

Caring Matters



March 2016



We Care... We Listen... We Help

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The Center for Family Support, Inc. (CFS) is a not-for-profit human service agency that provides individualized support services and programs for individuals living with developmental disabilities, and for the families that care for them.

A Month of Awareness

March is National Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month



President Ronald Reagan declared March to be Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in 1987, urging “all Americans to join me in accordng our fellow citizens with such disabilities both encouragement and the opportunities they need to lead productive lives and to achieve their full potential.”

Now 28 years later, The Center for Family Support has stayed true to their sixty plus year mission and today offers respite services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Manhattan and the five Boroughs as well as communities in central and northern New Jersey.

As people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the nation become increasingly visible in our daily lives, The Center for Family Support strives to help each individual live the life they wish for themselves. We hope you will join us this month as we celebrate the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



We support over 1500 individuals in both the NYC Metropolitan area and New Jersey.

We support individuals to help them live the lives they want, respecting diversity, and individual choice.

We provide families with the support to help them stay together.

We strive to enable individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to become productive members of their community.

The Rise of Technology

Technology Reduces Cost of Care and Eases Daily Living Stress for Those with Intellectual Disabilities

Individuals with intellectual disabilities can live more independently than ever before, due to advances in technology. This means less reliance on Government-funded programs and services and a lower Medicare or Medicaid cost. In a time when Managed Care is the norm in New York State and is quickly becoming a reality in New Jersey, this is good news for those who rely on services from The Center for Family Support in NY and NJ (CFS).

Steven Vernikoff, CEO of CFS, maintains that all of these devices help his agency to use staff only as needed. It is his belief that as managed care comes into play, this will reduce the agency's costs without sacrificing the individual's rights to live the life they see for themselves. For example, in the apartment buildings where there are 5 or 10 apartments of people with various needs, CFS has put in staff in one or two offices, and offers round the clock services. This translates to 3-6 staff (one per 8-hour shift) for 5-10 apartments vs. 15-30 staff, (one per apartment per an 8 hour shift).

Some examples of technology in use at CFS include; sophisticated door sensors, medication dispensers, high-tech bed pads, and life alert pendants and bracelets and electronic watches. Items such as stove sensors, audible prompts, teaching Apps for the iPad and Smartphones, have been considered for some service recipients, but are not yet mainstream items.

"We want to respect our individual's desire and right to privacy in their homes while ensuring to the best of our ability, their health and safety. These devices also enable older adults to age in place and remain in their homes longer surrounded by what is familiar to them as opposed to having to adjust to a new living arrangement such as a nursing home or assisted living facility," said Nadine Daley, Coordinator of Innovative Planning for The Center for Family Support.

Door sensors can be placed on doors if staff is worried about who their service recipient might be letting into their living space. They can also be used to monitor when a service recipient leaves his or her place.



Medication Dispenser

This tamper proof unit is designed to aid persons who take medications on a scheduled basis. With proper use, users can adhere to the medication schedule that maintains their health.



GPS Locator Watch

The GPS Locator Watch is actually a tiny cell phone worn as a watch. The Watch incorporates the latest in GPS, 3G/4G cellular network and Bluetooth 4.0 wireless technologies to accurately communicate the individual's location, right to your computer, cellular, or smart phone.

Nadine commented, "These are very helpful for those in the 'gray area', or for those who staff is not 100% sure that the individual will be able to function on their own. These are used as "just in case" and give peace of mind to the staff and the family."

Cooking, or stove sensors could be paired with a motion detector and they will send out an alert that the stove is on, when there is no one in the room. Staff nearby would receive the alert and if the individual does not turn the stove off, staff can then intervene. This can give the individual freedom, as they don't need a person supervising them day and night, yet they are safe. Staff can respond in the event of imminent danger, yet they do not have to be omnipresent, thus giving the individual privacy and independence.

The 'how-to' Apps. for iPads and Tablets are numerous and these devices can be loaded with the lessons and placed in every room in waterproof and motion-proof cases. Instead of the individual learning from different staff members who may perform a task a little different than their co-worker, the Apps. provide consistent 'how-to' instructions for daily living activities such as basic hygiene skills, cooking, dressing, bathing and doing laundry.

Audible prompts also offer another layer of security and these reminders can be recorded in a voice that the individual will recognize and will respond to. When they are leaving for the day, a reminder will play that reminds them to lock their door and to not forget their keys.

Other recordings can be made and can be programmed for reminders such as, 'time to do your laundry....don't forget the quarters and the soap,' or 'time to take a shower....don't forget your favorite shampoo and soap.'

The Med-Ready device is a tray with 28 slots that is programmed to dispense meds at the right time of day. If an individual is supposed to take his or her pill at 8am and they have not done so, at the pre-determined time, the unit flashes as a reminder and after 30 minutes, will alert staff if the medication is not taken. This is a huge step toward independence and eliminates the need for individuals to go to their doctor's office across town to take their medicine and it also eliminates the need for staff people to have to administer medication to each individual. From a safety standpoint, it prevents double doses and makes sure the medicine is taken as prescribed. There is also a saved 'history' of what meds were taken and staff can then go back and evaluate the effectiveness of the dose to see if it needs to be increased or decreased.

Designed for those with seizures or who are fall risks but want to live on their own without the presence of staff in their homes, the Bed Pads are placed under the bottom sheets and alert staff when the individual gets out of bed and if they are not back in a pre-determined amount of time, (three minutes) it will alert staff with a call or a text and they can go and check on the person. These can be used in conjunction with bedroom and outside door monitors, for the hours between sleeping and waking. This also allows staff to identify trends and capture information about the person, such as, the amount of times this is happening and identifying a relationship to the medication and adjusting accordingly.



"Funding does not yet cover the costs of the devices, their monitoring, repairs and replacements and at the moment there is no grant money for these items. CFS continues to communicate with the State agencies, about the positives associated with use of assistive technology devices and it is our hope that they decide to fund these items. CFS wishes to continue to build more and more assistive technology into the lives of those they serve and would prefer to have these conveniences built in during construction to save additional costs later on to renovate existing structures,"

**- Steven Vernikoff,
Executive Director**

CFS individuals also wear electronic watches to contact a staff person if they are having trouble or have a question. A recent example of this was a CFS service recipient was waiting for the bus for a long time and the bus had not shown up. The person pushed the button on their watch and stated the problem and the staff person responded by saying they would come and pick the person up. Alternately, the staff person could have consulted the schedule and told the individual when the next bus was due, easing their anxiety.

Some of the pluses CFS has seen are a greater enjoyment out of life and less stressful living situations. Having multiple roommates can be stressful as is the constant presence of staff people. Individuals can now have their own space and spend time alone and on their own. There have been less injuries. A home with multiple inhabitants is busy and can get chaotic for both the individuals and the staff.

Meals on Wheels

**Volunteer Spreads Warmth and A Nutritious Meal
No Matter What the Weather**



(left) Rob Pullan, Meals on Wheels Coordinator, hands Richard Nolte, a volunteer from The Center for Family Support, the meals that he will deliver that day. Meals on Wheels, with the help of volunteers like Richard, delivers meals to over 100 people in need each day. The program is housed in the SAGE Eldercare facility in Summit, NJ.

Despite bone chilling temperatures, Richard Nolte eagerly donned his coat to deliver hot meals to those in need. To Richard, who participates in the community-based day and residential programs offered at CFS, his work is vital to those he serves. With a friendly smile and a quick step, he visits four to five homes, three times a week and serves up nutritious meals and companionship since 2007.

At his side, is CFS Program Instructor, Patricia Addison, who has helped Richard for over ten years and she affirms he is a ready and willing volunteer for the Meals on Wheels Program, administered by SAGE Eldercare in Summit. He is a part of 600 volunteers annually who deliver more than 44,000 meals to 234 people in Union County. SAGE, like CFS, promotes independence and quality of life for older adults and has been doing so since 1954. Richard and Patricia were both honored by SAGE in 2010 as December Volunteers of the Month for their dedication to serving those in the community who are homebound and have limited socialization.

“Our partnership with SAGE gives Richard a meaningful volunteer experience and helps them help those in need in the community,” explained Executive Director, Steven Vernikoff. “Diagnosed at a young age with mild cognitive impairments, Richard, now a senior citizen, has spent his life serving others. At CFS, we are constantly looking for ways to bring our Day Program participants out into the community so they can show others what they are capable of,” he continued.

The Center for Family Support is a non-profit human services agency that provides support and assistance to individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families in New Jersey and New York. Founded in 1954, CFS operates three Day Programs in NJ and 19 residential sites as well as 26 residential sites throughout the five Boroughs of New York City, and Long Island.

Patricia Addison (bottom right), an instructor for The Center for Family Support, helps Richard Nolte load meals into the van to take to those in need. Nolte has been volunteering for this program for over 10 years and enjoys delivering these nutritious meals to those who are less fortunate or homebound.

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Aha Moments

When Your Job Becomes your Career

**By: Gavin Gear, Assistant Director, Day Program Services
The Center for Family Support NY and NJ**

During an interview for the agency's annual report, I was asked how I decided this field was for me. My mother is a nurse at a facility for adults with developmental disabilities and at the age of 17, she encouraged me to take a summer job there. I was there a few weeks when I was introduced to the power of companionship. While providing direct care, I was going from person to person trying to provide individual attention to everyone in my group. I came to work with a young lady with whom I already knew most of the staff didn't spend a great deal of time. After working with her for about 10 minutes, I let her know that I needed to go work with someone else. She reached out to take my hand and wouldn't let me leave. This was unusual for her, as she typically never made deliberate physical contact with anyone. After a few attempts to go work with someone else, she took my hands and got up out of her wheelchair and started to walk with me. To my surprise, our physical therapist came running across the room telling me not to stop doing what I was doing because this young lady had never walked before. The fact of the matter is not that she couldn't walk; it's that no one had taken the time to try. At that moment I was hooked. I realized that all I had to do to be successful in this field was to treat people with kindness, make them feel unique, special and welcomed. It changed my life and I changed my major to special education and I have never looked back.

I was fortunate in that my 'aha moment' came at a young age. As such, I enrolled in college courses that were fitted to exactly what I wanted to do – to help those adults with intellectual disabilities live the lives they chose to live. I am making a difference everyday for a segment of the population that is forgotten by many. Public outcry typically goes toward children and the education system. Even though these individuals are grown does not mean they don't need support and something to look forward to each day. Everyday I come to work wondering what I will discover about one of our adults. Will it be a hidden artistic talent or perhaps a sense of humor that comes out in the form of a witty remark? Will I finally conquer a communication challenge and break through the barrier of silence or frustration and discover the real person within? If so, I know I can then find a balance, using my tools and our data and documentation to help that person lead a happier and more productive life.

Not everyone is so lucky to have experienced the 'aha moment' at the age of 17, or perhaps they have had this happen to them, but they have not identified it as such. They enter college or a trade school with a goal of one day working and excelling in a particular industry, based on a suggestion by a guidance counselor or parent or a friend. Sometimes even a story line in a movie or a book can motivate them to consider certain careers. So, think back on your days and years at work and see if you can identify a moment, an event, an observation by a co-worker that might have steered you in the direction of where you are today.

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