

*The OEC is a statewide Coalition of low-income people who work to bring about economic and social justice through public policy. The OEC provides information, education and training. The OEC organizes to make the State of Ohio a better place for all Ohioans.*

## 30th Anniversary , Grandparents Appreciation Day

Sunday, September 13, is the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Grandparents Appreciation Day! Please take a few moments to remember your grandparents. If they are still alive, please take time out of your busy life to visit or call them. Honor them in some way to let them know they mean a lot to you!! On September 13 also remember the 86,000 grandparents and other relatives who are raising their grandchildren in Ohio instead of having these children (186,000) placed in foster care. Foster care cost taxpayers far more money than kinship care, while at the same time isolating children from the roots they've known. Grandparents raising grandchildren are unsung heroes! Far too often they receive very little assistance to raise their grandchildren. As many policymakers seem to think, "They're family, so why should they get assistance like foster care providers?"



Well, that is the good thing-they **are** family-and the children are able to stay connected to family ties and people who love them instead of being forcibly removed to live with strangers.

Mary Causey, OEC co-chair who is raising grandsons, reflects. "I raised two grandsons. I put them through school, bought their clothes, and fed them. At least I've tried to provide for them, but it's been tough. Boys can sure eat you out of house and home! Yet I was never willing to put my own flesh and blood in foster care. These are my grandchildren! It does seem unfair to give strangers money to take care of our children, then not give families the same amount. There are a lot of family members that would be willing to take them in if they could afford it. Children still have the same physical needs, whether they're living with family or strangers. My grandchildren go to reunions, they know their family, and they're happy. I'm on a fixed income. It's been a struggle, but I'm still providing for them. In the next year or so, maybe they can start taking care of me. I do not regret it at all. All we ask is that kinship caregivers be recognized and supported who are doing the important work of raising children."

(Pictured to the left is Mary Causey, a grandmother who is also a kinship caregiver. Mary has been very active at the Contact Center, Benefit Rights Advocacy Group (BRAG) and Ohio Empowerment Coalition since she got involved at Contact Center in 2007.)

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## **Children's Sabbath Community Forum**

Contact Center/SW Ohio Empowerment Coalition will hold a Children's Sabbath Community Forum Friday, Oct. 16, 5:30 PM at Contact Center.

This will be our 3rd year to hold this event to call policymakers' attention to the needs of children in our communities who are being raised in poverty. We will be calling for a strong economic safety net for children raised by birth parents as well as by relatives.

The Forum will especially focus on issues that affect our children, including adequate income support, health care and quality education. The annual Children's Sabbath is held in collaboration with the National Children Defense Fund's Children's Sabbath the 3rd Weekend of each October to call national policymakers' attention to America's children living in poverty.

For more information call 513/381-4242.

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## **California's Real Death Panels: Insurers Deny 21% of Claims PacifiCare's Denials 40%, Cigna's 33% in First Half of 2009**

More than one of every five requests for medical claims for insured patients, even when recommended by a patient's physician, are rejected by California's largest private insurers, amounting to very real death panels in practice daily in the nation's biggest state, according to data released today by the California Nurses Association/ National Nurses Organizing Committee.

CNA/NNOC researchers analyzed data reported by the insurers to the California Department of Managed Care. From 2002 through June 30, 2009, the six largest insurers operating in California rejected 31.2 million claims for care – 21 percent of all claims.

The data will be presented by Don DeMoro, director of CNA/NNOC's research arm, the Institute for Health and Socio-Economic Policy, at CNA/NNOC's biennial convention next Tuesday, Sept. 8 in San Francisco. The convention will also feature a panel presentation from nurse leaders in Canada, Great Britain, and Australia exploding the myths about their national healthcare systems.

"With all the dishonest claims made by some politicians about alleged 'death panels' in proposed national

legislation, the reality for patients today is a daily, cold-hearted rejection of desperately needed medical care by the nation's biggest and wealthiest insurance companies simply because they don't want to pay for it," said Deborah Burger, RN, CNA/NNOC co-president.

For the first half of 2009, as the national debate over healthcare reform was escalating, the rejection rates are even more striking.

PacifiCare denied 40 percent of all California claims in the first six months of 2009. Cigna, which gained notoriety two years ago for denying a liver transplant to 17-year-old Nataline Sarkisyan of Northridge, Calif. and then reversing itself, tragically too late to save her life, was still rejecting one-third of all claims for the first half of 2009.

"Every claim that is denied represents a real patient enduring pain and suffering. Every denial has real, sometimes fatal consequences," said Burger.

PacifiCare, for example, denied a special procedure for treatment of bone cancer for Nick Colombo, a 17-year-old teen from Placentia, Calif. Again, after protests organized by Nick's family and

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friends, CNA/NNOC, and netroots activists, PacifiCare reversed its decision. But like Nataline Sarkisyan, the delay resulted in critical time lost, and Nick ultimately died. "This was his last effort and the procedure had worked before with people in Nick's situation," said his older brother Ricky.

California Blues rejected 28 percent of claims in the first half of 2009. In 2008, six days before RN Kim Kutcher of Dana Point, Calif., was scheduled to have special back surgery, Blue Cross denied authorization for the procedure as "investigational" even though the lumbar artificial disc she was to receive had FDA approval.

At the time of denial, which she calls "insurance hell," Kutcher notes she had "already gone through pre-op testing, donated a unit of blood, had appointments with four physicians." Kutcher paid \$60,000 out of pocket for the operation and is still fighting Blue Cross.

Kaiser Permanente, which denied 28 percent of all claims in the first half of 2009, was one of two systems to reject options for radiation and chemotherapy for 57-year-old Bob Scott of Sacramento after his diagnosis of a brain tumor in 2005. The reason cited was his age, says wife Cheryl Scott, RN. "He had been in perfect health all

of his life. This was his first problem other than a sprained ankle. He died six months later."

Rejection of care is a very lucrative business for the insurance giants. The top 18 insurance giants racked up \$15.9 billion in profits last year.

"The routine denial of care by private insurers is like the elephant in the room no one in the present national healthcare debate seems to want to talk about," Burger said. "Nothing in any of the major bills advancing in the Senate or House or proposed by the administration would challenge this practice."

"The United States remains the only country in the industrialized world where human lives are sacrificed for private profit, a national disgrace that seems on the verge of perpetuation," she said.

CNA/NNOC supports an alternative approach, expanding Medicare to cover all Americans, which would give the U.S. a national system similar to what exists in other nations. Data released in late August by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which tracks developed nations, found that among 30 industrial nations, the U.S. ranks last in life expectancy at birth for men, and 24th for women.



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# CONTACT CENTER MEMBERSHIP

The Contact Center is a non-profit community based organization of low and moderate income persons, based in Over-the-Rhine. We believe that justice that begins in neighborhoods can challenge the conscience of the whole city. Located in one of Cincinnati's poorest neighborhoods, the Contact Center has a forty-one year history of organizing on neighborhood issues of housing, improving neighborhood schools, and an economic safety net, both local and statewide. Our vision is for a better life for all low-income persons in our city, our state and nationally.

Your contribution will support our ongoing educational programs, community outreach, and social action work. Members receive updates on legislation and action alerts. Hamilton County residents are eligible for a Holiday Food basket drawing each year.

## Membership

Join today and become a member of an organization that will change the system.  
Your support is important and needed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 low-income

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 non low-income

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 Grassroots organization

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 Non-Profit organization

\_\_\_\_\_ Donation

*Thank You for Your Support!!!*

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Benefit Rights Advocacy Group**

#### **(BRAG) Meeting**

Thursday, Oct. 8

Thursday, Nov. 12

Thursday, Dec. 3

12:00 Noon

Please bring a dish for Potluck

Location: Contact Center,

1227 Vine St., Cincinnati

For more info call 513/381-4242

### **Contact Center**

#### **Volunteer Appreciation Dinner**

Thursday, Nov. 5

5:30 PM

Location: St. John Unitarian

Universalist Church,

320 Resor Ave.

Cincinnati, OH 45220

Call 513/381-4242

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## **Welcome to New Mature Workers Staff!!**

We welcome new Mature Services (formerly AARP) Staff at Contact Center..

**Gloria Gray:** "My name is Gloria Gray. I am the new front desk receptionist at Contact Center. I am learning my position so I can utilize time and produce!! As an organized system, we can get the job done!! Time, and the mind, is a terrible thing to waste!!"

**Ronald Howard:** "Hi. My name is Ronald Howell. I'm 65 years of age. I have 3 kids and 7 grandkids and one great grandson. I consider myself a very blessed man. I really enjoy working here at the Contact Center. They seem to help everybody they can. I like the good things they do. I spent 11 years in the Marine Corps. I spent 19 months in Vietnam. I really came home from a hell hole. So my experiences & how I treat people are reasons I like working here."