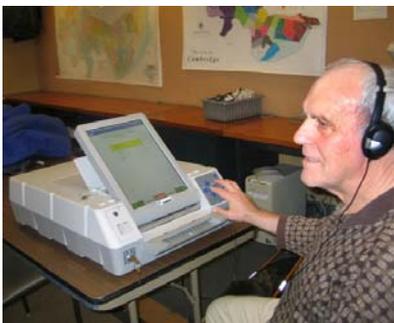


AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities

Cambridge Gets Accessible Voting Machines

On Tuesday, November 7, Cambridge voters will see a new machine at their polling places – the AutoMARK voter assist terminal – that will permit people with disabilities to cast their ballots independently, many for the first time.



Ken Bowles tries the AutoMARK

In response to the vote-counting debacle of the 2000 presidential elections, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. HAVA provided funds to the 50

states to replace antiquated punchcard voting systems. Voting machines that are able to be used independently by voters with disabilities, including voters who are blind, were required by HAVA to be deployed by 2006.

In Massachusetts, Secretary of State Bill Galvin has been leading an effort to research accessible voting machines and implement them statewide.

Unfortunately, not all 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts will have accessible voting machines by the November 7 election this year. With input from the Massachusetts Office on Disability and other disability organizations, Galvin's office decided to deploy a limited number of accessible voting machines, in 28 cities and towns, those with the largest number of visually impaired voters.

Galvin's office issued a press release stating, "Given the importance of procuring the most appropriate voting system accessible for voters with disabilities and the considerable amount of state and federal funds to be expended, Secretary Galvin believes further field

(Accessible Voting continued on page 2)

Proposed Medicare Policies Threaten Access to Power Wheelchairs & Scooters



Funding in Jeopardy?

On November 15, 2006, Medicare plans to implement several changes to its benefit for mobility devices that will prevent many individuals with long-term disabilities and chronic conditions from getting the type of power wheelchairs or scooters they require to participate in activities of daily living. While Medicare coverage of

this type of "durable medical equipment" has never been generous and the lack of appropriate mobility devices has prevented many people from returning to work or school, doing their own shopping, going to places of worship, and participating in their communities, the situation is about to go from bad to worse.

In August 2006, Medicare issued what is called a final *local coverage determination* (LCD) for power mobility devices (PMDs). Unless the policy changes are rescinded, this LCD would implement a series of new payment codes for power wheelchairs and scooters, and create new coverage standards for these mobility devices that would limit most Medicare beneficiaries to getting only the most rudimentary power mobility devices (in Group 1 or Group 2) that have very limited capabilities.

(Medicare & Wheelchairs,
continued on page 2)

(Accessible Voting continued)

testing is necessary before a final selection is made. All the equipment being field tested is in compliance with both state and federal law.”

Some disability advocates expressed frustration at the limited deployment of accessible voting machines. Bob Hachey, President of the Bay State Council of the Blind, said “While I appreciate Mr. Galvin’s attempts to expedite a partial rollout of accessible equipment in some communities, I am deeply disappointed that he will not be keeping a promise he made back in March of 2005 that all polling places would have accessible voting equipment for the 2006 elections.”

In Cambridge, each of the city’s 33 polling places will have one AutoMARK voter assist terminal. The AutoMARK machines utilize conventional optical-scan paper ballots, which have been used in Cambridge for the past ten years and have an excellent track record for reliability.

A voter with a disability inserts his or her blank ballot into the AutoMARK machine, which scans the ballots and displays the information on a touchscreen panel. Blind voters can have the ballot contents read to them on headphones by the AutoMARK’s computer-synthesized voice. Voters with low vision can enlarge the text displayed on the screen and adjust the contrast using buttons on the AutoMARK control keypad, for maximum readability.

Once voters have made their selections, they can check a verification screen to ensure all their selections are correct, then press a button on the AutoMARK. The machine automatically fills in the correct ovals on the optical-scan ballot, includes any write-ins, then delivers the ballot into the hands of the voter who can double check to make sure each candidate was properly marked. The voter then places the ballot into the same optical-scan tabulator machine used by every other voter in the polling place.

The AutoMARK prevents over-voting e.g. attempting to vote for more than one candidate on a particular election, and voters are prompted visually and audibly

if they attempt to under-vote. Other features of the AutoMARK include a keypad marked with Braille and a puff-sip interface. The voter can use all of these features separately or simultaneously. In the event of a mis-marked ballot the voter may spoil the ballot, obtain a new ballot from a poll worker and restart the voting process.

Voters experiencing any problems with the AutoMARK in Cambridge should contact the Election Commission at 617-349-4361 or <elections@cambridge.gov>.

(Medicare & Wheelchairs cont’d.)



Typically these power chairs are meant for occasional, intermittent use, balk at even going over a high door threshold, have a battery capacity of only 1.5 hours, and have limited control options. Medicare has also issued new reimbursement levels that significantly cut payments to providers for more versatile,

higher powered wheelchairs in the “Group 3” category.

There are three basic problems with these proposed Medicare reimbursement policies.

First, the new LCD states that in order to qualify for a high-functioning Group 3 device, the individual must have a “neurological condition or myopathy” that keeps him/her from being able to independently stand and pivot to transfer to the chair. This standard fails to take into account the functional needs of individuals with multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, cerebral palsy, and other disabilities who may be able to stand and pivot but need a Group 3 device to participate in their daily activities.

Second, the LCD would implement a new interpretation of the “in the home” restriction by denying people access to wheelchairs that have functions which Medicare deems unnecessary for indoor use. Currently, Medicare has not prevented individuals from using their wheelchairs outside their homes, but this new policy will not cover devices that have features that are useful for outdoor use. This change will further confine Medicare beneficiaries with mobility impairments to an indoor existence.

Third, the new reimbursement levels for more sophisticated (Group 3) wheelchairs represent up to a 40% cut in prices paid to providers. These cuts will likely translate into serious access problems even for Medicare beneficiaries who qualify for these more versatile wheelchairs because many providers will be unable to provide the high-end devices at the reduced reimbursement levels.

ACTION ALERT: We can stop implementation of these new Medicare wheelchair policies, and protect

access to appropriate mobility devices for people with disabilities! Call your members of Congress TODAY at 1-877-224-0041 (toll free) and ask them to:

- Press Medicare to rescind the new power wheelchairs coverage policy (LCD) and seriously examine the impact of these reimbursement cuts on individuals who require high-functioning, Group 3 wheelchairs.
- Support the legislation (Senate bill 3677 / H.R. bill 5983) to eliminate Medicare’s “in the home” restriction on mobility devices. Without enactment of this legislation, Medicare will continue to utilize this discriminatory coverage definition which prevents access to appropriate mobility devices for many people with disabilities.

More information is available at www.aapd-dc.org/News/medicare/061027item.htm.

Thank you for your advocacy!

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

November 6 **Registration DEADLINE for MRC Annual Consumer Conference in Quincy** – See Nov. 30-Dec. 1 listing for details.

November 7 **VOTE today in the 2006 General Election for Governor and on 3 State Ballot Questions.** Polls are open from 7am to 8 pm. The DEADLINE for absentee ballots is noon on Nov. 6. If you need to know where you vote, or need information about the candidates and issues, go to www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm or call Evelyne Milorin at Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) at 617-338-6665 voice or 617-338-6662 TTY.

November 7 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. They meet 7:30 to 9:30 pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.142. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to www.bostonvoiceusers.org.

November 8 **Siting Community Programs in Massachusetts** is a FREE half-day interactive seminar (9 am – 12 noon) about choosing an appropriate site for social service program or special needs school. The speakers will provide a review of the state and federal laws and will cover legal mechanisms and practical strategies to assist organizations in opening a new community programs. This seminar is being presented by the Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools and the Collaborative (Assn. of Developmental Disability Providers, Mass. Council of Human Services Providers, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Corporation of Mass.) The Nov. 8th event is at the Edinburg Center, 1040 Waltham Street in Lexington, but the **program will be repeated on Nov. 13 in Worcester, and Nov. 20 in Springfield.** Space is limited; advance registration is required. Contact Michael Ripple at mchsp@providers.org or Fax 617-428-1533.

- November 8 **Weekly support group for adults with LD/ADHD** (learning disabilities & attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) will meet in Cambridge near Harvard Square from 6 to 7:30 pm every Wednesday. Currently there are a few openings in this group, so if you are interested, contact Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117.
- November 8 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 to 9 pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture; 7-8 pm, on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- November 8 **An IEP for My Child – An IEP for My Child** is a workshop that takes parents step-by-step through the development of the Individual Education Program (IEP) for their child who receives special education services because of his/her disability. Parents learn how to articulate a Vision for their child, how to use the results of evaluations to set goals and how to measure their child's progress. The workshop, presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), will be held at Devotion School, 345 Harvard Street in Brookline, 7-9 pm. Workshop materials are available in Spanish. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- November 9 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30– 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- November 14 **Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) Annual Meeting** will feature Dan Grabauskas, General Manager of the MBTA, who will speak on the landmark lawsuit filed by BCIL with Greater Boston Legal Services to improve access to the T. This 6 p.m. event will be held at the Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza in Boston. It is free and a light dinner will be provided. To RSVP and request accommodations, contact Bill Henning at 617-338-6665 or <bhenning@bostoncil.org> by Nov. 9.
- November 14 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. They meet 7:30 to 9:30 pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.142. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.com>.
- November 15 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA**, meets 1 - 3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room #4. Call 617-973-7507 voice, or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information, to request Interpreters, or confirm date and time of meeting. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings.
- November 15 **Basic Rights** – This workshop provides families with an introduction to their rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Massachusetts Special Education Law and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It is designed to help parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, to decide the child's eligibility for special education, to plan, make decisions and to monitor the educational progress of their child. Workshop materials are also available in Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered 7-9 pm in at McCall Middle School, 458 Main Street in Winchester. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>. Workshop will also be offered Nov. 27 in Somerville.
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November 16 **LD/ADHD Task Force for adults with Learning Disabilities / Attention Deficit**

Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC State headquarters, 27-48 Wormwood Street in Boston (south of Fort Point Channel) in the 6th floor large conference room. Business meeting from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information contact Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117 voice, 617-497-5257 fax.

November 18 **Pandemic Flu Preparedness Among Special Populations** – 10 am - 3 pm forum sponsored by the Massachusetts Council of Churches (MCC) and the RI State Council of Churches Disability Ministries Network will be held at Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, 207 Washington St. in Wellesley. The program, with guest speaker Cheryl Bushnell, MS, RN from the Center for Community Health at DPH, will focus on how people with disabilities, families and advocates should plan for emergencies. Besides lunch, there will be time for networking and the annual Allen Gunn Recognition Award will be presented. For more information about the Disability Ministry Network and *The Accessible Church* statement, go to <www.masscouncilofchurches.org/docs/DisabilityNetwork.htm>. To register, you can also call 617-523-2771 or email <flettmc@yahoo.com>.

November 21 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.

November 27 **Basic Rights** – This workshop provides families with an introduction to their rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Massachusetts Special Education Law and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). See Nov. 15 listing for complete description. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered 7-9 pm in at Kennedy Elementary School, 5 Cherry Street in Somerville. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.

Nov. 30 – Dec.1 **MRC Pathways to Employment & Beyond, annual Consumer Conference** will take place at the Marriott Hotel in Quincy, 1000 Marriott Drive (formerly 1200 Crown Colony Drive). **Registration DEADLINE** is Nov. 6. This annual conference offers a unique opportunity for advocates and people with disabilities to network with one another and with the staff of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). Suggestions voiced at the conference can make an impact on the policies and practices of this state agency. For more information and to register, call 617-204-3665 voice, 617-204-3868 TTY or email <consumer.involvement@mrc.state.ma.us>.

December 6 **RSI (repetitive strain injury) Monthly Drop-in Support & Information Meeting** (no registration is necessary) on first Wednesday of each month, 5:30 to 7 pm at 650 Beacon Street in Boston, 4th floor Conference Room, steps from the Kenmore Square MBTA station, and a few doors to the right of the Barnes and Noble Bookstore. RSI Action volunteers will answer questions and provide resources and support, including the opportunity to view our provider evaluation book. For more information, call 617-247-6827, check **NEW website** at <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rsiaction>> or email <rsiaction@yahoogroups.com>.

December 6 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 to 9 pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (See Nov. 8 listing for details.)

December 12 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. second Tuesday of the month (See Nov. 14 listing for details.)

- December 14 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting and Holiday Gathering** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- December 20 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA**, meets 1 - 3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room #2. Call 617-973-7507 voice, or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information, to request Interpreters, or confirm date and time of meeting. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings.
- December 21 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston
- January 3 **RSI Monthly Drop-in Group** – first Wednesday of the month; see December 6 listing for details.
- January 3 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 to 9 pm at McLean Hospital in Belmont (See Nov. 8 listing for details.)
- January 11 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- January 12 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. second Tuesday of the month (See Nov. 14 listing for details.)
- February 2 **DEADLINE for artists with disabilities to submit entries to VSA Arts Renaissance 07 competition.** Selected works will be presented in Washington, D.C. in late spring of 2007. For more information go to <www.vsarts.org/renascence>, or call 202-628-2800, ext. 3885 or TTY 202-737-0645, or email <jennifer@vsarts.org>.

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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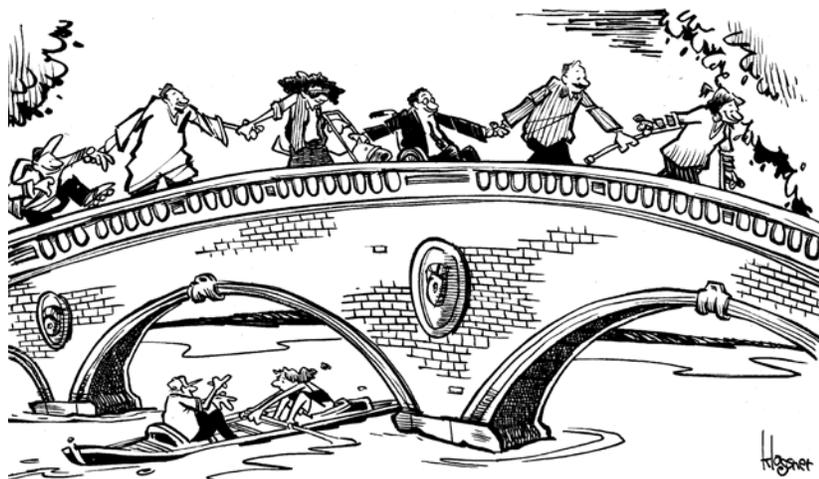
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We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

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Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

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