



NW-AIRS News

Chair's Report

Dear NW-AIRS Members,

As I look back on the year – a year that brought incredible changes and challenges to us all - I feel very fortunate to be part of our I&R community, whose work is so instrumental in responding in times of need and disaster, and whose individual members daily provide resources and support to the most vulnerable individuals among us.

On behalf of the NW-AIRS Board I want to wish everyone a Happy and Abundant New Year. We on the Board worked in many ways this year to promote I&R services in our region. The following are some of the activities undertaken by the Board:

- NW-AIRS presented, “**Collaborative I&R Connections: *Creating and Sustaining Links to Community Partnerships,***” a regional conference October 1-3 in Spokane, Washington. The event was attended by 85 I&R specialists and program managers from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana.
- Jeri Shumate, represented NW-AIRS on the AIRS Board of Directors and Julie Johnson participated on the AIRS Affiliate Council.
- Bill Brackin represented the NW-AIRS Board on the AIRS/UWA Disaster Response Team in Las Vegas in March. The DRT is an effort to develop a trained and experienced core of I&R Specialists who can help staff call centers around the country in times of disaster. Bill and Jeri were both later deployed to provide service at 2-1-1 call centers following disasters in Texas and Iowa.
- NW-AIRS sponsored four AIRS Certification Test sites in Oregon and Washington.
- The Board of Directors created a Training and Scholarship Fund that supports individual scholarships for AIRS or NW-AIRS conferences and also provides grants to member organizations to underwrite educational events in their regions.
- Wanda Smith enhanced the NW-AIRS website and expanded the content available on it.
- The Board published a quarterly newsletter to the membership.

The Board will be meeting next in Portland on March 6th to plan activities for 2009. We always welcome your suggestions for how to focus our energies and activities.

Best wishes,
Julie Johnson
Chairperson, NW-AIRS

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211 Updates

OREGON

Information and Referral providers in Oregon continue to improve the quality of their services. The Aging & Disability Services offices across the state are now linked with a statewide Network of Care database system. A number of rural communities are exploring options for bringing 2-1-1 to their regions and the statewide 211 system is currently reviewing software systems for its statewide database. Most of the staff at the Portland metro area's aging services, 2-1-1 center, and the City/County I&R have now completed AIRS certification. Oregon is looking forward to hosting the next NW-AIRS conference in 2010.

IDAHO

As a result of the current struggling economy and record job loss, a higher number of Idaho citizens need access to services such as: food stamps, Medicaid, child support assistance, and help with employment. Incoming call volume has increased more than 30% from the same time last year. A monthly average of 13,500 calls was received during the first 7 months of 2008; however, since August, the 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine has received an average of 18,300 incoming calls. Yet the number of 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine staff has remained static and, with budget cuts in all state agencies, staff numbers are anticipated to remain static.

2-1-1 Idaho CareLine continues to be the initial contact point for Idaho Department of Health and Welfare programs and special campaigns which include but not limited to: Medicaid, child care, foster care and adoption, poison control, cancer awareness, fraud reporting, and more. In addition, community programs relying on 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine to be the initial point of contact include: Toys for Tots, IRS/United Way free tax preparation sites, and Medicare open enrollment sites. Relationships with community partners throughout the state continue to develop to add to the pool of available resources.

In Idaho, a heightened emphasis has been placed on disaster preparedness and continuity of operations. As a program of a state agency, the 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine has required responsibilities defined through the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security to act as the contact point for disaster information, donated goods management, and volunteer information.

WASHINGTON

WIN211 faces significant regional and statewide challenges in 2009, in part because 2-1-1 call volumes are estimated to have climbed 20% throughout 2008. Washington state's 2-1-1's are in the Governor's budget (for the first time ever!) at a recommended \$1 million for the biennium; WIN211's board approved legislative request is \$3 million. This figure was essentially a "hold flat" amount in light of the call volume increases. The WIN211 board meets soon (the first time since the Governor's budget announcement) to review all aspects of this news. United Way of America and 211US have been successful in getting the Calling for 2-1-1 Act legislation re-introduced into both the US House and Senate this week. Passage of this legislation would provide ongoing federal support to each state's 2-1-1 program.

WIN211's recent activation to Camp Murray's Emergency Operations Center in the Public Information area fulfills the commitment to work collaboratively with the state during times of emergency. Primary duties have involved statewide tracking of shelter (human, pets, livestock) openings/closings, emergency declarations, emergency activations, road closures/openings. WIN211's presence at Camp Murray has helped keep WIN211 regional information current; WIN211's regional reporting has helped EMD stay up to date. Current efforts to stabilize and broaden the WIN211 funding base include a \$10k grant from the Department of Financial Institutions for home foreclosure information and referral, a \$50k grant from United Way of King County, primarily funding two development persons. The Department of Corrections is considering a pilot program with 2-1-1 to help with their community re-entry efforts, and South Puget Sound Community College is exploring a contract with WIN211 to help with their incoming call volumes.

2008 NW-AIRS CONFERENCE A Successful and Enjoyable Event

NW-AIRS held its biannual conference "**Collaborative I&R Connections: Creating and Sustaining Links to Community Partnerships,**" October 1-3 in Spokane, Washington. 85 Information & Referral/Assistance Specialists and program managers from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana attended the three-day event and 211 Call Centers as well as Senior I&A programs were well represented. The consensus among attendees was that the conference was a great success - both informative and enjoyable. We are appreciative of the conference sponsors - UPN-*InContact* and the State of Washington, Aging and Disability Services Administration - whose support enabled NW-AIRS to bring in many fine speakers.

Bob Blancato, a public policy and government affairs consultant for AIRS, addressed the conference about the crucial role of advocacy in assuring I&R legislative and funding goals are met. He challenged us all to be more proactive and organized in our advocacy efforts. Bob also presented a workshop on aging readiness initiatives and gave a broad and entertaining report on the state of aging services in the country. Jeri Shumate, Executive Director of 211*info*, also addressed the conference and gave a spirited talk about the challenges and rewards of disaster response work in our field.

There were many opportunities during the three-day conference for participants to network with others, and it was fun to meet colleagues and friends from around the region. 20 I&R Specialists took the AIRS Certification test held at the close of the conference. Photographs and presenters' educational materials are posted on the website: www.nwairs.org. The next NW-AIRS conference will be held in Portland, Oregon in the fall of 2010. Information about the conference, including opportunities to present or volunteer, will be included in upcoming newsletters.

Aging & Disability Resource Centers in the Northwest



The [Administration on Aging](#) (AoA) and the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS), both part of the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services, launched the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) grant initiative to promote the integration of long-term care information and referral services, benefits and options counseling services, and access to publicly and privately financed services and benefits for those in need of long-term supports and their families. ADRC grants were awarded to 43 states beginning in 2003, and these states have opened ADRCs that serve older adults and individuals with disabilities. Additional federal funding is pending federal legislative action. Idaho and Washington were awarded ADRC grants for the period October 2005 through September 2008. Oregon was just awarded a Centers CMS grant for Person-centered Hospital Discharge Planning that includes an ADRC Development component.

The Lewin Group has been providing technical assistance to the ADRC grantees and is now providing technical assistance to AoA Nursing Home Diversion grantees. The technical assistance site, <http://www.adrc-tae.org>, is going to transition to the public on January 15th. The Lewin Group's goal is to provide technical assistance and helpful information to all states and communities working on ADRC initiatives.

Idaho

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Division of Medicaid has implemented the use of [PeerPlace](#) to track ADRC client details and service information. In order to reduce duplication of effort and improve coordination, Idaho is currently in the process of web-enabling the tool so both Medicaid and Area Agency on Aging personnel can use it. The state anticipates that the software will allow for cooperative use between agencies and provide opportunities for eventual statewide ADRC implementation. The state hopes to further refine the tool to meet cross-agency needs; address security issues and costs involved in web-enabling; and design software administration training.

The [Idaho 211 CareLine](#) continues to function as the single point of entry to the ADRC, Aging I&R/A and long-term care programs under the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Division of Medicaid.

Oregon

Oregon State applied for and was awarded a 2008 Real Choices Systems Change grant funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for \$1,600,000 over three years.

Oregon's proposal includes two major components:

- **Person-Centered Discharge Planning Model:** Risk assessment and identification of Medicaid consumers' discharge goals on admission, early referral to a hospital-based Medicaid Case Manager to coordinate post-hospital care plan, post-hospital telephone follow-up with triage and referral, as needed, to the AAA local assistance center. Local assistance center staff will function as community-based health "navigators" by reinforcing the post-hospital care plan

and facilitating the transition from acute to community-based services and supports. These additional services will be designed to support a person's decision to return home rather than a nursing facility.

- **Aging and Disability Resource Center:** Development of a statewide, interactive online database of resources that includes screening and assessment tools to support consumers in making informed decisions about services and supports options. Establishment of a local assistance center by building on the success of LCOG's Senior Connections program to continue services to seniors and begin offering services to younger adults with disabilities. This will provide us with a prototype for possible replication statewide.

In regards to the grant, Oregon's proposal states: *Without information, skills or supports to make informed decisions people often end up using more intensive and expensive levels of care than necessary. This proposal will create collaboration between and among the critical pathways to long-term support and enable consumers to make decisions about balancing what is important TO them and FOR them.*

Oregon currently uses [Network of Care](#) for its Aging and Disability I&R/A website.

Washington

As a 2005 AoA/CMS ADRC Grantee, Washington State Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) Aging & Disability Services Administration (ADSA) contracted with Pierce County Aging and Long Term Care (ALTC) as its ADRC pilot site. The grant would have concluded at the end of September 2008; however, Washington State requested and was approved for a no-cost extension of unexpended grant funds through September 2009.

ADSA recently convened an Area Agency on Aging workgroup to advise and assist ADSA in the development of essential elements for an I&A/ADRC/NAPIS system and assist to determine next steps. The workgroup agreed that a high level of constituent self-service capability was essential; the system needed to be consumer friendly and easy to use, allow for the reduction or elimination of duplicative data entry; supports local contract monitoring and planning activities; and provides an opportunity for linkages with other systems. Further meetings are planned for January and February to look at some specific software solutions.

ADSA has just been awarded an Administration on Aging Nursing Home Diversion grant and is partnering with four Area Agencies on Aging to develop eligibility screening criteria, provide services to divert them from nursing home placement, and track client outcomes. The new *Tailored Caregiver Assessment and Referral* system (TCare) for unpaid family caregivers will be utilized with caregivers of care recipients at risk of nursing home placement; while the ADRC and Senior I&A programs will serve those who live alone. The Veterans Administration will be funding services for those who also meet Veterans services eligibility criteria.

ADSA's website has more information related to the ADRC grant is <http://www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov/professional/ADRC>; the pilot site website can be found at <http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/ourorg/humsvcs/ADRC.htm>.



Introducing New NW-AIRS Board Members: *Sarah Marshall and Laura Kuperstein*

I am pleased to introduce two of the new board members at NW-AIRS, Sarah Marshall and Laura Kuperstein. Both come with a wealth of experience, knowledge and a passion for field of information, assistance and referral. I had the opportunity to ask them some questions to get the “nitty gritty” on them in their personal and professional life but also to let you who is working on your behalf on the board.

What is your title and what do you do? What have you done previously?

Sarah: I’m the Resource Center Supervisor at the Crisis Clinic in Seattle, Washington. My department manages the database used by King County 2-1-1, Crisis Line and Teen Link phone lines; we also publish an annual directory called “Where to Turn,” used by service professionals throughout King County. I came to the clinic as a Crisis Line volunteer almost three years ago, and have found the industry to be a natural fit and very fulfilling. I’m also an internship away from a Masters in Counseling Psychology (to be completed Fall 2009).

Laura: I am the Oregon SafeNet Program Manager. Oregon SafeNet is one of the lines that we answer at 211info. It is the maternal and child health line for the state of Oregon. I manage the contracts that fund this service. I make sure that our staff are fully trained in all aspects of answering this line which involves not only information and referral but an in-depth knowledge of various government programs. I work in the database, run various statistical reports and manage a website (www.oregonsafenet.org). In addition, I manage a separate line for our state’s Breast and Cervical Cancer Program.

I have a total of 16 years in information

and referral. Prior to this position, I was the Resource Dept Manager for 211info. I worked before that at the Franklin County Office on Aging in Ohio as a Case Manager/I&R Specialist and before that I ran the Resource Dept at Firstlink in Columbus, Ohio.

Tell me a story about a situation in your work environment where you feel you made a difference in someone’s life?

Sarah: The crisis line volunteer training I received was a fantastic introduction to working at the clinic. The anonymity of the phone line, for instance, meant that I heard many personal stories. Though these calls rarely included closure, I came to understand that I was there to support the caller on their individual path. As a data manager, I’m even more removed from callers seeking information and/or assistance. However, knowing that our 2-1-1 line answers nearly 160,000 calls a year, and that our callers often receive referrals from the database I help maintain, validates my work and its importance.

Laura: I know that I’m making a difference in my work now although I’m fairly removed from any direct service. I’d have to say that when I worked for the Franklin County Office on Aging I had a Russian client who was quite lonely. I really went beyond the boundaries of my job to help her in a variety of ways including providing some companionship over the phone.

As a member of NW-AIRS Board what qualities do you bring in the Information and Assistance field?

Sarah: While still relatively new to the field, I bring an enthusiastic and compassionate spirit to the conversation. I am honored to participate as a member of the NW-AIRS board, and am committed to the work that we do. I am a Certified Resource Specialist and co-chair the WIN211 datamanager’s group, where we have successfully transitioned to a new referral software shared by call centers

throughout the state, and are currently developing Policies and Procedures for consistent data management.

Laura: I bring a wealth of knowledge about our field to this position. I am a Certified Information and Referral Specialist and a Certified Resource Specialist. I’ve worked in different positions and have worked with different specialized services.

What activities do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Sarah: I love living in Seattle and try and make the most of the parks, cafes, people-watching and city life available to me. I’m crafty and love to sew, especially clothes for myself and anything else that catches my fancy. I share an apartment with a friend and my two cats, Max and Charlotte.

Laura: I love gardening, attending art festivals/exhibits, sampling all types of foods and spending time with my husband of 38 years! I’m also busy being a grandma to two beautiful children - Sasha and Ezra.

What would you like to see in the future for Information and Assistance, it can be anything?

Sarah: Further collaboration. While Information and Assistance has been around for a long time, the relatively recent integration of technology into what we do has dramatically changed the industry. Both intimidating and exciting, technology reinforces existing I&R networks, and allows us to collaborate with others to reduce redundancy, increase accessibility, and strengthen the industry as a whole!

Laura: I would like to see the continuation of making our work a truly recognized profession. I also believe that we need to continue to stay ahead of the technological curve because people are now communicating and searching for information in new ways.

- Melissa Wall

NorthWest Senior and Disability Services

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