judge a book by its cover, but while going to school I saw the stigma first hand that my fellow classmates didn’t believe in the things that I was taught. So I wasn’t the popular student in school, but guess I was that student who spoke out and protected my fellow classmates with disabilities. I want to educate our community that having disability isn’t a curse or the Lord punishing us, because we are all born different and may have a disability later on in the future due to us getting older. We are just perfect in our special way! Becoming a Parent, I wanted my children to be open minded and understand that our life may not be perfect; but, if we show kindness and respect, then we will be blessed in the same way that we treat any individual. I support my son 100% with any obstacles that he would have to overcome. Parents never give up on our children, because they follow our footsteps and we must

lead by example to show them how to become wiser and prepare them for the world to come.

We are not alone in this fight! There are so many different agencies that are within our community that also have a helping hand to better understand and assist families and friends with any questions or concerns. Let’s become one as a community and unite and join this fight to support our disability community because they are also human and they do have feelings.

It is a great honor to become one of the newest employees of NMPASI, as Rota Intake Specialist. Since I became employed in October of this year, I’ve felt a great passion and want to educate my community, especially to assist families and friends who have loved ones that have a disability. NMPASI’s mission is to “protect the civil, legal, and human rights of individuals with disabilities.” We provide direct advocacy services and educate our community on issues surrounding people with disabilities.

If you have any questions or if you need any shoulder to lean on or even an open ear, please call me at (670) 287-9943 or email me at pmanglona@nmpasi.org

Services



The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (**OVR**) has three **(3)** different programs that can assist individuals with disabilities.

- 1)** Basic Support/Supported Employment (BS/SE).
- 2)** Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB).
- 3)** Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

Basic Support/Supported Employment (**BS/SE**) Program assists qualified individuals with disabilities in gaining or maintaining employment. In order to be qualified, you do have to meet all of the three **(3)** criteria which are: **1)** Physical or Mental Disability. **2)** Impediment to Employment (how is your disability stopping you from gaining or maintaining employment). **3)** Require VR services in order to gain or maintain employment. Examples of services you can receive if you are eligible, to name a few are: **1)** Counseling & Guidance. **2)** Job placement **3)** Assistive Technology (AT) services or devices **4)** Physical & Mental Restoration.

Independent Living Older Blind (**ILOB**) assists individuals who are 55 years old or older, who have a low vision, do not want to work and want to live independently. In order to avail of the ILOB Program, the criteria for low vision states “the corrected visual acuity in the better eye must fall: 20/70 or is legally blind”. An example of services you can get if you are eligible for ILOB is an Assistive Technology (AT) device, such as a screen reader, to assist you with your low vision and independent living.

Pre-Employment Services (**Pre-ETS**) Program assists students between the ages of 16-21 years old, who are enrolled in high school, college or technical school who are receiving Special Education or under a 504 Section Plan. Pre-ETS services include: **1)** Job exploration counseling. **2)** Work-based learning experience. **3)** Counseling on post-secondary education (college or technical/trades school) options. **4)** Work readiness training. **5)** Instructions on self-advocacy.

One (1) of the programs designated under the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc. (**NMPASI**) is the Client Assistance Program (**CAP**) that assists individuals who have applied for or are receiving VR services and are disputing VR decisions or actions. As an individual with a disability, it is your right to choose to meet with any NMPASI staff and do an Intake if you want to dispute or appeal your case with OVR. You do not need to meet with the Case Service Manager (CSM) or OVR Director in order to dispute or appeal any services. For more information on OVR programs and services, contact them at 322-6537/8 or for information on the CAP program or any other NMPASI programs and services, please contact NMPASI at our office numbers (670) 235-7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org.



By: **MAGDALENE REYES**
Program Aide

BRING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH MHE (MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION)

As we welcome in the new year, we begin to hear the oh so typical “new year, new me” phrases that indicate the start of a person’s revamping or transition into a newer, improved form of themselves. I see this as the perfect opportunity to reevaluate the aspects that may have been negatively impacting our well-being as a whole, with one being mental health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mental health focuses on a person’s emotional, psychology and social well-being. This means that it affects our daily lives: how we think, what we feel, and how we act. It is a determining factor for how we make our choices. When a person has poor mental health, it can be attributed to many factors surrounding them—their environment: are the people they are hanging out with or associating themselves with helping or hurting their mental health? Do they have a support system at home? Other factors include how they were treated as a child, cultural and spiritual influences, and how well they cope with stress and if their coping mechanisms are healthy.

Poor mental health is a serious sign that the individual is struggling with one of those factors and/or is going through a rough time in their lives. If not properly addressed or taken care of, this can negatively affect their relationships, productivity, and physical health, among others. Additionally, feelings of loneliness, isolation, hopelessness, and anger may arise during this challenging time.

Although CDC makes it clear that there is a distinction between mental health and mental illness, experiencing feelings of loneliness or isolation from poor mental health may result and contribute to the risk for mental illness. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), a mental illness is “a diagnosed condition that impacts a person’s thinking, feeling, behavior, mood, and day-to-day living.” While there is no single cause for the onset of a mental illness, factors such as early adverse life experiences in the form of abuse, neglect and trauma, chronic medical conditions, biological factors, and high intake of alcohol and drugs are identified by the CDC that may increase the risk for mental illness.

At the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems (NMPASI), we advocate to protect the civil, legal and human rights of individuals with disabilities. One of our programs is specifically catered towards individuals with mental illness and is known as the Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program. Under the PAIMI program, an individual must have a diagnosed mental illness and have an alleged abuse, neglect and/or rights violation. If a PAIMI case is opened at NMPASI, the advocates act as investigators, negotiators, mediators, etc. in order to ensure that the rights of the individual are being protected. These rights may include access to community services, state services, and benefits. For instance, such services may include access to the Transitional Living Center or voluntary admission into the Psychiatric Ward. Benefits could include receiving Veteran’s benefits or Social Security benefits, if deemed qualified.

For more information about the PAIMI program, please contact NMPASI at our office numbers: (670) 235-7273/4, via text message at: (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org



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