



# PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

HIV ADVOCACY & SERVICES SINCE 1995

The Network  
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Issue #143



As we get ready for our 4th annual Dining Out for Life, we have one more kick off event for you all to enjoy.  
<https://www.facebook.com/DiningOutForLifePortland>



The Hawthorne Burgerville will be donating 10% of dinner sales (6-9 p.m.) on **Thursday, April 5th** to Partnership Project and The HIV Day Center. **Bring the kids!! Join us!!**

**Next Meeting**  
  
**April 10th**  
  
**9:00-11:30 a.m.**  
  
CAPS Assessment  
  
Multnomah County  
Aging and  
Disability  
  
800 NE OREGON  
St, RM 1D

**By Alan Edwards-Social Security Public Affairs**

Disability is something most people do not like to think about. But if you're not able to work because you have a medical condition that is expected to last at least one year or result in death, you may be able to get Social Security disability benefits. Here's what you need to know. You should apply for disability benefits as soon as you become disabled. It can take months to obtain all your medical records and process an application for disability benefits (three to five months, on average).

Generally, the information we need includes:

- Your Social Security number;
- Your birth or baptismal certificate;
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of the doctors, caseworkers, hospitals, and clinics that took care of you, and dates of your visits;
- Names and dosage of all the medicine you take;
- Medical records from your doctors, therapists, hospitals, clinics, and caseworkers that you already have in your possession;
- Laboratory and test results;
- A summary of where you worked and the kind of work you did; and
- A copy of your most recent W-2 Form (*Wage and Tax Statement*) or, if you are self-employed, your Federal tax return for the past year.

**IMPORTANT--Do not delay filing for disability benefits if you don't have all the above information in your possession. Social Security will assist you in getting the necessary documents, including obtaining your medical records.**

The fastest and most convenient way to apply for disability is online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyfordisability). You can save your application as you go, so you can take a break at any time. If you prefer, you may call our toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213, to make an appointment to apply at your local Social Security office or to set up an appointment for someone to take your application over the phone. If you are approved for disability benefits, that doesn't mean you'll never return to work. Social Security has special rules called "work incentives" that allow you to test your ability to work. Learn more about disability benefits and take advantage of the helpful Disability Starter Kit at [www.socialsecurity.gov/disability](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability).



### ASK Devon

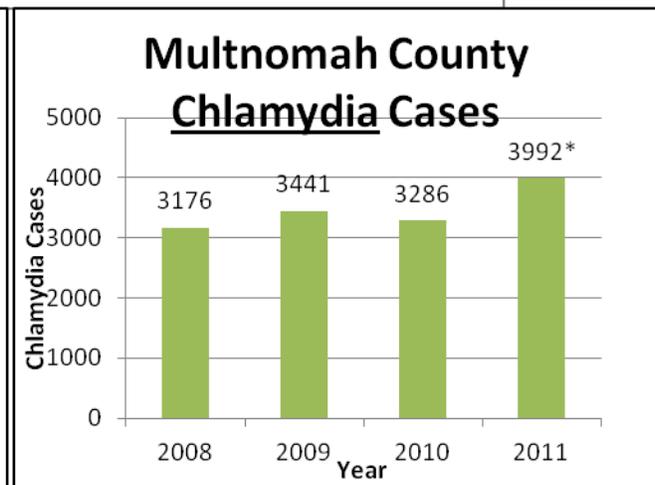
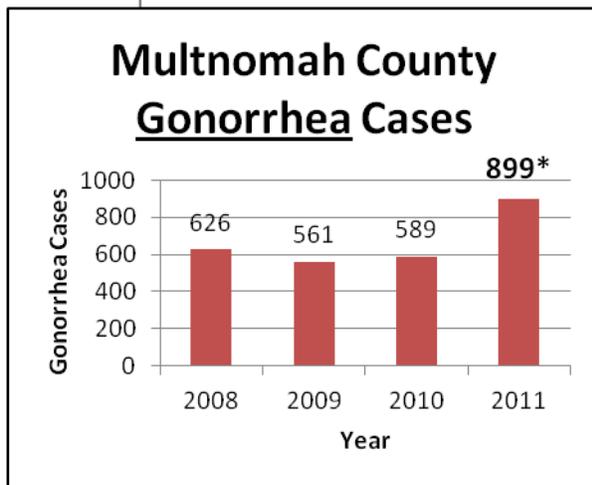
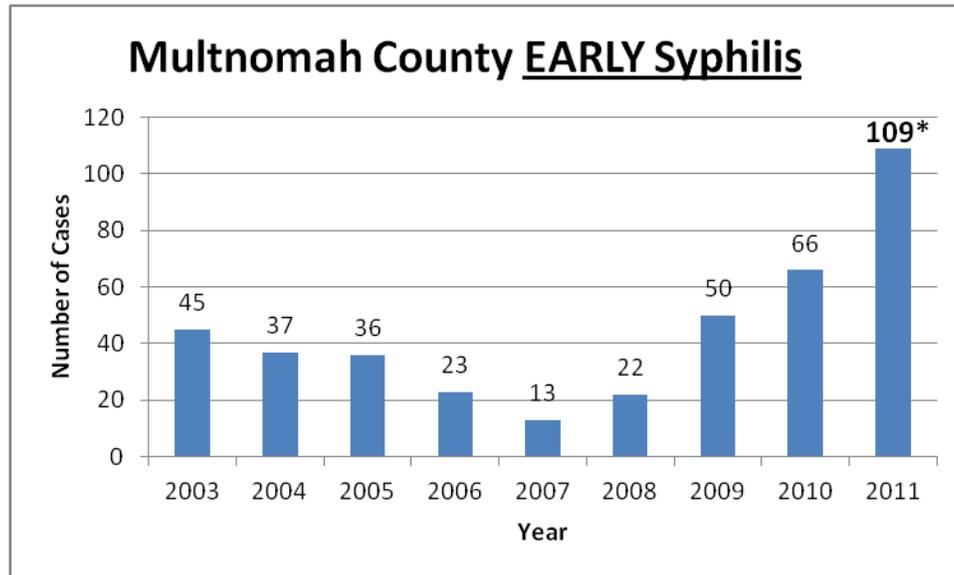
Devon Flynn is a pharmacist with the OHSU-HIV Clinic

#### Update of Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia Infections in Multnomah County

Cases of syphilis infections continue to rise per Multnomah County Health Department surveillance data. Unofficial, preliminary data from 2011 show that cases of syphilis were exclusively among men (as was the case in 2010 as well). The unofficial data indicate 92% of these cases were specifically among men who have sex with men (MSM).

In addition to increased cases of syphilis, gonorrhea and Chlamydia infections have also increased. This serves as a **reminder to continue discussions of risk reduction practices and sexually transmitted disease screenings with clients.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) Treatment Guidelines, 2010, recommend screening for syphilis, gonorrhea, and Chlamydia in MSM at least annually. **MSM clients who report sex with multiple partners, anonymous partners, and/or illicit substance use associated with sex (or who have sex partners who participate in the above activities) should be screened more often (every 3 – 6 months)<sup>1</sup>.**



Multnomah County data\*Unofficial, preliminary data from 2011

CDC Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines, 2010. MMWR 2011;59(RR-12).



This Column is provided as a public service by Attorney Sarah Patterson ( www. Sarahpattersonlaw.com), by Email :Sarah@sarahpattersonlaw.com, (503) 281-4766. Sarah is a lawyer in private practice and represents claimants with HIV and AIDS in Social Security and SSI disability cases and is not associated with the Social Security Administration.

## Substance Abuse: Is it Still a Disability?

### Record Development is essential for moving forward on these cases

**Substance Abuse**, past or current, is always hot topic in the Social Security disability world. There is perception that substance abuse may preclude a claimant from getting benefits.

**In Social Security's** own past, there was a time when substance abuse was actually a qualification for disability benefits. Theoretically, this allowed a person to get medical insurance that could cover treatment. In 1996, Congress slammed that door shut, and addiction suddenly became a barrier to eligibility.

**Actually, the guidance** of the law has been plain since 1996, even if every adjudicator was not clear on its application. Once a person is found disabled, the judge must then determine whether drug or alcohol use is "material" to that disability. Social Security issued a regulation in October 2003 codifying this interpretation of the law. A judge must give a specific finding as to whether a drug addiction is "a contributing factor material to the finding of disability". What does that mean? Ask yourself ;which claimed disabilities would still be present if you took substance abuse out of the picture? Social Security will then decide whether any of the remaining limitations would be disabling.

**Hundreds of physical** and mental conditions are NOT affected by substance abuse. For example, a diagnosis of AIDS or cancer does not go away if someone stops drinking or using drugs. But a diagnosis such as severe depression is clearly going to be affected by ongoing drinking or drug use. There must be a baseline of sobriety to see if the depression is free standing, or perhaps caused by substance abuse.

**A more subtle** argument can sometimes be made that a condition that was originally caused by substance abuse ( brain damage, liver disease) is now permanent. Damage like this can be irreversible, beyond the point where it can be improved by abstinence. It becomes its own disability rather than a symptom of substance abuse.

**For many disabilities**, substance abuse is only a small part of the picture. But even if there is an impaired ability to follow required treatment or medication regimens, it can be seen as a "material factor contributing" to the inability to heal. Very careful record development is essential for moving forward on these cases. Please call us for a free consultation on this issue.

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### Free Seminar

**We will conduct a free seminar at your location on how to help clients win Social Security disability cases. If you are a social worker and need to complete continuing education credits. We could assist you in obtaining those credits with a customized seminar. Call our office to make arrangements.**

Do you know where you'll be Dining Out this year?  
Click here for the most up to date list of participating restaurants

# DINING OUT FOR LIFE



## THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2012

Join us for Dining Out for Life on Thursday, April 26, and between 20% and 30% of your bill will be donated to Partnership Project and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's HIV Day Center to provide services for people living with HIV/AIDS in the Portland metro area.

### Participating Restaurants

New restaurants are joining daily! For more information, including a complete list of restaurants, visit [www.diningoutforlife.com/Portland](http://www.diningoutforlife.com/Portland).

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Dine Out, Fight AIDS



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## TICKET TO WORK™ INSPIRES BALLROOM DANCER TO DANCE ON

By Alan Edwards-Social Security Public Affairs

Megan Riggs was just like many other people in their late twenties: bright, ambitious, and full of life. She earned Bachelor degrees in Forensic Science and Biology, with a minor in Chemistry. Riggs started working and building her career. In her spare time, she pursued her passion, competitive ballroom dancing.

In January of 2008, Riggs had a major depressive episode. Her illness caused her to lose her job, and financial struggles resulted. Riggs qualified for Social Security disability benefits. The monthly payments helped keep her afloat financially, but even then she had the desire to work again. Knowing she would need help returning to work, she looked to Social Security's "Ticket to Work" program and other work incentives for support on her path back toward self-sufficiency.

Riggs learned that the Ticket program was free, voluntary, and designed specifically for adults who receive disability benefits through Social Security. She decided the program was a good fit for her, as it would help her find a career that could lead to a brighter future.

Once Riggs made her choice to participate in the Ticket to Work program, she decided to work with an Employment Network (EN) that provides employment support and guidance. The EN helped Riggs develop a plan to achieve her work goals and offered advice on career building, job placement, training, and counseling. "I could try work," said Riggs. "I knew I wasn't going to be on my own."

Using her Ticket, she was able to test her abilities, build her confidence, and continue to receive her benefits while working toward becoming fully self-sufficient. Through Social Security's work incentives, she maintained her health care coverage, which gave her peace of mind.

Riggs found stable employment. As a result of her hard work, she now works as a document control specialist, earning more money than she received on disability benefits.

The Ticket to Work program helped Riggs achieve a more fulfilling life by helping her regain the satisfaction of work. She now enjoys working, reading, spending time with her Cocker Spaniels, and has even been able to return to competitive ballroom dancing.

"With Ticket to Work, I've received the tools to excel and the help of people to keep me going."

Thousands of Social Security beneficiaries like Megan Riggs have earned more money, begun careers, learned new skills, and met new people through the Ticket to Work program. If you're disabled and ready to change your life through work, this program may be the ticket for you, too.

To learn more, visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/work](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work).

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The editor is Julia Lager-Mesulam.

Comments/questions about this publication should be directed to:

Julia Lager-Mesulam at [lagermes@ohsu.edu](mailto:lagermes@ohsu.edu),  
or call (503) 230-1202, FAX (503) 230-1213,  
5525 SE Milwaukie Ave. Portland, OR 97202

**This issue, and issues from Feb 2002 on, can be found electronically at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/hiv/services/news.shtml>**