Under Obama Order, Workers With Disabilities To Get Pay Hike
By Michelle Diament / February 12, 2014

An executive order requiring new federal contractors to be paid at least $10.10 per hour will apply to workers with disabilities too, White House Officials say.

President Barack Obama plans to sign an executive order raising the minimum wage for federal contract workers, including those with disabilities employed under service or concessions contracts with the government.

The move represents an about-face for the White House. When the plan to hike the pay for government contractors was originally announced during Obama’s State of the Union address last month, it left out many workers with disabilities.

Under a federal law known as Section 14(c) that dates back to the 1930s, employers can obtain special permission from the U.S. Department of Labor to pay those with disabilities less than the minimum wage, which is currently $7.25 per hour.

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Hiring and Supervising Your Staff
by Renee Uitto

To hire and supervise your staff can be a challenging task. However, if you prepare yourself with the right questions to ask and if you tell the person you want to hire the right information, everything should go smoothly.

I go through a staffing agency, so I deal with a lot of changes in staff. Some are good, some are not so good. But I try to adjust to the changes the best I can.

Whenever I meet a potential caregiver, I always give her a list of instructions. I explain how I need a drink to take my medications, need help taking a shower, how I like my meals prepared and that I need help with things around the house. I also ask her what experience she has with working with people with disabilities. If she has a lot of experience, I feel comfortable. I like to ask people what kind of car they drive. If they have a SUV or a truck, I have a hard time getting in those because I need to be lifted.

After a few days of the new person working, I like to see how they do. I like to see if they take initiative in the job, engage in conversation with me and listen to directions. I can tell people who want to be patient and want to learn, and those who only want a paycheck. I had people who came into my apartment and really didn’t care what they did. I soon realized I didn’t want those people helping me with my personal care.

My best advice is to be honest with what you need help with and observe people while they are working for you. If you are not happy with your staff, talk to someone and make a change. You deserve to be happy and have the best staff working for you!

Local Coordinators—The Harmony of MPF

coordination occurs, it is said that different elements of a complex activity enter a relationship that ensures efficiency or harmony. To coordinate one must organize, arrange order, systematize, harmonize, correlate, synchronize, bring together, fit together—it’s a lot! When MPF started ten years ago, we knew the most important stakeholders in self-determination were individuals receiving services. What we have learned is that the relationship between people who want self-determination and their allies is what holds us together. MPF Local Coordinators do just this. They harmonize the process of supporting lives in real community with real participation. In doing this, these Coordinators organize Local Leaders (LLs) and their outreach efforts to build demand for Self-Determination.

Some examples of these tasks are:

- Attend MPF Community training
- Help recruit people who use arrangements that support S-D to become LLs
- Help coordinate and participate in LL training
- Help LLs find places to give presentations
- Help make sure LLs have the accommodations needed when giving their presentation(s), which may include co-presenting
- If necessary, help LLs fill out and send in their MPF report forms and invoices
- Encourage presentations to people who use CMH services, family members, CMH and other disability organization staff, students with disabilities, teachers, people living in group homes, general community groups, policy makers, people working in sheltered workshops and others
- Teach LLs about any new policies or changes
- Help MPF trainers recruit presenters for Community & Local Leader trainings
- Hold periodic LL meetings

To honor this relationship MPF held a celebratory luncheon for the MPF Local Coordinators early this winter at the Lexington Plaza Hotel in Lansing. Pictured here are Pat Carver and Angela Martin, MPF Consultants with Local Coordinators, Christy Jane Courtney and Tiffany Devon, Wayne County; Laura Demeuse, Bay and Arenac Counties; Lorrain Johnson, Oakland County; Lori Owen, Genesee County; and Calisa Reid, Washtenaw County. Not pictured but in attendance: Jill Gerrie, MPF Project Coordinator; Annette Downey, Executive Director of Community Living Services for Oakland County; and Tedra Jackson, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council Grants Manager. Missing are Cheryl Osborn, Genesee County; Pam Miles, Allegan County; Marie Eagle, Kalamazoo County; Tammy Finn, Kent County; Jan Lampman, Central Michigan, Deb

A person working alone has all the power of social dust.

~Saul Alinsky
Hello Partners!

As I write this for our spring newsletter it’s a steamy -2°F outside… spring really can’t come soon enough! As you may have heard, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently made public its final rule on home and community-based services.

Instead of saying what a community home is not, CMS is now saying what a community home should look like. Their definition of a community-based home includes the following:

- The place a person lives needs to be included in the community with full access to the community.
- People will decide where they live from choices given.
- People will have a choice of services and who provides them.
- People will have the right of privacy, dignity and respect, be free from pressure to do something they don’t want to do, and be free from restraint.
- People will have more personal control and independence in making life choices.

Michigan has recently seen an increase in large residential settings, which seems to me like a big step backward in time. Hopefully this definition will help make sure that public money cannot be used for such places!

Stay Warm,

Jill Gerrie
Michigan Partners for Freedom Coordinator

Leaders in Policy Advocacy (LIPA)
Salli Christenson for more info (800) 292-7851—salli.c@arcmi.org

LIPA training will be held in Gaylord for people with DD and parents of children with DD starting in April!
MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS COMMISSION REPORT about Supporting Self-Determination

The State of Michigan Mental Health and Wellness Commission just released a detailed report on how to improve both the lives of individuals and families living with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders.

The necessary actions the Commission describes include:

1. Advancing more opportunities for independence and self-determination for persons living with a mental illness, substance use disorder, or developmental disability.

2. Better access to high quality, coordinated and consistent service and care between agencies, service providers and across geographical boundaries.

3. Measuring outcomes and establishing meaningful metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of services provided and to assess the progress of goals set by the individual, state locals and service providers.

A five minute message from Lt. Governor Brian Calley about the December 2013 report in which he mentions self-determination several times can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjgT1dDO-pI

If you would like the full report, it can be downloaded at: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mentalhealth/CommissionReportFinal1212014_445161_7.pdf

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Obama Pay Hike for Contract Workers with Disabilities

Obama administration officials initially said that the executive order would not alter the ability of employers with government contracts to pay so-called subminimum wage. But under pressure from disability advocacy groups, the final version of the executive order will now include such workers.

“We applaud the administration for hearing the voices of the disability community and including disabled workers in the new minimum wage protections for contractors,” said Ari Ne’eman, president of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, one of the 25 groups that signed a letter from the Collaboration to Promote Self Determination urging the White House to include workers with disabilities.

“We hope to work with them going forward to convince Congress to repeal Section 14(c) for all disabled workers,” Ne’eman said. “Equal rights should apply to everyone—President Obama and (Secretary of Labor, Tom Perez) helped us take a significant step forward towards realizing that vision today.”

The increased minimum wage will apply to new federal contracts and replacements for expiring agreements beginning Jan. 1, 2015, the White House said. The move is expected to bring a pay boost to hundreds of thousands of workers staffing concessions at National Parks, serving food to members of the military and in other roles.

For the complete article go to: http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2014/02/12/under-order-pay-hike/1902/

Article from Disability Scoop: http://www.disabilityscoop.com
MPF Taking the FEAR out of Self-Directed Services

The Arc of Kent County hosted an event that truly respects the mission of Michigan Partners for Freedom: to build demand for self-determination.

**Taking the FEAR out of Self-Directed Services** is for individuals in Kent County with disabilities, their families, and others who are interested in hiring their own staff to have more control over who provides their support and services. Tammy Finn, The Arc Kent County Executive Director says, “Many individuals with disabilities and their families have little experience with how to navigate the Community Mental Health system. As a parent of an adult with developmental disabilities, I know first-hand that it can be overwhelming, confusing and intimidating. When my daughter expressed her desire to hire her own staff, the information we were given was insufficient. The Arc Kent County began offering this workshop in response to the need for quality information in our community.”

Presenters at these series include the community mental health agency Network 180’s Self-Determination Coordinator, the Director of a local independent supports services organization, a representative from the local fiscal intermediary and a MPF Local Leader. For more information visit: [http://www.arckent.org/#!events-and-fundraising/vstc3-self-directed-services-workshop](http://www.arckent.org/#!events-and-fundraising/vstc3-self-directed-services-workshop).

**Quotes from previous “Taking the FEAR out of Self-Directed Services Participants:**

“This workshop was helpful in giving me information both in person and on paper to take home. I like learning this because I want to move out of the group home that I am in at some time in my future.” D.W.

“People with disabilities should be self-determined so it is in writing what they want and what their choices are for their life. Everything in life is a choice for everyone, even people with disabilities. Keep spreading the word!!” E.S.

“This was very helpful. It might be a good workshop for all parents of people with DD to go through when they leave the school system and enter the adult world.” K.L.

If we have learned one thing from the civil rights movement in the U.S., it’s when others speak for you, you lose.

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**MIFREEDOM listserv... the freedom to be me.**

Oakland County MPF Local Leader Alex Kimmel moderated the MPF listserv in January. He asked the listserv members to finish the following statement, “Self-Determination is ...”. Here are some of the replies:

- Oakton County MPF Local Leader Alex Kimmel

**Self-Determination is...**

- ... my life on my terms
- ... a life like anyone else
- ... the first step to self-advocacy
- ... the freedom to be me
- ... being able to make my own choices
- ... people with disabilities get help when they need help to do what they want to do. Health care. Go to college. Have a business.
Michigan Partners for Freedom is a grassroots coalition of people with disabilities, family members, advocates, organizations and other allies working together to build statewide demand for self-determination.

MPF Summit
June 20, 2014
Radisson Hotel
111 North Grand Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48933