

State Representative Dan Miller's Summit Schedule

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

10 am – 11:30 am Stand Up Advocacy

How to be an effective advocate for your child or a self-advocate to ensure you are receiving services to help achieve your goals. Tips and techniques for sharing your life experiences with decision-makers. Also, the nuts and bolts of communicating with legislators about important policy decisions that would increase independence and opportunity for all.

Jeanine Schultz, Director of Advocacy, Achieva
Cindy Duch, Director of Parent Advising, PEAL Center

Maria Silva, Senior Supervisor, Allegheny Family Network
Kurt Kondrich, PA SICC Coordinator and Family Member

11 am Resource Fair Open

1 pm Navigating Early Intervention

For those diagnosed young, starting and maintaining services until kindergarten is key to preparation and progress. This session will discuss the evaluation process and initial service involvement as well as the early transition markers from Alliance for Infants, to DART or PPS Early Intervention, and then school.

Erica Balint, Outreach Coordinator, Alliance for Infants and Toddlers
Amy Sukay, Preschool Service Coordinator, Allegheny Intermediate Unit #3
Elizabeth Strickland, Early Intervention Medical Coordinator, Pittsburgh Public

1 pm Special Needs in Court

Entry into our court system can be stressful enough, but what additional challenges can one face when having a disability or mental health diagnosis? Whether for divorce, delinquency, dependency, or a simple interaction with law enforcement, learn what to talk about before the need arises.

Hon. Alexander Bicket, Judge, Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas
Jennifer Staley McCrady, Program Policy Supervisor, KidsVoice
Scott Bailey, Officer, Aspinwall Police Department

2 pm Warning Signs of Suicide & Fighting Stigma

Warning signs can range from the obvious to the hidden and everywhere in between. Learn how to identify them, talk about them, and how to build a support system. Discussion will also focus on the stigma often associated with mental illness and suicide and how to break down barriers of ignorance throughout society.

Kathe Niznik, Director, Psychiatry & Mental Health Services, St. Clair Hospital
Debbie Ference, Associate Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness
Leigh Carlson-Hernandez, Family Member

2 pm Getting Around! Transportation Assistance in Allegheny County

Transportation is vital to independence – whether traveling to school, work or back to home. This session will discuss how to qualify for transportation assistance, what programs exist that provide individual travel training, and how the public transit system works to provide access for all.

Karen Hoesch, Executive Director, ACCESS Transportation Systems
Deborah Skillings, Community Outreach Coordinator, Port Authority
Michelle Holsoapple, Travel Instructor, Allegheny Intermediate Unit #3

3 pm Post-Secondary Education Supports

Transition from high school to college is filled with significant changes. Preparation done in advance will help students and parents have a better understanding of postsecondary education options. We will discuss planning for college while still in high school, differences between high school and college and expanding postsecondary education opportunities in Pennsylvania for students with disabilities.

Lisa Silverman, Parent/Community Advocate
Alexandra Robinson, Parent/Community Advocate

3 pm Family Stress: Parenting a Child with Special Needs Together

Raising children and keeping the family unit together is tough enough for the average family. When one or more children's needs require more than the typical, the associated stress can often test the strength of the entire family. Learn about strategies for discussing issues and maintaining family wellness.

Christina Hostutler, LCSW, Clinical Director, Outreach Teen & Family Services
Renee Corrigan, M.S. CCC-SLP, The Watson Institute
Lu Randall, Executive Director, Autism Connection of PA
Darci Ellsworth, LSW, Family Therapist II, Wesley Spectrum Services

4 pm Resource Fair Closed

4 pm K-12 Education: The 4-1-1 on IEPs, 504s, and SAP

Join local school districts in a discussion as to your rights and responsibilities as a parent when dealing with a 504 plan or an IEP, and how you can be an effective member of the IEP team. Also learn about recent changes to the Student Assistance Program and how they impact your child.

Tina Tolkacevic, Inclusion Specialist, Mt. Lebanon School District
Lori Sutton, Director of Special Education, Bethel Park School District
Suzanne Lochie, Special Education Coordinator, Keystone Oaks School District
Jeff Ruder, Attorney, Ruder Law

4 pm Financial Planning & the ABL Act

Planning for your future is never a bad thing, but when dealing with the challenges often associated with disabilities and mental health, such planning is a must. Discussion items will include special need trusts, powers of attorney, and guardianships. Thanks to recently passed federal legislation we will also talk about the benefits of establishing an ABL account.

Lisa Dougan, Trust Attorney, Achieva Family Trust
Eric O'Connor, Trust Service Assistant, Life Enrichment Trust

5 pm Bullying and Kids with Special Needs

Students with special needs may be victims of bullying; learn the impact of bullying and the possible ramifications on children who are diagnosed with a disability or mental health issue. We will also discuss the cycle of aggression and the warning signs if your child has been impacted by bullying behaviors. Learn how to empower your child and build up their support structure.

Sophia Barrett, Clinical/Educational Consultant, The Watson Institute
Lori Morin, Elementary School Counselor, Mt. Lebanon School District

5 pm Waivers & Insurance; Financial Reality of Adulthood

Reaching the age of 21 has a major impact on the amount of assistance and support one can receive for their caring of a loved one or how they might be able to live independently. While there are many waivers in PA, the application process and maintaining eligibility is often cumbersome with ridiculously long waiting lists. This session will go over the waiver process and the difficulties likely to arise.

Staff, Department of Human Services
Janice Meinert, Paralegal, Pennsylvania Health Law Project

6 pm – 8:30 pm Survival Guide to Life After High School

Program designed by 21 & Able, a program of the United Way of Allegheny County

Program includes welcome and dinner (for registered participants), an explanation of the "Planning for the Future Checklist," an overview of the new OVR Early Reach Project, breakout sessions for parents and students, and a question and answer session with knowledge experts.

Mary Hartley, Lead Consultant, 21 and Able
Michael Stoehr, Educational Consultant, PaTTAN
Sarah Vogel, Early Reach Coordinator, OVR

Matt Berwick, Independent Living Youth Specialist, TRCIL
Tina Calabro, parent

Thursday, March 12, 2015

10 am Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act

Congressman Tim Murphy will describe how his groundbreaking bipartisan legislation redirects resources to patients and families most in need of services by expanding treatment options, integrating mental and physical care, and reducing barriers and stigmas associated with mental illness.

11 am Local Disability and Mental Health Stories in the News

This heartfelt panel of local families will discuss their disability and mental health stories that brought them into the news in 2014.

12 pm – 2 pm Legislative Panel

Join Senators, Representatives, and other government officials as we discuss disability and mental health policy changes that need to occur in order to increase independence and opportunity for all.

Join us
for Day 2!