DISABILITY NETWORK OF MID-MICHIGAN

September 2020 NEWSLETTER

**ARTICLE 1 – The Census Ends on September 30th. BE COUNTED!**

Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census to count the number of people living in the United States. Starting in March, census invitations will be mailed to households, and now, more than ever before, the Census Bureau is encouraging people to fill out the census electronically (i.e. online).

WHY DOES THE CENSUS MATTER?

The census count has consequences we will live with for the next decade, if not longer. This makes the stakes even higher.

Michigan stands to lose millions of dollars in federal support for programs that use census data. These include Medicaid, nutrition assistance, highway construction and planning, Title I and Special Education Grants, Foster Care and Child Care Grants, K-12 education, Section 8 Vouchers, and Head Start/Early Start - for which Michigan received more than $14 billion in 2015.

The Census Bureau has identified people with disabilities as a hard-to-count population, which means they are at a greater risk of being under-counted in the census. The reasons for this include accessibility challenges and wider systemic inequalities. People with disabilities are also over-represented among other groups that are considered hard-to-count, such as people of color people with low incomes, and people experiencing homelessness.

AN AREA OF CONCERN - THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The Census Bureau’s online response option represents both an opportunity and challenge to the disability community. For many, the option will be more convenient than responding by mail. This is, in part, due to the greater availability and increased effectiveness of screen readers, electronic magnifiers, and other assistive technology tools. However, a significant digital divide exists between people with and without disabilities: people with disabilities are about 20 percentage points less likely to own a computer, tablet, or smartphone or subscribe to home broadband. Without reliable internet access, people with disabilities may encounter difficulties completing the online form.

BE COUNTED 2020

We want to make sure Michigan gets as accurate a count of its residents as possible. You can help by sharing this article with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Click on the images below to download some helpful questions and answers about the census.

**ARTICLE 2 - EFFECTS OF COVID-19 POLICIES ON RESIDENTS IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES**

Do you have a loved-one living in a long-term care facility such as a nursing home? People from throughout mid-Michigan are contacting us with disturbing stories of isolating procedures taking place at facilities during this pandemic.

Residents cannot have visitors. Many cannot go outside except for medical emergencies. Some have even had their windows bolted shut. Lack of available staff has seven resulted in inadequate care.

Over the past several weeks, DNMM has hosted two video conferences with long-term care residents and family members to discuss their concerns. We have engaged members of the Long Term Care Task Force as well as the Long Term Care Ombudsman's office (LTCO). We have shared your concerns with the governor's office, with legislators, and with the media. We thank all of you who have taken the time to share your stories in order to address these issues of concern.

We have recently been contacted by the LTCO regarding a new information service they are providing. The LTCO has created weekly question and answer sessions designed to respond to policy questions and resident care concerns, allowing them to research and respond accordingly.

Sessions are one hour and take place every Wednesday at 6:30 pm. The LTCO encourages families and friends of residents to join the calls. If you have a specific question you would like answered, please contact the Ombudsman's office at 517-827-8010 and leave a message or send them a detailed email at MLTCOP@meji.org.

Please be sure to visit their website at MLTCOP.org for more details about the call and for information about COVID-19 and the ombudsman program.

How to Join the Weekly COVID-19 Calls

· Please Click Here to join by Zoom over the computer

· To join by phone

· Call 1-929-205-6099

· Meeting ID: 829 7146 7655#

· Participant ID # Password: 838159

**ARTICLE 3 – September is Hispanic Heritage Month**

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period starting on September 15 and ending on October 15. September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively.

57.5 million people or 18% of the American population are of Hispanic or Latino origin. Hispanics have had a profound and positive influence on our country through their strong commitment to family, faith, hard work, and service. This influence is as varied as their people; from politics to pop-culture, from athletics to cuisine, from commerce to charity, and from literature to the silver screen. They have enhanced and shaped our national character with centuries-old traditions that reflect the multi-ethnic and multicultural customs of their communities.

Below are a few videos focusing on the broad and varied spectrum of Hispanic traditions and influences. In addition to the videos below, we encourage you to visit Google's Arts and Culture page devoted to the experiences and contributions of Latinos in the United States by clicking here.

**ARTICLE 4 - Virtual Peer Group Events**

Due to Covid-19 concerns, our Peer Groups will be meeting virtually. We know this is not ideal, but we want everyone to be safe. For now, we hope you'll join us for one of the events below. For more information, or if you just need someone to contact you, please email LaraBeth Sullivan.

"Social Lunch" Tuesdays - 11:30am - 1:30pm

Grab a bite to eat and join us for a friendly chat about whatever topics you want. A chance to get together - virtually - and hang out for a while!

"Amazing Women" Group

Every Other Tuesday 3:00 - 4:30pm

Women need to talk to each other! Here is a chance to get on and share your day, ask each other what they think about something or share your experiences with other peers. Come join us twice a month to talk and hang out!

"Bingo!" Wednesdays - 10:30am

Just a little friendly competition!

"Guy Time" Every Other Wednesday 2:30pm

Time for men to get together and talk about their week and how things are going! Grab a snack and a soda and hang out with your peers.

"ACTIVITY GROUP" Thursdays - 2:00pm

Everything from virtual tours of museums, theme parks to cooking demonstrations. From arts/crafts to live music. Maybe even some magic from time to time. Peers pick the activity each week. Join us!

"MOVIE MATINEE" Fridays - 1:00pm

Pop some popcorn and join your peers for an afternoon at the movies! Classic 80s comedies, recent Pixar classics, always something fun! September viewings include: "Cobra Kai,” “Wonder Woman,” “Despicable Me,” and “The Greatest Showman.”

**ARTICLE 5 – What’s Up Wednesday Episodes**

*DNMM hosts a weekly talk show covering current events over a wide range of issues. Everyone is invited to participate.*

[*CLICK HERE TO REGISTER*](https://www.dnmm.org/wuwregister)

*If you weren't able to join us live,*[*you can still view the episodes on our YouTube page.*](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxKBiL9Ezi7GhVWth-gbu9Q?view_as=subscriber)

Sept. 9th: Medicare's Low-Income Subsidy Program

Sept. 16th: Census Myths

Sept. 23rd: Medicare Part D

Sept. 30th: Neighboring Week

**ARTICLE 6 – NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK – SEPTEMBER 6th – 12th**

Suicidal thoughts, much like mental health conditions, can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. In fact, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health condition. Suicidal thoughts, although common, should not be considered normal and often indicate more serious issues.

Every year thousands of individuals die by suicide, leaving behind their friends and family members to navigate the tragedy of loss. In many cases, friends and families affected by a suicide loss (often called “suicide loss survivors”) are left in the dark. Too often the feelings of shame and stigma prevent them from talking openly.

National Suicide Prevention Awareness Week is September 6th through the 12th. It is a time to share resources and stories in an effort to shed light on this highly taboo and stigmatized topic. We use this month to reach out to those affected by suicide, raise awareness and connect individuals with suicidal ideation to treatment services. It is also important to ensure that individuals, friends, and families have access to the resources they need to discuss suicide prevention.

Below are links to websites and organizations that provide informational resources regarding suicide prevention and awareness:

National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Barb Smith Suicide Resource and Response Network

**ARTICLE 7 - DNMM's Medicaid/Medicare Specialists Are Here to Answer Your Questions**

Do you need extra help paying for your Medicare Part D prescription plan?

Call one of our MMAP certified Medicare specialists to see if you are eligible for the Low Income Subsidy for Medicare Prescription Drug coverage. We can help you with screening questions and do the application over the phone in as little as 15 minutes!

Do you need help paying your Medicare premiums?

Call us today to talk with one of our certified MMAP counselors to see if you qualify for the Medicare Savings Program. We can assist you with checking your eligibility and doing the application over the phone.

Did you know that there are many preventative health and screening services included with your Medicare coverage?

Some of the things you may be eligible for include:

Screening:

Diabetes

Depression

Lung cancer

Prostate Cancer

Testing and services:

Nutrition Therapy

Glaucoma

Mammograms

Tobacco Use cessation counseling

These are just some of the many services you could access. Call one of our certified MMAP counselors today for more information and a full list of preventative health benefits!

We can provide information about Part D coverage and finding the best plan for you!

CALL US TODAY! WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

1-800-782-4160

**ARTICLE 8 – Assistive Technology**

Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software or product system that is used to help people with disabilities, including older adults, do what they want to do.

DNMM's Information and Referral team has produced a series of videos showcasing various assistive technology items that assist people with everyday tasks. From reachers to canes, from magnifiers to jar openers, and from wheelchairs to apps for your tablet, there are many options out there to help you maintain your independence.

New videos will be posted weekly. Click here to view the entire playlist.

**ARTICLE 9 - STATEMENT OF INCLUSION**

At Disability Network of Mid-Michigan, inclusion is a universal human right for all people, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or any other discernible quality. To be inclusive is to promote a sense of belonging, respect, and value for who you are as a person. It is about equal access and opportunities for everyone. Inclusion is an integral part of our Independent Living philosophy and of our agency's vision of "Accessible and Inclusive communities that provide opportunities for individual choice."

In the twelve counties we serve in Mid-Michigan, Disability Network offices have been, and continue to be, places of solace, understanding, and information for all. We are committed to promoting and protecting diversity and inclusion, within our offices, among our community partners, and throughout the 15 Centers for Independent Living in Michigan.

**ARTICLE 10 – STATEMENT OF ACCESSIBILTY**

DNMM advocates for the removal of barriers to independence and full inclusion of people with disabilities throughout the Mid-Michigan area. DNMM pledges to ensure accessibility. Each year, DNMM conducts a review of its own architectural, environmental, attitudinal, employment, communication, transportation, and other barriers that may exist which prohibit full access to our services.

 If you have any issues of concern regarding the accessibility of DNMM services and facilities, we encourage you to share that information with us.

 Please send your concerns or suggestions to:

Executive Director
Disability Network of Mid-Michigan
1705 S. Saginaw Road
Midland, MI 48640