



MONTHLY BULLETIN

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

ADA 19TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the world's first comprehensive civil rights law for people with disabilities. The Act prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment (Title I), in public services (Title II), in public accommodations (Title III) and in telecommunications (Title IV).

In 1990, Congress found that historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities. Despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem. Congress found that discrimination against individuals with disabilities persists in such critical areas as employment, public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, institutionalization, health

services, voting, and access to public services.

The ADA was enacted to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities and to ensure that

the Federal Government plays a central role in enforcing the standards established in the ADA on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities will be holding a celebration to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the passage of this important law. The event will be held on Sunday, July 26, 2009 from 4 until 7 PM at the Miller Senate Building in Annapolis, Maryland. Interpreter and CART services will be provided. Assistive listening devices will be provided on request. For more information, to RSVP or for other accommodations, call 410-767-3660 or 1-800-637-4113.



SAVE THE DATE

GET TESTED!

The Hearing and Speech Agency (HASA) offers hearing tests and treatment for babies, children, adults and seniors. Every weekday in June and July and one special Saturday, HASA is offering their standard hearing test at a dramatically reduced cost. For just \$10 (normally \$245) one of their audiologists will give you or your child a hearing test that lasts up to an hour. They will discuss your

results with you and suggest follow-up steps if your test shows evidence of hearing loss.



The Hearing and Speech Agency is located at:

5900 Metro Drive
Baltimore, MD 21215

Registration is required. Call 410-318-6780 or visit <http://www.hasa.org/get-tested/index.html> and make your

appointment to get tested today!

ODHH

PROGRAMS

- Awareness Training and Technical Assistance
- Constituent Services
- Community Outreach and Education

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ODHH UPDATES AND DIRECTOR'S CORNER

June was an exciting month at ODHH. The month began with our quarterly Advisory Council meeting where members discussed ways to support ODHH's mission. As a fully staffed office, we were able to begin the task of developing a strategic plan, which will map out the long term directions and goals of the Office. At the same time, we have been busy putting our final touches on a new brochure and finishing the redesign of a new ODHH website. It has been truly inspiring to see the vision and vitality of the office reflected in the work we are producing.

We have also been actively engaged in the pursuit of a three-pronged approach to serving the Governor and the communities we represent by:

- providing information to constituents;
- supporting policy makers at the local, state and federal level; and
- promoting communication access for all Marylanders at every level of Government through the review of policy and application.

It is in the pursuit of these goals that we met with the procurement division of the Department of Budget and Management to provide Sensitivity and Awareness Training on the State's role in ensuring communication access to both employees and constituents who access government services

ODHH has also maintained a presence at advisory council and taskforce meetings throughout the State to facilitate the inclusion of communication access in policy development. Office staff have attended meetings with the UNHS Advisory Council, Baltimore County Emergency Management Council, the Interagency Council on Aging and work group meetings with the Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and with the Police and Correctional Training Commission.

As always, we looking forward to serving you.

Have a Happy 4th of July, *Lisa*



MEET THE ADVISORY COUNCIL: ALICIA EPSTEIN

The Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was established in October 2001. The Council, which is headed by a chair and co-chair, consists of 16 members – eight members represent state agencies and eight members represent the general public. Alicia Epstein, who is also the President of the Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD), is an Advisory Council member representing the general public. A somewhat recent addition to the Advisory Council, Alicia plans to contribute to the Council and to the operation of ODHH by:

- Advising ODHH on its strategic plan and operation;
- Serving as a liaison between ODHH and the community; and
- Providing input on relevant issues.

In fact, since her appointment to the Council, Alicia has been working to become an active. She recently volunteered to serve on the Council's Strategic Plan Subcommittee. When asked why she applied to be on the Advisory Council, Alicia said, "With my expertise in public policy and management, I

believe that I can contribute to the growth of ODHH. I've been a Marylander since I was a toddler and I feel I can offer my input on the various issues facing the Deaf community in Maryland."



From left, ODHH Director Lisa Kornberg, Governor Martin O'Malley, and Alicia Epstein.

Among the many issues facing people with hearing loss in Maryland, Alicia counts equal access to communication and access to services provided by the State as the most pressing. Alicia sees the Advisory Council as being able to address these concerns, as well as other concerns of the community, on a State level. "We can identify potential solutions and ensure that the issues are resolved," she said.

Alicia strongly believes that it is critical that there are

representatives from the community on the council. "It is a opportunity to be heard by the Governor and his cabinet," she added.

Alicia recently relocated to Virginia and will be leaving the Council in September, but is happy to take question and comments from the community. If you would like to contact her, please e-mail ODHH at odhh@gov.state.md.us and we will forward your message to her.

CONSUMER REPORTS INVESTIGATES HEARING AID PURCHASES

****taken from <http://www.consumerreports.org>****

When we set out to test hearing aids, we encountered the same challenges that hearing-aid shoppers face every day: a fragmented and confusing marketplace and difficulty sorting out good hearing-aid providers from less-capable ones.

We followed a dozen actual patients for six months as they shopped for and used hearing aids, conducted a national survey of 1,100 people who had bought a hearing aid in the past three years, and lab-tested the features of 44 hearing aids. Here's what we found:

High prices

Our shoppers purchased two pairs of hearing aids each, or 48 aids in all, ranging from \$1,800 to \$6,800 per pair, including professional fitting and follow-up services, in the New York City metropolitan area.

Mediocre fitting

We had audiologists check how well providers fit our shoppers' hearing aids to their individual hearing loss. Two-thirds of the 48 aids they bought were misfit: They amplified too little or too much.

Lack of information

Most of the providers our shoppers visited discussed style and features, but a significant minority didn't. One-fourth of respondents to our survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center, didn't know whether their aids had feedback suppression, and a third didn't know whether they had directional microphones. Both features can be critical to performance.

So why bother with hearing aids? Medical evidence shows that

they can improve your quality of life and relationships with friends and family, so it's worth persevering until you get aids that are properly selected and fitted. Of our survey respondents, 73 percent pronounced themselves highly satisfied with their aids. As one of our shoppers noted, "I'm hearing music sounds I haven't heard for over 20 years."

Moreover, hearing-aid technology has made major strides in



recent years, most notably with the development of very small open-fit digital hearing aids. In loud social settings, the most challenging environment for hearing-aid users, survey participants reported more improvement with those aids, which don't plug up the ear canal, over other styles that use earmolds, custom-shaped inserts that fit tightly in the ear canal.

If you're avoiding noisy places or having trouble in conversation or understanding TV, it might be time for a hearing aid. In our survey 67 percent of first-time aid users sought aids because they got tired of asking others to repeat themselves.

Once you've accepted your hearing loss and are considering getting hearing aids, your most consequential decision is finding the proper professional from whom to buy them because it's likely to be a long-term relationship. This is not a project for the faint-hearted because the industry is anything but standardized. Our shoppers encountered a variety of providers, including hospital-based clinics and strip-mall storefronts, all legally able to fit a hearing aid, but with varied resources and expertise. In this report, we'll help sort things out step by step.

****To view the article, visit : <http://www.consumerreports.org/health/healthy-living/home-medical-supplies/hearing/hearing-aids/overview/hearing-aids-ov.htm>****

SAVE THE DATE: ODHHS TOWN HALL MEETING

ODHHS holds at least two public town hall meetings each year to solicit public comment and feedback. Information helpful to ODHHS includes:

- comments of the quality of state services and programs affecting deaf, deafblind, late-deafened and hard of hearing individuals;
- ODHHS related functions and operations; and
- other issues that affect deaf, deafblind, late-

deafened and hard of hearing individuals including ODHHS responsibilities.



ODHHS will be holding a Town Hall Meeting on Friday, July 24 from 2:15 to 3:15 PM at the Maryland Association of the Deaf 41st Biennial Conference. The Conference is being held at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. The Town Hall Meeting will be held in the Rosenstock Hall Building.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202

Voice: 410-767-1497
TTY: 410-767-7756
VP: 443-453-5954
Fax: 410-333-1016

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lieutenant Governor

Lisa H. Kornberg
Director

Julie Anne Schafer
Editor

WWW.ODHH.MD.GOV

ODHH ON THE MOVE

July 2009

ODHH Town Hall Meeting
Friday, July 24, 2:15 PM— 3:15 PM
Hood College
Frederick, MD

MDAD Biennial Conference
Friday and Saturday, July 24-25
Hood College
Frederick, MD

ADA 19th Anniversary Celebration
Sunday, July 26, 4 PM— 7 PM
Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD

****Please note that the Office will be closed on
Friday, July 3 in observance of Independence
Day****



August 2009

Maryland Association of Counties Conference
Wednesday—Saturday, August 12-15
Roland E. Powell Convention Center
Ocean City, MD



- In observance of the 40th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York, we would like to recognize the Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf (RAD), a nonprofit organization established to maintain a society of Deaf GLBTIQQ to encourage and promote the educational, economical, and social welfare; to foster fellowship; to defend our rights; and advance our interests as Deaf GLBTIQQ citizens concerning social justice. For more information, visit www.rad.org.
- The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) is celebrating its 30th birthday! It's not every day an organization turns 30, especially one that has impacted the lives of so many people with hearing loss. Send a birthday wish to HLAA by visiting www.hearingloss.org and clicking on the birthday cake button (found on the right side, below the Walk4Hearing button).

EXPANSION OF HOME WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

Governor Martin O'Malley formally announced Maryland's first steps in expanding its home weatherization program, designed to benefit thousands of low-income families throughout the state.

"As families throughout Maryland struggle to pay their energy bills, we are able to take significant steps to reduce their energy costs, while ensuring their health and safety, thanks to the President's economic recovery plan," said Governor O'Malley. "These audits may seem trivial on an individual basis, but the fact is that families could save between \$300 and \$400 per year with simple energy efficiency improvements. If every household in the state of



Maryland swapped out one incandescent light bulb for a compact florescent bulb, it would save enough energy to power over 6,300 homes for one full year."

More than \$61 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds will be provided to the State for its Weatherization Assistance Program.

To qualify for weatherization assistance, families must have household incomes below 200% poverty level, or 60% median income. Families who may qualify are encouraged to contact their Local Energy Office by calling 800-638-7781 or through Maryland's assistance website problemsolver.maryland.gov.