



Advocacy for an Increase to the Personal Needs Allowance in PA

Student Interns: Rory Milsark, Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health
Anjali Pradhan, Drexel University College of Medicine

Academic Preceptor: Dr. James Buehler, MD, Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health

Community Preceptor: Lori Walsh, MPPM, CARIE

The Community Site: The Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of Elders (CARIE) is a Philadelphia-based group whose work includes education on elders' rights, efforts to change local and state legislation to better serve elders, and the dissemination of free information pertaining to difficulties elders experience. In addition to advocacy work, CARIE also maintains a free hotline made available to anyone who has questions or concerns about elder rights and social issues. CARIE's long-term care (LTC) ombudsman is responsible for compliance management and advocacy on behalf of long-term care residents who have experienced a violation of their rights.

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) is the monthly sum of money that nursing home residents who receive Medicaid may retain from their personal income. It is used for phone-bills, dining out, clothing, supplemental medication, etc. In PA, the PNA is \$45/month, which is way too low in our opinion.

BTG interns worked on an advocacy project focused on increasing the PNA in Pennsylvania for adults living in nursing homes. This work included research focused on legal language and the legislative process as it applies to the PNA.

Additionally, the interns conducted interviews in nursing homes in the Philadelphia and Montgomery County area to understand the views of residents on the need for an increased PNA. These interviews will be used in a social media campaign by CARIE with the goal of educating people about the PNA. The interns also created additional resources such as a call-to-action pamphlet and brief background paper for CARIE to use in the future.



Alex, a resident at a nursing home in Center City Philadelphia, uses his PNA on soap, razors, and clothing. However, \$45 does not go very far, and many of his needs have to be met by family members.

REFLECTION

Rory Milsark

My experience at CARIE has been eye opening to a world of issues and logistics I knew little of. There are so many issues that people are advocating for, and it happens in every state. It has been interesting to learn about the connection between advocacy groups like CARIE and the state government. CARIE has a lot more responsibility than I thought. The government relies on CARIE's opinion and data before they make decisions, and CARIE and other groups have serious sway in terms of legislative support. CARIE has the power to introduce new bills through political champions, and that is exactly what they were initially hoping to do before being blindsided by HB 1606.

Anjali Pradhan

I found my experience at CARIE to be extremely insightful. I appreciated the opportunity to learn about the personal needs allowance and how it impacts individuals living in nursing homes. Additionally, I enjoyed learning about the legislative process and the work and research that goes into advocating for an issue like this one. However, my favorite part of this experience has been speaking with older adults in nursing homes. Hearing their stories and how the personal needs allowance impacts them was eye-opening. I hope that the work that we did at CARIE this summer can contribute to improving the lives of nursing home residents in some way.