

CenterPage

A quarterly publication of the

Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services



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A Message from the Director

Welcome to the first issue of CenterPage!

We hope that you find this publication informative, useful, and interesting as you work to make a difference in the lives of the beneficiaries we serve.

The Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights' (OEOCR) mission is to facilitate and ensure fair and equitable treatment, both internally and externally. Our first newsletter strives to make a difference in your work life by keeping you informed and up-to-date with OEOCR activities. We will feature articles that address diversity and equal employment opportunity in a way that promotes better communication. To help you communicate with us, a CenterPage resource box is now available in GroupWise to receive your messages. Also, we are overhauling our web site with the expectation that it too will be a resource to you.

Following this issue of CenterPage, the newsletter will be published quarterly. Enjoy reading it and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Ramón Surís-Fernández

Diversity Day

"We are all Americans" celebration

Continuing the tradition of the past two years, and despite the wind damage to the outside tent that was to hold this event, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights (OEOCR) held the agency's third annual Diversity Day celebration at the Baltimore Central Office headquarters.

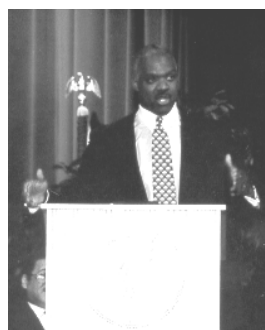
Ramón Surís-Fernández, OEOCR Director, served as the master of ceremonies, welcoming the speakers, guests and staff.

"...there is a strong business case for diversity [and] providing the very best public service to all of Americans." —Paul D. Barnes

The keynote speaker, Paul D. Barnes, Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources, Social Security Administration (SSA), touted the accomplishments at SSA.

"Twenty-seven percent of the 65,000 SSA employees are African-American, 10 percent are Hispanic, 3 percent are Asian and 1 percent are Native American. That's over forty percent people of color." Mr. Barnes also addressed the benefits of realizing a diverse workforce. Proclaiming, "Our diversity is our strength," he concluded his remarks by listing examples of why "there is a strong business case for diversity [and] providing the very best public service to all of Americans."

Ruben J. King-Shaw, Jr., Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Administrator, also a featured speaker at this event, gave examples of diversity at CMS and connected diversity to the



mission of the agency. He stated, "To meet our mission we must embrace all that we are and all that we bring. When you bring who you are to work everyday, you add your perspective, your insight, your knowledge and commitment to issues that may not be on some else's agenda. By doing so, we add to the American agenda." King-Shaw stressed to the audience

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Mediation vs. the Traditional EEO Process - Making the Appropriate Choice

The rules and regulations governing the federal sector EEO complaint process are contained within 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1614. In November 1999, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) revised these regulations requiring all federal agencies to either establish or make available an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) program for EEO complaints. This regulatory change reflects the Commission's efforts to reform the federal sector process: a process characterized by increased complaint filing, increased processing times, and decreased findings of discrimination.¹ In compliance with this regulatory change, CMS established an ADR program offering mediation in EEO complaints at both the informal and formal stages of the process.

Now that employees and managers have a choice between the traditional EEO process and ADR, how do you decide which process is appropriate for you? Employees need to be fully informed of their options so they can make an educated decision. Otherwise, there is the potential for unmet expectations, regrets, and dissatisfaction, which only exacerbates an already contentious situation. Here are a few things to consider when deciding whether mediation or the traditional process is appropriate:

MEDIATION	TRADITIONAL PROCESS
I want to solve this problem, and I am willing to work in collaboration with the other party(ies) to construct a mutually acceptable outcome that is in my best interest and better than my alternatives.	I want a decision. I want a finding. I want someone to decide "who's right and who's wrong." I am prepared to win or lose.
I want closure. I don't want to go through a formal rights-based process. This dispute has more to do with fairness than discrimination.	I am willing to wait for the process to unfold no matter how long it takes.
My interests and needs include things that are not available to me under the traditional process.	It's not about my interests and needs, but to what the law says I may or may not be entitled.
I want peace.	I want to fight.
I want to be heard.	I want to convince.
My relationship with the people involved in this dispute is important. I want an opportunity to improve this relationship through communication and understanding.	I am not interested in working with the other party to resolve this. I have no interest in repairing the relationship. I don't trust them, they don't understand me, and I don't think things will change.

¹ GAO Reports, Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Caseloads Rising, With Effects of New Regulation Trends Unclear, August 1999 (based on FY'98 EEOC data), Equal Employment Opportunity: Rising Trends in EEO Complaint Caseloads in the Federal Sector, July 1998, Equal Employment Opportunity: Administrative Judges' Recommended Decisions and Agencies' Actions, June 1998, and EEOC's Accomplishments Report for FY 2000.

Disability Awareness Month

...and the Oscar for best Short Documentary goes to...



The Academy Award winning film King Gimp will be shown Thursday, October 18 in the CMS Auditorium as part of CMS's celebration of Disability Awareness Month. The film's star, Dan Keplinger and the award-winning producers, Susan Hannah Hadary and William Whiteford, will also visit.

Dan Keplinger was born with cerebral palsy. At the age of 12, two Baltimore filmmakers began to document his life and continued the endeavor for more than 13 years. King Gimp is the inspiring story of Mr. Keplinger's journey.

Ms. Hadary and Mr. Whiteford's film, written by Keplinger himself, traces the struggles of a young man for whom no daily routine is taken for granted. Using paint as his language, and his art as his voice he has found a decidedly unique way to communicate his emotions and perceptions.

The film is a compelling story of sheer determination and Mr. Keplinger's life-long struggle to be an artist. It is a 39-minute glimpse into 13 years of Mr. Keplinger's world as he mainstreamed—despite opposition—into his neighborhood high school, moved into his own apartment and studied art at Towson University. He is now an internationally known artist. This story illustrates, as Mr. Keplinger is often quoted, "Most people think gimp means someone with a lame walk. But gimp also means fighting spirit."

Ruben King-Shaw, Jr., Deputy Administrator and Ramon Suris-Fernandez, OEOCR Director will be opening speakers. Mr. Keplinger and the producers will be available for questions after the viewing. OEOCR and the Employees with Disability Advisory Group are sponsoring this event.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Paving the Way for Future Generations

Under Public Law 90-498, Congress authorized the President of the United States to issue an annual proclamation designating Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15.

On Wednesday, September 26, Ms Leslie Sanchez, Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans will be the keynote speaker. *La Vista from Here*, an Afro-Cuban musical group will provide the entertainment.

Women's Equality Day

On Thursday, August 23, CMS will observe Women's Equality Day. This day was established to officially commemorate the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees women's right to vote.

CMS's program this year will feature Mary Ann Jung, a local actress, who will portray Margaret Brent, a feminist, lawyer and one of Maryland's first landowners.

Margaret Brent, often called the "first suffragette," is noted in history for her petition to the assembly for a seat in the Maryland Legislature and the right to vote in 1648. She was denied admission to the Legislature and the right to vote, even though her male contemporaries praised her abilities. It would take 272 years before women received the right to vote. On Aug. 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution became law and gave women the right to vote in all elections.

During the program, employees who have made a significant contribution to women's health issues related to the mission and goals of the Agency will be honored. OEOCR and the Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee are the sponsors of this event.

Survey Says...

EEO Survey Delivers

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, an independent regulatory agency, requires all Federal agencies to maintain and report annually their workforce profiles and their progress toward achieving diversity.

To ensure that CMS information is accurate, in October 2000, our employees were asked to participate in an EEO Survey (which was technically a census rather than a survey). The survey requested employees to provide the Agency with information regarding their race, national origin and disability status.

The EEO Survey responses began to pour in after executive officers, secretaries and other administrative staff helped to communicate the importance of the information being requested. In fact, 86 percent of CMS employees responded (95 percent in the Regional Offices). With this effort, CMS has successfully updated the personnel records that identify staff by race, national origin and disability status.

Thanks for your participation that contributed to the tremendous response rate!

Children's Day at CMS

The Ms. Foundation launched "Take Our Daughters to Work Day" in 1993 to increase girls self-esteem during a crucial point in their development, while also providing access to new choices and possibilities beyond traditional roles and expectations. CMS expanded this effort to include all children between the ages of 8 and 16 with, "Take Our Children to Work Day."

On April 26, approximately 100 children and parents participated in planned events that included a tour of the Baltimore Central Office facilities, an overview on the Agency's operations, including customer service and disability awareness.

The tour included visits to the security control center, Individual Learning Center, Graphics, Fitness Center, Library and TV Production Studio. The tour continued in the afternoon with Pictel, customer service and disability awareness presentations from CBC staff, formerly CBS.

Contributors included: Arnie Kahn of Administrative Services Group, Della Thompson, Karen Gross and Marvelyn Davis of the Individual Learning & Support Center, Kathleen Kelso of Graphics (also responsible for children's pictures shown below); Carol Cotton, Fitness Center; Elnora Scott, Library; Wayne Gegorek, TV Production Studio; Jerry Mills, who conducted the Pictel with the Atlanta Regional Office; Brenda Stup, Tangita Daramola, Paul Mendelsohn and Lakeicha Wing of CBC.



that when he speaks of diversity and asserts that the Agency "shall promote, retain, recruit and outreach at all levels of the organization," he is not "lowering standards or reducing expectations." Continuing he added, "We are raising the standard of expectations and performance for everybody, from the leadership on down. Just as it is appropriate to hold leadership accountable for embracing diversity, inclusion and decision making, it is important that I hold you and myself accountable for our performance..."

The Tropical Ensemble, a local steel band played throughout the day's event. Other performers were Scottish Dancers; Cantarea (Hispanic singing duo); Irish dancers from the Sean Culin School of Irish Dance; and the HCFA Choir.

Job Fair & Conference Schedule

*National Medical Association's Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly
August 5-7, Nashville, Tennessee*

*Blacks In Government National Training Conference
August 27-31, Los Angeles, California*

*World Congress & Exposition on Disabilities
September 28-30, Atlanta, Georgia*

*National Society of Hispanic MBAs National Conference
November 2-3, San Antonio, Texas*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

CMS AUDITORIUM
THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 1:30 PM
Commemoration of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution that guaranteed women's right to vote

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

CMS AUDITORIUM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 10 AM
Keynote: Leslie Sanchez, Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans

DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

CMS AUDITORIUM
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 10AM
Special screening of King Gimp.

Managers and Supervisors Training on Disability Issues

One of the responsibilities of OEOCR is to assure that all managers and supervisors receive training to help them understand their civil rights responsibilities. CMS is continuing training that focuses on the legal framework of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and related regulations designed to assure equal employment opportunity, including accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Because of the Agency's commitment to equal employment opportunity, Rehabilitation Act training is being provided to all managers and supervisors.

This year, OEOCR has contracted with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to present training to managers in the Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Denver, Chicago, Kansas City, San Francisco and Seattle regional offices by the end of this fiscal year.

On June 6, the Dallas and Atlanta managers completed training on disability during a consortium meeting in Dallas, Texas.

We are pleased to report that the training received excellent reviews.

CenterPage

Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard, N2-22-16
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850

Editor

Glenn Smith

Editorial

Assistant

Bettie Spencer

Researcher

Brian Sutherland

Staff Writers

Tracey Therit

Glenn Locklear

Ivette Blanc

Copy Editors

Michele Lechert

Tana Hicks

Contributing

Writers

Clara Carter

Beverly Moore

Lynn Strange

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