



PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

ADVOCACY & SERVICES SINCE 1995

The Network
News
2021
January/February
Issue #240

OREGON HIV CASE MANAGEMENT



Next Meeting

January 12th

Policy Update

**Jonathan
Frochtzwajg-
CAP**

Email
lagermes@ohsu.edu
for the link to the
meeting

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!

This has been quite a year! We went from living our lives as we normally do to learning how to exist while wearing masks, being physical distant from each other, moving operations to remote and how to keep those essential services happening in person safely for our clients and ourselves.

Our community is certainly no stranger to challenges and learning new ways to meet the needs of our clients. Even knowing the history that we have all been a part of, I am still in awe of all of you, for doing the work that is often hard, in what was a very stressful and scary time. This wasn't just something that impacted our clients but also impacted ourselves and yet we continued to show up in the ways that we could for our community.

Thank you to everyone for your commitment to the work and to your colleagues. I continue to be honored to work in this community that stands with our clients and advocates for their needs.

May 2021 bring you, your loved ones and our community peace, good health and happiness!

Best,

Julia
Julia Lager-Mesulam, LCSW
Partnership Project Director

Important Update Regarding Online Video Hearings

Dear Colleague,

We announced on September 3, 2020, a new option for people awaiting a hearing. In addition to telephone hearings, we will begin offering claimants the option to participate in an online video hearing using the Microsoft Teams platform. Beginning in December 2020, we will send special notices that explain hearing options during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our mailing will include a form where the claimant can agree to a telephone hearing, online video hearing, or both.

This new, free service will allow claimants and their representatives to participate in the hearing from anywhere they have access to a camera-enabled smartphone, tablet, or computer and access to the internet. This stable and secure online platform allows the administrative law judge to see and interact with claimants and their representatives just like an in-person hearing, while maintaining privacy. Other hearing witnesses, such as medical or vocational experts, may participate by phone only.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of finding new ways to serve the public," said Commissioner of Social Security Andrew Saul. "For over a decade, the agency has used video hearings to get applicants their hearing decisions sooner. This advancement builds on that effort, making it easier and more convenient to attend a hearing remotely, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. To continue to ensure all participants' safety, we expect online video hearings and telephone hearings will be the only two hearing options for the foreseeable future."

Read the latest news about online video hearings at www.ssa.gov/appeals/hearing_options.html. Please share this exciting news with your clients. We encourage you and your clients to accept the option of online video hearings. If you have questions about hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit our Coronavirus web page at www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/.

my Social Security now offers a wider range of features and benefits for both beneficiaries and those not receiving benefits.

Beneficiaries will continue to get information tailored to them, and can print a benefit verification letter and SSA-1099, change their address and direct deposit information, request a replacement Social Security card, and more.

Someone not receiving benefits now has more reasons to use *my* Social Security. In addition to being able to request a replacement Social Security card, view their Social Security Statement, and find out if they are eligible to receive retirement benefits, they can now view the benefits they could receive based on their spouse's record. If they are eligible to receive retirement benefits, they can also view their retirement benefit estimates at different ages or dates when they want to start receiving benefits, calculate the benefit their spouse could receive based on their record, and more. When they are ready, they can start the benefit application process online.

If they have a claim pending, they can also check their claim status with their personal *my* Social Security account.

Please remind the people you help that *my* Social Security is not just for people receiving benefits. Encourage them to plan for their future and manage their present by visiting www.ssa.gov/myaccount to create or sign in to their personal *my* Social Security account today!

Social Security Benefits Increase in 2021

Nearly 70 million Americans will see a 1.3 percent increase in their Social Security benefits and SSI payments in 2021. Federal benefit rates increase when the cost-of-living rises, as measured by the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI-W).

The CPI-W rises when inflation increases, leading to a higher cost-of-living. This change means prices for goods and services, on average, are a little more expensive, so the COLA helps to offset these costs.

January 2021 marks other changes that will happen based on the increase in the national average wage index. For example, the maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll tax in 2021 will be higher. The retirement earnings test exempt amount will also change in 2021. You can read our press release for more information at www.ssa.gov/news/press/factsheets/colafacts2021.pdf.

We will mail COLA notices throughout the month of December to retirement, survivors, and disability beneficiaries, SSI recipients, and representative payees. Want to know your new benefit amount sooner? You can securely view and save the Social Security COLA notice online via the Message Center inside my Social Security in early December without waiting for the mailed notice.

If you don't have an account yet, you will have to create your account by November 18, 2020 to receive the COLA notice online this year. my Social Security account holders can opt out of receiving a mailed COLA notice and other paper notices that are available online. You can choose text or email alerts when there is a notice in Message Center by updating your Preferences at www.ssa.gov/myaccount/opt-out.html so you always know when we have something important for you.

Be the first to know! Sign up for or log in to your personal account today at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. Choose email or text under "Message Center Preferences" to receive courtesy notifications. This way you won't miss your online COLA notice!

You can find more information about the 2021 COLA at www.ssa.gov/cola.

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Get Your New Standardized Benefit Verification Letter Online

If you receive a Benefit Verification letter, sometimes called a "budget letter," a "benefits letter," a "proof of income letter," or a "proof of award letter," we have good news for you! A new standardized Benefit Verification letter is now available when you need proof of Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income, or Medicare.

In addition to name, date of birth, and the benefits received, the new Benefit Verification letter includes other identifiers to prevent misuse and fraud. This is an added benefit to you as proof of income for loans, housing assistance, mortgage, and other verification purposes. The same standardized letter is also available if you need proof that you do not receive benefits, or proof that benefits are pending. If you are an individual representative payee, you can use the my Social Security Representative Payee portal to access the same standardized Benefit Verification letter online for your beneficiaries.

This new standardized Benefit Verification letter is another example of our commitment to improve our service to you. No matter how you request your letter, whether calling our National 800 Number, your local office, the Interactive Voice Response system, or online with your personal my Social Security account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount, the Benefit Verification letter now contains a seamless look.



Oregon Health Authority has expanded its multilingual [Safe + Strong education and outreach campaign](#) with a new theme and materials to help communities find simple, culturally specific information on safely connecting with family and friends this winter.

Led by the theme “Love Finds a Way,” new campaign materials and resources available in 12 languages provide fresh public health recommendations on preventing the spread of COVID-19.





This past month Health and Human Services released the first ever 5 year plan to address the rise in Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United States!

[It is available online here](#)



In an effort to remain aware of all of our programmatic and staff changes throughout the HIV community in Oregon we would like to collect and share that information.

Programmatic & staff changes should be sent to lagermes@ohsu.edu by the last Wednesday of the month.

Multnomah HIV Health Center Welcomes

E Dominguez (he/him/el) as the new bilingual Rapid Start Navigator

Cascade AIDS Project Welcomes

John Domingo as Chief Financial Officer

Heather Webb (she, her, hers) Davis St Employment Services Coordinator

Andrew Provencher moved to Program Assistant Role from Receptionist

HIV Day Center

Welcomes

Conner Leaf Program Assistant

AETC is hiring

Join our team! The Oregon AETC is look for a **Practice Transformation Lead** to work with Federally Qualified Health Centers in Oregon to increase Latinx engagement along the HIV Care Continuum. This position will work with clinics to assess, implement, and monitor practice change efforts to improves systems of care for the Latinx community. [Click Here](https://pvarf.applicantpro.com/jobs/1586999.html) to read more. <https://pvarf.applicantpro.com/jobs/1586999.html>

Partnership Project

Announces

Virginia Scott has moved into a 20 hour week Medical Case Management role. She had previously been helping with eligibility work.

We are hiring for [Linkage to Care Coordinator](#). This positon will work with those newly diagnosed at OHSU and help link them to services and medical care.

Thanks for your help in keeping the community updated. Please send them your new staff announcement, farewells and program updates to lagermes@ohsu.edu to be included in the next newsletter.



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[OHSU/ Partnership Project](#).

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The editor is Julia Lager-Mesulam.

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This issue, and issues from January 2011 on, can be found electronically [here](#)