



Spring 2026 | Issue 34

Health Home Herald Newsletter

April is a good time to stop overlooking stress and pay more attention to its causes and effects.

Stress can come from different parts of our lives. There are plenty of resources to help with stress, whether it is related to home life, work life or relationships. Coping with stress can look different for all of us.

Springing into Stress Awareness Month

Kerri Hummel, DSHS HH QA Specialist

We just made it through the holidays and winter months. Spring flowers will be in bloom and April brings us Stress Awareness Month.

Here are some ideas for observing Stress Awareness Month:

Be Aware of Stress and Stressors

Focus on your physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. For some of us, this might mean putting ourselves first and focusing on bringing stress levels down in whatever ways are possible.

Participating in the 30-Day Stress Awareness Challenge

The 30-day challenge encourages us to do one action each day that will benefit our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. This can help in changing our mindset and outlook on stress, as well as finding ways to help cope with certain stresses that may become more obvious and upsetting over time. This is a great opportunity for us to learn about ourselves and the triggers that come with stress.



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Practice Stress Reduction Techniques

Try out some of these simple practices that have been known to help reduce the negative impact of stress on our lives:

- **Breathing Exercises.** One of the easiest ways to reduce stress is by taking a moment and focusing on your breathing. Whether breathing slowly while counting, or using visualization techniques, the internet is full of ideas for reducing stress by taking everything back to breathing.
- **Laugh More.** Studies have shown that we are more relaxed and have an improved mood when we practice laughing.
- **Exercise.** One of the best ways to reduce stress on the body and mind is through exercise. Exercise helps to improve sleep, balance hormones, increase endorphins and encourages relaxation after a workout.
- **Reduce Triggers.** Be aware of what triggers tend to cause stress and anxiety. Look at the ways that stress begins and then aim to resolve those with life skills such as time management, hiring help around the house, leaving the house sooner or other solutions.

Help Others Who Might Struggle with Stress

Doing the challenge above and talking about stress can really help. It might be worth reaching out to those you trust or seeking professional help where necessary. This is a great time to encourage others to talk about their feelings and always try to be there for people who may appear to be overwhelmed. We all tend to cope with stress differently, so sharing personal experiences of coping might also help others.



Participant Portrait

Lead: Wellpoint | CCO: Sea Mar | CC: Alecia Matsen

The care coordinator met with the client at his new home to transfer services from his previous address to his current one.

Due to client's mental health issues, he was anxious and unable to make the necessary calls on his own.

The care coordinator explained the process and assisted him in updating his benefits, while encouraging him to participate.

The client successfully completed the calls and felt empowered to handle future follow-ups independently. He expressed gratitude for the support provided, which eased his anxiety.

The client is now stably housed, with all medical care, and all assistance programs transferred to his new location.



Medicare No-Cost Wellness Benefits You Might Be Missing Out On!

Vanessa Sherrill, DSHS Medicare-Medicaid Policy Manager

Medicare is built to help you stay healthy and independent, not just respond when something goes wrong. Many no-cost wellness benefits are included with your Medicare coverage yet often go overlooked. April is the perfect time to turn Medicare benefits you have into benefits you actually use!

Many Medicare beneficiaries qualify for no-cost preventive care, including the Medicare Annual Wellness Visit, screenings for diabetes, heart disease, depression, certain cancers, recommended vaccines and tobacco cessation support. While the Medicare annual wellness visit focuses on prevention, health planning, and identifying potential risks early, it is not a replacement for your annual physical exam.

If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, you can contact your insurance company directly to ask how to use your benefits and what services are available. If you have Original Medicare, the Medicare & You Handbook you receive each year is a helpful resource.

Understanding your benefits is a key step toward confident, informed healthcare decisions. For free unbiased Medicare help, call SHIBA 1-800-562-6900.



Care Coordinator Corner

Lead: CHPW | CCO: Rural Resources | CC: Kirsty Tucker

Since the tragic loss of this member's daughter, their physical and emotional health have consistently been overshadowed by profound depression. The weight of this grief, combined with preexisting medication challenges, made even getting to appointments feel impossible.

But her story is one of remarkable courage and the power of a supportive care team. From the beginning, we worked collaboratively with her PCP to stabilize her medications, significantly reducing the panic-induced visits to the emergency room that once marked her life. A major breakthrough came when we connected her with a counselor in her community whom she trusts. That relationship has become a vital source of support for her, and she now actively engages in weekly sessions.

Together, during our monthly visits, we've built a toolkit for resilience. We map the "triggers" that lead to debilitating panic attacks or days spent in bed, and in their place, we've identified self-care strategies and a circle of "safe" people she can turn to when the waves of stress feel overwhelming.

Perhaps the most powerful moment in her journey came recently. With incredible clarity, she shared that she had connected her recent struggles to a specific source: the upcoming sentencing date of the man involved in her daughter's death. This act of naming her pain was not a moment of sorrow, but one of profound strength and a crucial step in her healing process.



She often expresses her deep gratitude for her care team, but the true victory is hers. Through her own hard work and the supportive partnership around her, she is reclaiming her life, one step at a time.

Submit your story, resource, or ideas to the Care Coordinator Corner via: anthony.foster@dshs.wa.gov

MAY IS INTERNATIONAL MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS MONTH



Silke Kramer, HCA, Health Care Program Manager

Did you know - World Multiple Sclerosis Day is a global event for anyone affected by MS. World MS Day was introduced on May 30, 2009. Although the official day is May 30, you'll see people raising awareness and hosting events all through the month of May and into early June. It is a chance for the MS community to come together, share their personal stories, and push for change.

There are many ways everyone can help to achieve a world free of MS. Advocates hope for better MS training for health care professionals and raise awareness of clinical advancements in MS diagnosis.

MS is one of the most common diseases of the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40. MS is two to three times more common in women than in men. There is no drug that can cure MS, but treatments are available which can modify the course of the disease. It is estimated that 2.9 million people around the world have MS. For more information click on the link below: <https://atlasofms.org/map/global/epidemiology/number-of-people-with-ms>

This year advocates will campaign for early diagnosis of MS. The hope is to have more informed communities and systems that support people who live with MS.

Below are some ideas on how people can get involved and become an advocate in 2026:

- **Attend Events:** Participate in advocacy days at the state and federal levels or local events like Walk MS to show solidarity and raise funds.
- **Share Your Story:** Personal experiences are powerful advocacy tools that help policymakers and the public understand the real-world impact.
- **Use Social Media:** Join global conversations and use official hashtags like #WorldMSDay and #MyMSDiagnosis to amplify messages and educate others.
- **Fundraise:** Participate in fundraising events to support critical research and patient services.
- **Become an Activist:** Sign up as an MS Activist with organizations like the <https://www.nationalmssociety.org> to receive updates on policy priorities and guidance on contacting legislators.

Sharing stories and collecting data may help to eradicate MS in the future.

A key symbol is the orange ribbon and the butterfly (It is the shape most often seen in MRIs). Let's wear orange, the official designated color to show our support for our clients who live with MS.



Spotlight on Resources

File of Life Magnet

In medical emergencies, the “File of Life” magnet serves as an important link between patients and first responders.

This simple tool—typically a bright magnetic pouch placed on the refrigerator—contains a form with essential medical information, including the patient’s name, age, emergency contacts, existing conditions like diabetes or atrial fibrillation (Afib), current medications, allergies, and doctor’s details along with current advance directive form(s).

Where to find them

- Local Emergency Services: Fire, police, and ambulance stations often provide these for free.
- Community Centers: Council on Aging, Senior Centers, Lions Clubs, or Rotary Clubs may have them.
- Healthcare Facilities: Hospitals and medical centers sometimes distribute them.

What it is

- A bright red magnetic pouch with a card inside.
- Contains medical conditions, allergies, medications, and emergency contacts.
- Kept on the refrigerator for easy access by EMTs.

What’s on the card

Medical conditions & allergies, current medications, emergency contacts, and insurance information.

FILE OF LIFE		
KEEP INFORMATION UP TO DATE !! <i>Review At Least Every Six Months !</i>		
MEDICAL DATA REVIEWED AS OF		MO. YR.
Name:	Sex: M F	
Address:		
Doctor:	Phone #:	
Preferred Hospital:		
EMERGENCY CONTACTS		
Name:	Phone #:	
Address:		
Name:	Phone #:	

Monthly Webinar Invitations

The Health Home Program offers learning topics for new health home care coordinators. For the current invitation, please visit [Washington Health Home Program – Training Invitations | DSHS](#)



PRISM Access Reminder:

Please be sure to log into your SAW account every 30 days, enter the PRISM application, and click on at least one of your assigned clients so that you will continue to have uninterrupted PRISM access.



Training Update

Did you know that as of January 1, 2026 the Opt-Out form is not required to be completed for people newly outreached for Health Home participation? As part of an effort to alleviate administrative burden, collaboration between the state (DSHS/HCA) and Health Home Leads led to this change in the opt out protocol. It should be noted that the Opt-Out form is still required to be completed on behalf of those who are enrolled in Health Home and decide to opt out. For more information regarding this change, please reach out to your respective supervisors and/or lead organizations. The training module, **Module 5 – Outreach** has been updated to reflect this change in protocol. You can find this module along with the other 11 training modules at the following link:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/stakeholders/washington-health-home-program-core-training>

Stay tuned as further training updates will be coming in the near future.



Fun Fact

As of November of 2025, there were 3,325 enrollees in the Dual Special Needs Plan Health Home program.



HEALTH HOME HERALD
HOCUS FOCUS
 Can you find 8 differences between these pictures?

ORIGINAL

CHANGED

Find 8 Differences!

ANSWERS BELOW

1. Butterfly color changes (orange vs. blue)
2. Dog missing
3. Watering can color changes (yellow to red)
4. Man holding flower trowel handle different
5. Purple flowers added to the left pot
6. Blue watering can missing in the background
7. Green seed packet missing from the ground
8. Hanging basket flowers changes (pink only vs. missed pink and white)