



September

Cholesterol Education
Month

National Suicide Prevention
Awareness Month

Healthy Aging Month

National Child Obesity
Month

World Alzheimer's Month

9/7 Labor Day

9/11 Patriot Day

DDS requesting 700 additional CES Waiver slots

This past Thursday, August 27th, Secretary Gillespie, Deputy Dawn Stehle, and I met with the Governor to discuss adding 700 additional CES Waiver slots. You can watch the press conference here:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/GovernorAsaHutchinson/live>.

The CES Waiver program is the companion Medicaid program to institutional care like the Human Development Centers. The clients all meet the same eligibility requirements. Specifically, the clients have an intellectual or developmental disability that impairs their general intellectual functioning or adaptive behavior, including cerebral palsy, spina bifida, Down syndrome, epilepsy, or autism. The impairment must originate before the client turns 22 years old and it must be expected to continue indefinitely.

The purpose of the waiver is to provide the same level of care for clients with IDD who wish to remain in their home or community as you would receive in a 24-hour facility. For those of you not familiar with this waiver, we currently have 4,719 clients receiving services and over 3,500 on a waitlist. Our waitlist remains fairly consistent each year as when people are pulled off of the waitlist, more come on.

Act 775 of 2017 is the Arkansas law that created the PASSE program. As you know, we have around 7,000 clients with IDD in the program today. All of those clients meet the criteria outlined above. The PASSE program also provides care for approximately 34,000 clients with high behavioral health needs who tier at a 2 or 3. Because PASSEs are essentially insurance companies, they are required to pay a premium tax to do business in the State of Arkansas. This tax is paid quarterly to the Arkansas Insurance Department. Act 775 of 2017 mandates that half of this tax is used to provide additional CES waiver slots. This means that for the very first time, we have a brand-new funding stream to add people to the CES Waiver!! It is very exciting. As members come into the PASSE, the premium tax grows, and we will add slots on a regular basis from this point forward with this tax money. Our goal is not to eliminate the waitlist, per se, as we will always have clients needing help. We will, however, be able to move clients into a slot more quickly and these 700 slots are a huge step in the right direction. Just an FYI, 600 of the slots will be given to people on the waitlist (first come first serve by the date the client was approved and placed on the list) and the remaining 100 slots are set aside for children who come into foster care and meet the criteria.

I encourage you to watch the press conference. It was a special moment to announce these slots. We have a wonderful team here that was a huge help to making this occur. Thank you to Regina Davenport and Portland Gilbert for working for 24 hours straight to amend the Waiver last Monday and Tuesday. Thank you to all DDS staff who work on the PASSE program in some capacity. That program is making this request possible. Your hard work is noticed and appreciated!

Additional Slots cont'd

Lastly, on a different topic, I have to thank the Human Development Centers and Tammy Benbrook. We have had a hard few months. The HDC Superintendents and staff are working tirelessly to keep COVID 19 out of the Centers. We have had cases, but staff continue to take excellent care of the clients. We had a tropical storm, but staff were prepared. Here's to hoping and praying that September is an uneventful month for you guys! Keep up the good work!

Happy Fall!!

Melissa Stone

We will never forget!

We continue to remember **September 11th, 2001**. Pre-COVID-19, this was a day of service recognizing all first responders as well as commemorative ceremonies at each attack site and cities through out the country. Things will be different this year with a lot of the ceremonies being held virtually and luncheons cancelled.

You can still safely serve the first responders in your town. Send or drop off cards of appreciation and or gift cards for meals. Find your own way to remember those lives lost and to honor those who are first to go in to rescue. Teach the youth. My 21 year old was 2 years old on that fateful day. Teach them so America NEVER forgets!



Protecting Each Other

- 1 **WASH YOUR HANDS**
- 2 **PHYSICAL DISTANCING**
- 3 **WEAR A FACE COVERING**
- 4 **GET TESTED IF NEEDED**

Returning to a New Normal during COVID-19

Quarantine Weight

Did you think the days of the Freshman 15 were behind you? I certainly did! Not only have I put on the freshman 15 but I've also added the rest of the family (Sophomore 15, Junior 15, and Senior 15.) The Freshman 15 refers to the 15 pound weight range that quite a few college freshman gain. Think back to that first year of college. After the homesickness and adjustment to your new surroundings, you discover new freedoms to come and go as you please, no longer under the parental watchful eyes, eating what you want when you want, sleeping in. Hence, the Freshman 15! Finding ourselves months into a pandemic with no clear end in sight, we must take care of our bodies.

Eat healthier– Ease back from the endless snacking and add veggies back into your daily routine.

Exercise– Get moving! Even if it's just walking laps around your house or apartment. If you physically are able, add exercises in the morning when you wake up and again at the end of the day before bed. I've reverted to exercises from elementary and junior high school days from P.E. I find those less taxing on the body but still achieve the desired results.



Mental Stress and Anxiety

In a season of various types of loss, remain thankful for what you do have. Make a list of all you have to be thankful for– job, health, family, friends, shelter, food.

Check on your friends with a text, email, or note in the mail. It doesn't have to be a dissertation, but just a thoughtful line or two letting them know you're thinking of them and checking in. It goes a long way!

Parents are struggling with sending children back to school at any age. As stressful as this new normal is, try to remain positive yet truthful when you have difficult conversations. If you are calm, your child will feel comfortable sharing their concerns with you. They will also internalize and reflect your emotions.

Find healthy ways to relieve stress and anxiety. Do your favorite hobby, read a book, increase those cooking/baking skills, learn some line dances from YouTube. We will be back dancing together again!

Acknowledge the reality. These are uncertain times with many storms brewing. Get a plan in place. Do what you can to keep you and your family healthy and safe. Preparation brings a sense of calm and helps to control emotional stress.



Upcoming

DHS Book Drive

We will host a book drive for our DHS partner school, Bale Elementary. We are in the early planning stages. If you'd like to participate, you can start collecting books for elementary age children. Because of COVID-19, we will not have the annual DHS Children's Halloween event but are looking into a drive-by parade with decorated cars/floats at possibly Bale and 7th Street Elementary schools. If you're interested in either of these activities, please email yvette.swift@dhs.arkansas.gov. More information to come!



DHS Website

The new website will have a new web address. If you have publications or business cards to order, please hold until December. This is the deadline to have the transition completed. We will keep you updated. The address will be **dhs.arkansas.gov**



Comments, Suggestions, Q&A

Please let us know what you would like to see featured. Send all inquiries, stories, pictures to Yvette Swift @ yvette.swift@dhs.arkansas.gov. **by the 15th of each month.** If you'd like your birthday featured, please email it to Yvette Swift.