Date Change for the 2015 AIRS Conference in Dallas

Great news! We have been able to change the dates of the 2015 AIRS Conference so that they no longer fall on Memorial Day weekend.

As you may know, AIRS does not normally schedule the conference on dates that interfere with holidays and we had to wait to see if other events that had been reserved at the hotel would cancel. Thanks to a few determined AIRS individuals who worked hard with hotel management, they have been able to adjust our conference days. This way attendees can enjoy a Memorial Day weekend with their families and then come to the AIRS Conference.

You will be hearing more about the conference over the next few months but we wanted you to be able to lock the date into your calendar and the cost into your budget. Don’t forget to join the Dallas 2015 AIRS Networker group and check the conference page of the AIRS website regularly for updates.

The pattern is a little different from previous conferences but we think this will work for everyone. The “pre-Conference” will start on Wednesday, May 27th with the Intensives, Aging/Disabilities Symposium, 211 State Directors meeting, Newcomer Orientation, etc. The first full day of Conference workshops begins on Thursday, May 28th with the final session finishing mid-afternoon on Saturday, May 30th.

Our Conference registration fees will remain at the same level as they have for the past several years. We have secured a new room rate with the Sheraton Dallas of $129 per night which includes internet access.

Dallas is an affordable city with great airfare options from virtually everywhere. And a new rail link from the airport stops just outside the hotel and costs only $2.50!

A few weeks ago, AIRS surveyed around 500 individuals who attended the AIRS national conference in Atlanta and we received a 40% response within 48 hours. We primarily wanted to know whether holding the AIRS Conference over the Memorial Day weekend would be a problem – and for a significant number of people, it was. That’s why we know that this news of a date change will come as a relief to many.

We hope to see as you and your colleagues in Dallas from May 27th-30th, 2015 when the I&R sector gathers together in Texas!

Got a question? Not sure who at AIRS to contact? Email info@airs.org!
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Update on Activities of the AIRS Board of Directors

“No matter how busy you are, you must take time to make the other person feel important.” Mary Kay Ash

As the holidays are fast approaching, I realize that each of us is busier than ever and we tend to add stress to our lives. I share this because I want the AIRS membership to appreciate the commitment of the AIRS Board members and staff.

Recently the Board met to conduct the business of AIRS. It was a very full two and a half days. A highlight of activities:

- Review and approval of Standard Operating Procedures and Succession Plan for AIRS. It is our responsibility to ensure the continuity of the professional association for Information and Referral.
- Update on the Link Data project. We will continue to look for the best way to set standards in this field.
- New products will be available for the membership (see page 5 for details of one new benefit).
- Committee work that is the heart of the organization ranging from Certification, Accreditation, Training, Marketing, Public Policy, Taxonomy, Standards, Technology and Conference committees to the Affiliate Council.
- We were able to change the 2015 Conference dates to May 27-30, 2015.
- AIRS website and Networker have been upgraded to ensure that information is accessible for people with smart phones.

I want to extend a personal Thank You to each Board Member and staff for their work and dedication. You are an awesome group of people and it is an honor and privilege to work with you.

My thanks also goes to each and every person in the information and referral field. You deal with individuals seeking assistance every day and often go unappreciated. Thank you from the AIRS Board.

I wish each of you and your families a very happy and safe holiday season.

Joan Phelps
AIRS President

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

Thank you to those that have already renewed their membership. We appreciate your support and prompt response!

If you did not receive your blue envelope in the mail or if you have any questions contact moayad@airs.org.
One and Two-Way Texting: Picking the Right Tool for the Right Job

By Aaron Blackledge
IT Consultant, GeauxPoint

Many I&R centers are adopting text messaging strategies to great effect, but not all texting methods are created equal. To maximize contact center performance it’s important to know what you can do with two different texting methods: one- and two-way texting.

Sometimes you just want calls to run a little faster and smoother. For this, one-way texting would be ideal. One-way texting refers to text messages that are sent in response to some other incoming communications for the client, usually a phone call. This type of messaging is best to use when you want to achieve the following:

- Improve referral accuracy
- Reduce call times
- Improve call specialist efficiency
- Improve client experience

To expand on this, one-way text messages are most commonly sent at the end of an incoming call. Rather than having the caller transcribe referral info with a pen and paper, the specialist sends them a text message that contains the information. This eliminates the need for the caller to locate a pen and paper – a significant source of inefficiency that is often overlooked or underestimated. Also, since the information is sent via text message directly from the resource database, it is highly accurate, and there is no risk of data loss by human error on the part of the specialist or the caller.

The second contact-center text message method is two-way texting. This refers to complete conversations that are both initiated as well as completed via text messaging.

Use two-way texting when you want to achieve the following:

- Serve more people/new populations
- Add a new communication modality
- Increase service efficiency through automation

There is substantial data available on the subject of two-way texting that demonstrates the effectiveness of the service. By now, it is a well-established fact that text-based Internet communication is supplanting verbal, phone-based conversation. This is especially true among youths. The data for two-way texting demonstrates that it does indeed connect I&R with new populations, including young people.

Also, through two-way texting contact centers can establish a number of timesaving measures through automation. Software systems can easily be configured to send pre-written messages to callers, such as salutations and sign-offs. Sometimes, the messages can even be set to respond automatically to certain keywords.

For many contact centers, the difficult part of text-message programs is not the technology implementation or procurement. Many call-center software solutions have this functionality already. Rather, the most difficult challenge is operational – in developing training, quality assurance, and management practices around a new program. Luckily, AIRS has developed several lengthy guides for this reason.

In conclusion, one-way and two-way texting are communication techniques that many contact centers are using to great effect. Use one-way texting when your primary goal is to improve call performance. Use two-way texting when you want to add a completely new modality to your current service strategy. In any case, organizations that wish to improve service quality and reach should strongly consider adopting a text message program, using AIRS content to help them get started.
Portland Celebrates I&R Day

Sunday, November 16 was I&R Day and in Oregon The City of Portland and Multnomah County Information and Referral Program celebrated both I&R Day and 20 years of helping citizens connect to local government services. They invited folks to drop by the front desk in the Portland Building or City Hall to have a cup of coffee and a cookie, participate in their “Know Your City Trivial Contest”, and receive a limited edition “Who to Call in City Hall” ceramic mug.

In two decades The City/County I&R program has helped over 2 million by phone, in person, and electronically.

City/County Information and Referral Staff,

Portland City Council members would like to congratulate the City of Portland/Multnomah County Information and Referral Program on 20 years of successfully representing the City and County government and easing access for community members to local government services. Over the past two decades the program has assisted with nearly 2 million inquiries for services over the phone, in person and through electronic forms of communication.

The wealth of information and professional and friendly demeanor in which it is provided is a tremendous asset to both local government and the community we serve. Thank you for this continued service and best wishes for continued success!

With appreciation,

Mayor Charlie Hales
Commissioner Amanda Fritz
Commissioner Nick Fish
Commissioner Steve Novick
Commissioner Dan Saltzman
AIRS Partnership with InContact Means a New Added Benefit for Premium Members

Every 5 years or so, I&R services assess the abilities of their phone system to meet their current and future needs. And the next time this moment comes around for your I&R, there is a phone system that has agreed to expand its special rates to AIRS Premium members. You will no longer need to have an Automatic Contact Distributor (ACD) on the premises, as everything will be “in the cloud”.

InContact at http://www.incontact.com provides cloud-based communications software for call/contact centers. They have more than 1,300 customers and handle over a billion calls a year. Over the past 8 years, they have become the main provider of call handling technology for 2-1-1 services with approximately 30+ clients, including a range of large and small agencies. This has created a knowledgeable implementation/support system within InContact on I&R issues. They understand our work and are able to help us better handle our calls.

The growing popularity of inContact has also created the unanticipated benefit of allowing I&Rs who are InContact users to switch call routing between different services in times of disaster and other situations. Within the inContact system an I&R can easily transfer call routing to another I&R (for example, one service can cover for another during a team meeting on a Thursday afternoon, with the favor being reciprocated the next day).

In order to encourage more 2-1-1s to move to this system, United Way Worldwide negotiated a contract pricing agreement with InContact and this preferred pricing is now also available for all AIRS Premium members regardless of whether or not they have a 211 service. Furthermore, the agreement is based on tiers that are tied to usage – so as each new threshold is reached, the price for all users will be reduced.

There are other phone systems out there and I&R services should always engage in due diligence when making a major technological decision. However, we believe that inContact is an option that should be seriously considered. If you are interested in learning more about how inContact can help your I&R service move forward in improving access options for your community, please contact Steve Pulley at steve.pulley@incontact.com or 1-866-739-2886.

Policy: Midterm Election Review

By Meredith Ponder
AIRS Public Policy Associate

The midterm elections were held on November 4. In the 114th Congress, both chambers will be controlled by Republicans for the first time since 2006. In the House, the Republicans now control at least 244 of 435 seats with seven races outstanding, a modern day record majority. In the Senate, the Republicans control at least 53 seats, with one race to finalize.

A lame duck session of the 113th (current) Congress with the current majorities convened beginning on November 12. The session is not expected to be extremely active. The only required legislative activity is to determine funding for the balance of Fiscal Year 2015 after December 11, when the current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires. This CR has frozen funding levels at FY2014 levels. The lame duck session will either pass another short-term CR, a full-year CR, or an omnibus funding bill. Any other legislation which has not become law by the time Congress recesses in December will need to start all over again in the new Congress. This is expected to be the case with the Older Americans Act.

Starting November 18, the incoming new Congress will hold organizational meetings. At that time, the leadership positions (Senate Majority and Minority leaders, Speaker of the House, and Minority Leader of the House) will be determined along with Committee chairmanships on November 19 for the House. The chairmanships will now be held by Republicans in both chambers, Senate and House. The leaders of the House (Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) are not expected to change currently; the leaders of the Senate are simply expected to switch places (current Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)). Some of the new Senate chairmen and ranking members are expected to be:

- Appropriations: Chair: Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS), Ranking Member: Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)
- Finance (covers Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security): Chair: Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Ranking Member: Sen. Ron Wyden (R-OR)
- Aging: Chair: Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Ranking Member: Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA)

Subcommittee assignments are not expected to be completed until later in December or January. House changes will be fewer in number.
Congratulations New AIRS Certified Specialists

CERTIFIED INFORMATION & REFERRAL SPECIALISTS

Acree, Melissa - NJ 211 Partnership - Whippany, NJ
Balduck, Lynn - UW of Gr. Houston - 211Texas/United Way Helpline
Bartoloni Venegas, Linda - United Way of Greater Houston - 2-1-1 Texas/United Way Helpline
Bobe, Kristina - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Brackett, Alejandra - IQ Solutions- Rockville, MD
Brickman, Melanie - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Burdick, Pamela - ADRC of Eagle County- Baraboo, WI
Caceres, Megan - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Campbell, Mordina - 211 Big Bend Inc- Tallahassee, FL
Coffee, Margrite - United Way of Greater Kansas City- MO
Collins, Christopher - 211 Big Bend Inc- Tallahassee, FL
Dailey, Patricia - United Way 2-1-1- Columbus, IN
Davidson, John - UW of Gr. Houston -211 Texas/United Way Helpline
de Vries, Daniel - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Deeds, Nicole - IQ Solutions- Rockville, MD
DeVenuto, Heather - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Elliott, Thomas - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Enderton, April - American Red Cross- Des Moines, IA
Everhart, Karen - Masonic Pathways Live Better At Home- Alma, MI
Fangmann, Stephanie - Heritage AAA - Cedar Rapids, IA
Garcia, Graciela - United Way of Tarrant County- Arlington, TX
Garcia, Marta - National Rehabilitation Info. Center- Landover, MD
Gomez, Edgar - IQ Solutions- Rockville, MD
Grote, Mandeed - Frederick County Hotline- Frederick, MD
Grupenhoff, Christine - Chesapeake Helps/CCCRC- Wye Mills, MD
Guagenti, Tonnie - Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Center 211- Chillicothe, OH
Guajardo, Maricela - Community Council of Rio Grande Valley- Weslaco, TX
Hamm, Natalie - IQ Solutions- Rockville, MD
Heinzman, Rachel - ADRC of Eagle County- Baraboo, WI
Hernandez, Daniela - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Hernandez, Tiffany - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Hunley, Alphonso - United Way of Greater Kansas City- MO
Jarrett, Justin - Contra Costa Crisis Center- Walnut Creek, CA
Jimenez, Yousy - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Kaniewski, Janice - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Kay, Susan - United Way Services- Chardon, OH
Klakring, Catherine - Chesapeake Helps/CCCRC- Wye Mills, MD
Klubertanz-Gerber, Roxanne - ADRC of Eagle County- Richland Center, WI
Langston, Rachel - IQ Solutions- Rockville, MD
Lonigro, Paul - Paraquad- St. Louis, MO
Lopez, Anauryedi - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Luland, Anjali - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Marichalar, Raul - Community Council of Rio Grande Valley- Weslaco, TX
Martinez, Megan - 211 Texas South Central Region, UWCA- Austin
May, Jeffrey - NJ Department of Human Services- Trenton, NJ
Mayer, Julie - ADRC of Eagle County- Baraboo, WI
McManus, Sarah - COPE Center, Inc.- DeFuniak Springs, FL
Mira-Navarrete, Sandra - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Morris, Darlene - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Nieland, Brandi - United Way of Central Maryland, First Call for Help- Baltimore, MD
Ortiz, Yvette - AAA of the Coastal Bend- Corpus Christi, TX
Pasell, Christina - Great Rivers 211- Onalaska, WI
Powell, Katharyn - Brazos Valley Area Agency on Aging- Bryan, TX
Prepetit, Gailen - United Way of Greater Atlanta- Atlanta, GA
Robertson, Tracey - Heritage AAA - Cedar Rapids, IA
Safstrom, Jennifer - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Shaffer, Micki - Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Center 211- Chillicothe, OH
Silver, Jenna - Foundation 2 Crisis Center- Cedar Rapids, IA
Simmons, Jennifer - Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Center 211- Chillicothe, OH
Sinclair, Nicole - United Way of Tarrant County- Arlington, TX
Smoleviche, Shiran - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Soule, Leah - UW of Central Maryland, First Call for Help- Baltimore
Stone, Penny- United Way of Pierce County- Tacoma, WA
Tippie, Jodi - Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Center 211- Chillicothe, OH
Trewin, Abraham - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Tsekhovoi, Irina - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Valdes, Armando - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Villarreal, Abel - Comm. Council of Rio Grande Valley- Weslaco, TX
Walters, Kathleen - ADRC of Barron, Rusk, and Washburn Counties- Ladysmith, WI
Walton, Matthew - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Watts, Marcie - United Way of Greater Kansas City- Kansas City, MO
Welch, Arinita - United Way of Greater Atlanta- Atlanta, GA
Williams, Clifton - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ
Williams, Lynn -UW of the National Capital Area/211 DC- Washington
Williams, Raushanah - NJ 211 Partnership- Whippany, NJ

CERTIFIED INFORMATION & REFERRAL SPECIALISTS - Aging

Alvarenga, Gretchen - AAA, Region One- Phoenix, AZ
Balboa, Monika - AAA of the Lower Rio Grande Valley- Harlingen, TX
Bass, Alagra - Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities- Annapolis, MD
Benavides, Odalis - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Bentzinger, Brooks - Aging and Adult Care of Central Washington- Moses Lake, WA
Blackwell, Ryan - Northwest Regional Council AAA - Burlington, WA
Boone, Hattie - Division of Aging and Adult Services- Jackson, MS
Bruera, Veronica - Switchboard of Miami, Inc- Miami, FL
Cairns, Marisa - Aging and Adult Care of Central Washington- Moses Lake, WA
Carr, Jane - Municipality of Penn Hills /Penn Hills Senior Services- Frankstown, PA
Chantharaj, Sherry - Metrocare Services- Dallas, TX
Covington, Courtney - Northeast Georgia AAA - Athens, GA
Cowart, Lisa - Division of Aging and Adult Services- Pontotoc, MS
Crawford, Jessica - Mid East Area Agency on Aging- Manchester, MO
Cridlin, Darlene - Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh- PA
Davis, Sirrenthia - Division of Aging and Adult Services- Jacksonville, FL
Douglas, Portia - Sowega Council on Aging- Albany, GA
Elliott, J'Dawn - Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging- Athens
Frenk, Nancy - Palatine Township Senior Council- Palatine, IL
Garrison, Diane - Mid East Area Agency on Aging- Manchester, MO
Gerhart, Brittany - Senior Services of Seattle King County- Seattle, WA
Glover, Michelle - Atlanta Regional Commission, AAA- Atlanta, GA
Gutierrez, Monica - United Way Assoc. of South Carolina- Columbia
Hairson, Ginja - Division of Aging and Adult Services- Coldwater, MS
Hall, Barbara - Sowega Council on Aging- Albany, GA
Johnsen, Mandy - ADRC of Southwest WisconsinSouth- Monroe, WI
Johnson, Hollis - Sowega Council on Aging- Albany, GA
Johnson, Rebecca - ADRC of Ozaukee County- Port Washington, WI

Continued on page 7
Update on CIRS-Aging/Disabilities (CIRS A/D)

As shared in earlier issues of Connections, AIRS in partnership with n4a and NASUAD has been working with subject matter experts to evolve the CIRS-Aging (CIRS-A) credential to a CIRS-Aging/Disabilities (CIRS-A/D).

The AIRS Certification Commission is pleased to announce that this new CIRS-A/D credential will "go live" on March 16th, 2015.

In January 2014, we sent all CIRS-A holders a Job Task Analysis that outlined the tasks, knowledge and skills required for the CIRS-A/D, and requested comments which in turn, influenced the final document. One of the questions asked was "Do you support the idea of having a single Certification that covers the work of I&R/ Specialists serving both older adults and persons with disabilities (and their families and caregivers)?" The response was an overwhelming 91.9% in favor of the initiative.

Since that date, we have been engaged with frontline specialists in AAAs, ADRCs, CILs and other specialized programs to work through the numerous psychometric stages needed to complete new exams for a new credential.

Although the new exams are now ready, the March 16th date allows ample time for any required training materials to be developed and for organizations hosting AIRS Certification exams to schedule events knowing that any date before March 16th will involve a candidate taking the CIRS-A and any date on or after March 16th will involve the new CIRS-A/D.
Conference Call for Presenter Proposals

Would you be interested in presenting a workshop session at the annual AIRS conference from May 28 to May 30 in Dallas? We require many presenters to share their I&R skills, knowledge and expertise to their peers on a range of topics. However, we are particularly looking for “high level” presentations that will meet the needs of more experienced I&R practitioners.

I&R vendors are also welcome to submit proposals but the presentations must be vendor-neutral and aimed at sharing knowledge about a topic other than their product/service.

If you have an idea for a workshop and would like to discuss it prior to submitting your proposal, please contact the program track manager that fits with the subject matter you wish to present:

2-1-1 Track: Chris Juett at chris.juett@uweci.org, Donna Burnham at dburnham@unitedwayatlanta.org or Catherine Rae at crea@cir.org
Aging and Disability Track: Nanette Relave at nrelave@nasuad.org
Disaster Track: Janna Shoe at jshoe@unitedwayhouston.org
I&R Management Track: Erin Goff at erin.goff@unitedwaytoledo.org
I&R Service Delivery Track: Francie Kranzberg at Francie.Kranzberg@shalomdc.org
Serving the Military Track: Lucinda Lorei at lucinda.lorei@usmc.mil
Resource Database Track: Polly Fay at fayp@ihsnet.org
Technology Track: Clive Jones at clivemjones@gmail.com
For Everyone Track: Clive Jones at clivemjones@gmail.com

Send submissions for the Aging/Disabilities Track to Nanette Relave at nrelave@nasuad.org, and for all other tracks to Clive Jones at clivemjones@gmail.com. The submission deadline is February 10, 2015.

For complete details and an application form please download the Call for Proposals document at www.airs.org/conference.

NASUAD: Medicaid Services Webinar

By Nanette Relave

Director, National I&R Support Center, National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities

On November 12, the I&R Support Center hosted a webinar on the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services final regulation. Across the country, changes in policy, financing, and service delivery are transforming the provision of home and community-based services (HCBS) to persons with disabilities and older adults. In January 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released regulations that will lead to significant changes in Medicaid-funded HCBS. These regulations reflect changing expectations regarding person-centered planning, conflicts of interest, and community integration. The final rule will significantly impact the landscape of services and supports in states across the country, as well as the experiences of individuals who receive Medicaid-funded HCBS. Importantly, the rule applies to both residential and non-residential settings, such as day programs.

For I&R specialists and other staff in aging and disability agencies, implementation of the rule may impact service options available to individuals who are currently or may become Medicaid eligible. The webinar featured NASUAD’s Senior Director Damon Terzaghi, who discussed the major provisions of the rule; current status of state activities to become compliant; and potential implications to individuals’ services. The presentation from this webinar, and the audio recording, are available at http://www.nasuad.org/initiatives/information-and-referralassistance/monthly-calls.