



RERC ON COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT

Thursday, January 13, 2005

Winter 2005

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

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Backup plans create havoc for disabled

by Joe Hemphill, Writers Brigade

The person needing home care providers has to deal with many injustices and unfair situations just to keep the providers. Some of the problems and injustices might not happen if the state paid the providers a decent wage and gave some benefits.

Even with the recent wage increase and the limited benefits that were made available to care providers, it wasn't enough for the hard work they do and the responsibilities they take on caring for someone who is disabled and depends on their help. I have cerebral palsy and I need help with bathing, dressing, feeding and in other parts of my daily life. I can't do without a care provider.

Care providers can be late to work without any consequences. There isn't a procedure in the system for the disabled person to call for a backup, and the system doesn't have any way of dealing with a provider who is late.

There is a place called the Public Authority where someone can report a care provider being late, but the Public Authority doesn't do anything about it. It is pretty much up to the disabled person to find somebody to help if a care provider doesn't come to work. This continues to happen because the handicapped person doesn't want to lose the help that he needs to live through each day.

There was a case where a care provider was extremely cruel to a disabled man, but the Public Authority kept this person on the list even after her behavior had been reported to them. She could go to work for other disabled people and carry on with her deplorable behavior.

Bulletin boards

The disabled person usually puts his name on a board at a college or asks friends if they know anyone who might want to be a care provider. For the most part, a disabled person is on his own finding a care provider who is honest and has integrity.

Since care providers don't receive decent wages, disabled people often must be satisfied with care providers who aren't mentally qualified to do this type of work. This isn't the care providers' fault. One of my care providers is very



Writers Bridgade member Joe Hemphill at work at his computer

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kind-hearted and would do anything for me, but she just can't remember what to do no matter how many times I tell her. For example, this woman can't remember the simplest things, such as putting toothpaste on the toothbrush. I have to remind her to do such things each day because she has a mental handicap.

There are some providers who have asked to borrow money, promising to pay me back when their checks come. When their checks come, there are always more important things to do than pay me back. One provider smoked a lot and was always asking me for \$2 here and \$2 there. When she received her pay, there was no mention of what she had borrowed and certainly no effort to pay me back. I couldn't do anything about this because I wasn't able to find anyone else to take care of me. So the borrowing would start again next pay period. Like most disabled people, I am on a fixed income and, when this person was my care provider, I couldn't afford anything extra like a new shirt.

The disabled person who needs care providers in order to live independently must deal with many injustices. If a care provider doesn't come to work, he must find someone to help him that very morning. Then the disabled person has to contact the Public Authority and get another list of possible care providers.

Little help

If the disabled person needs to replace a care provider, he will not receive much help from any agency. An agency may give out a list of people who want to be providers, but very little is done in the way of background checking, and the agencies do not contact or help interview people.

Some care providers have mental or emotional handicaps that disabled people must deal with to get the help needed to get through each day. Some disabled individuals have to put up with care providers who take financial advantage because the disabled people can't find anyone else to help.

In dealing with care providers, a disabled person needs to be ready for anything. There are no days off for a disabled person.

Editor's Note: This article was originally published on the FresnoBee.com. Check out other works by Joe on his website at www.wheelingwriter.com.

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