

Promoting independent living for people with disabilities in Nebraska & Southwest Iowa for more than 45 years

Volunteer of the Year



Loralee Krohn, left, receives the Ken Lindhorst Volunteer of the Year Award for 2017 from SW Iowa Center for Independent Living secretary Frann Mersnick. See page 6 for more.

States Consider President's New Policy Allowing Work Requirements for Medicaid

In a reversal of longstanding federal policy, the Trump Administration in January announced that it will allow states to impose work-related requirements that could result in denying Medicaid to some low-income adults.

Some disability advocates say the move is a way to begin dismantling Medicaid and deny health insurance to low-income Americans. Proponents say the requirement will encourage employment and community involvement.

Ten states had petitioned the Trump Administration seeking approval of demonstration projects that would include work or activities like attending school or job training, volunteering and caregiving. The 10 states are Arizona, Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Utah and Wisconsin.

Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts said there is no need to seek to implement the policy, since Nebraska did not expand Medicaid coverage as encouraged by the Affordable Care Act, according to a report by the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications network (NET).

In Iowa, which did expand coverage, Gov. Kim Reynolds is "reviewing and considering" the guidelines, reported the *Quad City Times* on Jan. 12.

Nebraska currently has 65,000 non-elderly Medicaid enrollees who do not receive Social Security. Iowa has 245,000.

CEO'S NOTE

According to an Article by Andy Staples on Nov. 12, 2017, Sports Illustrated TV, Shaquem Griffin, a 22-year-old linebacker from the University of Central Florida, received the American Athletic Conference's defensive player of the year last season. Since winning a starting job last year as a redshirt junior, the 6-2, 229-pounder from St. Petersburg, Fla., has recovered three fumbles and intercepted a pass. Granted, this is great football, but what makes it amazing is that Shaquem Griffin has only one hand. Due to something that happened in utero, he was born with a problem with his left hand. When he was four, the hand was amputated.

Now, I must admit that Shaquem and his story were not even on my radar. I watched the Peach Bowl only because the coach then for UCF was Scott Frost. And, being a huge Cornhusker fan, I wanted to watch him hopefully take his undefeated team all the way. I was really excited about watching this game. There on the field was Shaquem Griffin, this powerhouse linebacker with only one hand. It is funny, because my husband was watching the same game and never noticed until I pointed it out. When I was discussing the game with my parents and was all excited about Griffin, they too, never even noticed that he was missing his left hand. What a testament to "see my abilities, not my disabilities". Shaquem Griffin clearly is a great example of someone who doesn't let a disability stop him. And not only does it not stop him, it doesn't even slow him

down! He is quoted in the Sports Illustrated article as saying "A lot of people in our generation like to make excuses about little things that really don't hinder them from doing what they want to," he says. "It always comes down to the work ethic. God put you on the Earth for a purpose. I feel like my purpose is to get away from people making excuses." It's not a deformity unless you make it one," he says. "You're not disabled unless you say 'I'm disabled.'"

What a great attitude that everyone should emulate- people with disabilities and people without disabilities-may we all stop making excuses. And, may we all see the ability, not the disability just like my parents and my husband did. They just saw the great skill exhibited by this one UFC linebacker and yes UCF won the game and ended the season undefeated! So, kudos to Scott Frost for also seeing the ability -- not the disability. At the League of Human Dignity, we focus on the ability, not the disability and we too share Shaquem's idea that it is not a disability until you make it one. To learn more about independent living please contact us at 402-441-7871.



Kathy Kay, League Co-CEO

ON THE LEVEL is the bi-monthly newsletter of the League of Human Dignity, Inc. The League is a consumer-based, nonprofit organization, dedicated to independent living for people with disabilities. The League offers services throughout Nebraska and Southwest Iowa through Centers for Independent Living, Medicaid Waiver offices and Mobility Options shops.

This newsletter is available online, by email subscription, Braille and on audio CD. To subscribe in any of these formats, contact us at: Editor, On The Level, 1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68508; 402-441-7871 V/TDD. The newsletter also is archived on our website: league-ofhumandignity.com

New Tax Law Includes Changes in ABLE Accounts

Regulations Now Offer 529 Account Holders, Employees with Disabilities More Flexibility; But Extra Care, Concern May Be Warranted

Families that have opened ABLE savings accounts will have a little more flexibility – and possibly more uncertainty -- as a result of new federal tax legislation signed into law on Dec. 22, 2017.

Currently, people can contribute up to \$15,000 a year to qualified ABLE accounts. A provision in the new tax law allows families that savings in so-called 529 savings accounts – accounts designated for future college costs -- to roll over up to \$15,000 a year from a 529 account to an ABLE account. The 529 account must be for the same beneficiary as the ABLE account or for a member of the same family as the ABLE account holder.



Also included in the new tax bill, 529 accounts now can be used to pay for a child's K-12 education in a public, private or religious school. Previously, 529 funds could be used only for college.

The tax bill also benefits ABLE account holders who are working. They can now make ABLE contributions from their own earnings in addition to the \$15,000 annual cap, up to an amount equal

to the Federal Poverty Level. The poverty level currently is \$12,060, meaning an account holder could potentially deposit up to \$27,060 a year. However, to do so they cannot be participating in their employer's retirement plan.

Some disability advocates have voiced concern over the provision to allow additional deposits, though. Social Security and Medicaid view deposits over the \$15,000 annual cap differently than other ABLE deposits. That means that mistakes could increase an account holder's vulnerability to losing benefits.

Another issue many are concerned about is the massive tax cuts included in the new tax law. Less money flowing into federal coffers means there is the potential for future spending battles among lawmakers and resulting cuts in social programs.

ABLE accounts were made possible by Congress via the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act in 2014. The accounts, allow people with disabilities and their families to save for disability related expenses, while maintaining eligibility for Medicaid and other means-tested public benefits programs.

- To learn more about ABLE accounts, go to the ABLE National Resource Center at <http://www.ablenrc.org/>
- To learn more the State of Nebraska's plan, called ENable, at <https://www.enablesavings.com/>
- Learn more about the State of Iowa's plan, called IABLE, at <https://www.iabile.gov/>



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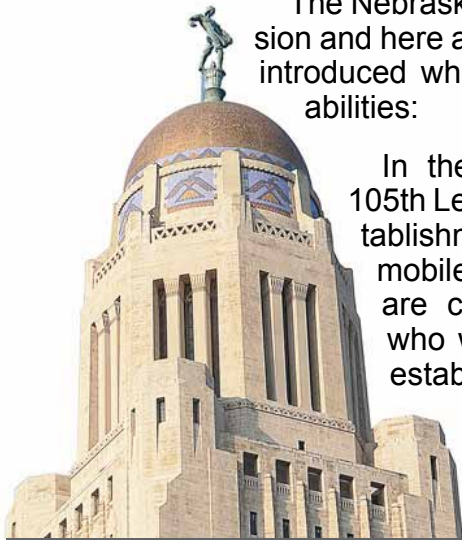


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Nebraska, Iowa Legislatures Back in Session

Bills We're Watching that Could Impact People with Disabilities

The Nebraska and Iowa legislatures are in session and here are a few of the bills that have been introduced which could impact people with disabilities:



105th Legislature

In the second session of Nebraska's 105th Legislature, **LB 790** would call for establishment of state regulations allowing mobile cosmetology businesses. There are cosmetologists and hair dressers who wish to serve clients outside their established salons, including clients who are home-bound, in nursing facilities, without reliable transportation, and who live a great distance away but would like to continue their established relationship. It currently is not possible for mobile hair salons to

operate in Nebraska. LB790 would update statutes and procedures to allow them. The bill was introduced by Sen. Laura Ebke of Crete on Jan. 4, and has been referred to the Unicameral's Health and Human Services Committee.

LB 800 would fulfill the 1999 Olmstead Decision that requires states to provide for treatment of people with mental disabilities in community settings rather than institutions. If enacted, the state would hire a professional consultant to help the Department of Health and Human Services and other experts develop a strategic plan for transferring qualifying Nebraskans with disabilities from institutional care to community-based care. LB 800 was introduced by Sen. Lynne Walz of Fremont On Jan. 4, and has been referred to

the Health and Human Services Committee.

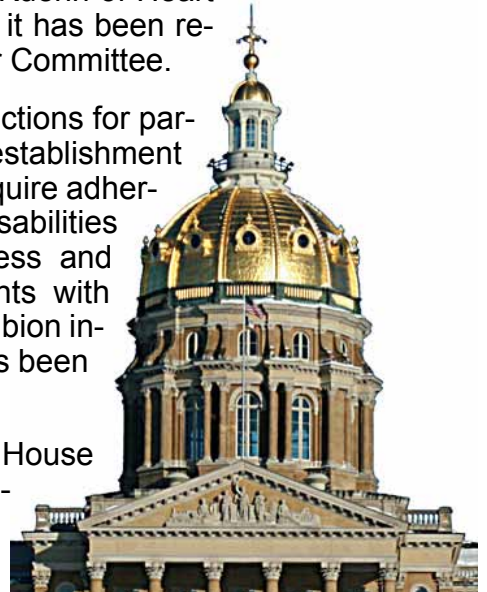
LB 867 is intended to increase the accountability and performance of the three Medicaid managed care organizations used by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, collectively known as Heritage Health. The bill, which would establish fines for the MCOs addresses issues that have been raised in oversight hearings. LB 867 was introduced by Sen. Sue Crawford of Bellevue on Jan. 5, and has been referred to the Health and Human Services Committee.

LB 806 may protect people with disabilities who own and use vertical platform lifts. Sen. John Kuehn of Heartwell introduced it on Jan. 4, and it has been referred to the Business and Labor Committee.

LB 845 would establish protections for parents with disabilities through the establishment of procedural safeguards that require adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act and respect for the due process and equal protection rights of parents with disabilities. Sen. Tom Briese of Albion introduced the bill Jan. 5, and it has been referred to Judiciary Committee.

Bills introduced in the Iowa House of Representatives and Iowa Senate this 87th General Assembly include:

HF2001 would establish conditions under which a landlord could require removal of service dogs and assistive animals from residential rental property. It also provides for penalties for



87th General Assembly

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LEGISLATURE

continued from page 4

misrepresenting an animal as a service dog or assistive animal. The bill was introduced Jan. 10, by Rep. Sandy Salmon and has been referred to House Commerce Committee.

HF2014 would allow hunters with physical disabilities to use any firearm, or other hunting weapon authorized for hunting deer. The bill was introduced by Rep. Sandy Salmon on Jan. 10, and has been referred to Natural Resources Committee.

HSB516 would prohibit a health plan carrier, health benefit plan, or utilization review organization from limiting or excluding a covered person's prescription drug coverage if the person is medically stable on the drug, the drug was previously approved by the health carrier for coverage for the person, and the person's prescribing health care professional continues to prescribe the drug. The bill is a Committee on Human Resources bill by Chairperson Joel Fry, Introduced Jan. 10.

The Iowa Senate's counterpart to HSB516 is **SSB3003**, a Committee on Human Resources bill by Chairperson Mark Segebart, also Introduced Jan. 10.

SF2013 would eliminate Iowa's Medicaid managed care system. The bill allows for a 60-day transition back to the Medicaid fee-for-service system. It would become effective upon enactment. The bill was introduced Jan. 9, by Senators Amanda Ragan and Liz Mathis and has been referred to Senate Human Resources Committee.

To learn more about legislation under consideration this legislative session, in Nebraska visit nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/intro. php; in Iowa visit www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation

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Email info@leagueofhumandignity.com
or
janderson@leagueofhumandignity.com

Someone can use your help as a care provider

If you're a people person who likes to keep busy, and if you're interested in self employment, work as a private care provider may be a perfect fit.

By assisting with household duties and everyday activities, you can earn a competitive income — while helping someone with a disability maintain an independent lifestyle. Your responsibilities could include cleaning the house, preparing a meal, doing the laundry, or other similar duties. You might also provide transportation to the doctor's office or the grocery store.

Filling in occasionally for those caring for a family member with an illness or disability is another valuable service you may provide.

If this sounds like the self-employment opportunity for you, contact the League of Human Dignity in Omaha. We can connect you with individuals in your community who could use your services.



OMAHA CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

5513 Center Street, Omaha, NE 68106
Phone 402-595-1256 • Toll free 800-483-5784
oinfo@leagueofhumandignity.com • leagueofhumandignity.com

SWI CIL Decorates for Holidays, Recognizes 2017 Volunteers

SW Iowa CIL volunteer Lorelee “Lori” Krohn received the Ken Lindhorst Volunteer of the year Award for 2017, during the center’s annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on Friday, Dec. 8, in Council Bluffs.

She has been a volunteer since 2014, answering the center phone and greeting walk-in consumers twice a week. She also helps out during the League’s Omaha/Southwest Iowa Golf Benefit.



The luncheon is a way of saying “Thank You” to League volunteers as well as a chance to decorate the office for the holidays (right).



Volunteers, friends, and League staff enjoy the annual SW Iowa CIL Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon Dec. 8, in Council Bluffs.

“She is always ready and willing to help others,” said center secretary Frann Mersnick.

About a dozen volunteers, friends, and League staff attended the event, which also doubled as a holiday decorating party. Volunteers each were given a thank-you gift, a League canvas tote bag.

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Registration Now Open for 2018 National ADA Symposium

This year's National ADA Symposium is June 17-20 at the Pittsburgh, PA, Wyndham Grand Hotel.

The annual four-day conference is the largest conference on the Americans with Disabilities Act and the source for latest information on the ADA. Presenters include nationally recognized representatives of agencies and organizations that are involved with the ADA.



This year marks the 28th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 22nd annual ADA Symposium.

The symposium is made up of pre-conference session options, keynote, break-out sessions, advanced discussion groups, exhibits, and hands-on learning activities. The event is coordinated and hosted by the Great Plains ADA Center, based in Columbia, Mo.

Early registration is \$750 through April 30 and \$900 beginning April 1. For more information about the symposium, or to register, email event planner Lisa Tucker at tuckerli@missouri.edu or register online at www.adasympposium.org.

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Barrier Removal Grants are available to qualifying renters or homeowners and their family members who have mobility limitations.

Grants are available to:

- People in Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Lincoln & Lancaster County.
- People with low to moderate income, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- People who need help removing barriers in their homes.



Examples of eligible modifications include outside ramps and lifts, grab bars, handrails, widened doorways, accessible tubs and showers, and reachable sinks and counters.

League staff offer a variety of services to assist in making homes more accessible to people with disabilities. For more information or for an application for a Barrier Removal Grant, contact:

Lincoln CIL

1701 P St.
Lincoln, NE 68508
Ph.402-441-7871

Omaha CIL

5513 Center St.
Omaha, NE 68106
Ph. 402-595-1256

SW Iowa CIL

1520 Avenue M
Council Bluffs, IA 51501
Ph. 712-323-6863

A service of the League of Human Dignity

WINTER IS HERE: SNOW CLOSING INFORMATION

We have designated **KFOR** radio as our weather station.

In times of severe weather, please turn to **KFOR 1240 AM**, or go online to www.kfor1240.com for the latest word on cancellations.



PROMOTING INDEPENDENT
LIVING FOR PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES SINCE 1971

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THE ONE YOU DEPEND ON
FOR WINTER WEATHER NEWS

Associations & Support Groups

The League maintains a list of associations and support groups in Nebraska, Southwest Iowa, the region and the nation for people with disabilities and their loved ones.

To see the complete list, in pdf format, please visit our website: leagueofhumandignity.com/getinvolved/ and click on "Support Groups."

LEAGUE DONORS

Nov. 24, 2017, through Jan. 16, 2018

Builder (\$500 or more): Schnell Family Charitable Fund, Peed Corporation, Diane Klima, Sid Dillon Chevrolet Inc., Derek Knorr.

Supporter (\$250-\$499): Caretech Inc.

Century (\$100-\$249): Christine Usher, Vivian Cordell, Sharon M. Thorson, Kent Mattson, Applied Connective Technologies, Linda Roberts, Jeff Patterson, Frank Velinsky, Cornhusker Auto Center, J. Gates Minnick, Tim Keelan, Denise Wiemer, Ken Mayberry, Alan Radke, George Underwood, Madison County Bank.

Believer (\$50-\$99): John Robbins, Debbie Kee, Mark Zach, Noel Engineering Inc., Christopher Connolly, Dan Zach, Tom Lovgren, Frank Andelt.

Friend (\$25-\$49): Suzanne G. Schreiber, Eugene Kelly, Marissa Torio, Duane Beiermann, Peter Larimer, Grant Hrabovsky, C.G. Pritchard, Elaine Bills, Lorene Ludy, Paula Luther.

Other: Janet Greser, Burdie Thrapp, Katherine Hancock, Chris Tonniges.

In Memory of Carol Prentice: Wayne Svoboda, Kathryn Burden, Vernon Westberg, Lynn Pepperd, Norman Hedgecock, Thomas Kelly.

In Memory of Bob Allington: Dale Young.

In Memory of Maggie Albertson: Rosanne Staniford.

**THANK YOU ALL
FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

NCIL Conference Set for July

This year's National Council on Independent Living conference is July 23-26, at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington, DC.



The annual conference is the largest Independent Living event of the year, usually hosting more than 1,000 people, including grassroots advocates, CIL and SILC leadership, members of Congress, government officials, and representatives from other major disability advocacy organizations.

The theme of this year's conference is "Mobilize: Resistance through Action."

"For over a year now, members of Congress and aggressive ideologues have tried their hardest to strip people with disabilities of their health and liberty," NCIL officials said. "The goal of this year's Annual Conference is to improve our strategy and cohesion."

The conference will include workshops focusing on advocacy and organizing, mobilizing new leaders, core services, SILCs and general workshops that do not fit these.

For more information, go online to <https://www.ncil.org/2018-annual-conference-on-independent-living/>

LEAGUE EMPLOYEES

Saying Hello:

Jessica Johanns, Independent Living Advisor, Council Bluffs.

Saying Good-Bye:

Sarah Thoene, Services Coordinator, Norfolk

Becky Williamson, Secretary, Kearney

Tom Bridge, Maintenance Specialist, Lincoln

LeShann Miller, Independent Living Advisor, Omaha



The Extended Hours Service is for people with disabilities in Lincoln who need accessible, affordable rides when other options are not available.

Service Times: 5 to 11 p.m. weekdays
8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Holidays
(Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas & New Year's Day)

Service Area: Lincoln, NE

Cost: \$4 per one-way ride

**Reserve rides 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.
Call for reservations 1 to 7 days in advance.
Same-day requests are subject to space availability.**

**A HandiVan or EHS identification is required:
You can get both at the League of Human Dignity
1701, P Street, in Lincoln.**

**Stop in or call 402-441-7871 for more information,
details about eligibility and registration.**

**Questions or complaints about EHS scheduling
& service may be directed to Servant Cab Company:**

Kirby (owner) 402-770-3683

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WHERE TO FIND US

LINCOLN Center for Independent Living & Mobility Options

1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone 402-441-7871

OMAHA Center for Independent Living & Mobility Options

5513 Center Street, Omaha, NE 68106
Phone 402-595-1256

NORFOLK Center for Independent Living

400 Elm Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701
Phone 402-371-4475

SW IOWA Center for Independent Living

1520 Avenue M, Council Bluffs, IA 51501
Phone 712-323-6863

PANHANDLE Medicaid Waiver Office

17 E 21 St., Scottsbluff, NE 69361
Phone 308-632-0470

KEARNEY Medicaid Waiver Office

3811 W. 29th Avenue, Ste 2, Kearney NE 68845
Phone 308-224-3665

NORTH PLATTE Medicaid Waiver Office

2509 Halligan Dr., North Platte, NE 69101
Phone 308-532-4911



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Achieve, Maintain Independence with Aid of League Services

The League of Human Dignity's Centers for Independent Living provide services that people with disabilities need to achieve and maintain their independence.

Services include, but are not limited to:

- Individual and systems advocacy
- Information and referral
- Independent living skills training
- Peer counseling and support
- Transition from institutions into the community
- Training in personal assistant hiring and management
- Barrier removal grants
- Equipment loan and rental

Call the League at 402-441-7871 to find out more. Or drop by our offices at 1701 P Street in Lincoln, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Or contact any of our other Centers for Independent Living.

Through our CILs and Medicaid Waiver offices, the League serves all 93 Nebraska counties and eight counties in Southwest Iowa.



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CLASSIFIEDS

Classified ads cost \$5 for the first 25 words and 25 cents for each additional word. To place an ad, write to: On The Level, League of Human Dignity, 1701 P Street, Lincoln, NE 56508; call Jim at 402-441-7871 v/tdd; call toll free at 888-508-4758; or fax: 402-441-7650. Equipment, supplies and other items for sale must be accessible to, or for the use of, people with disabilities.

FOR SALE: Six adjacent cemetery plots in Westlawn-Hillcrest Cemetery in Omaha. Section 8, Lot 24R spaces 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. \$1,000 each or \$5,000 for all six. Call the League of Human Dignity, 402-441-7871.



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(price includes sales tax)



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On Sale Now
Only at the
League of Human Dignity

\$5.⁹⁵

(Price includes tax)

While Supplies Last!

The League of Human Dignity Building Corporation

Is taking applications for 1 and 2 bedroom apartments with roll-in showers in Lincoln, Omaha, York, Columbus, Norfolk and Hastings.

These units come with Section 8 certificates and rent is based upon income. Eligible applicants must qualify under income guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Applicants must experience disability to qualify.

To apply or for more info, call **Paula Shufeldt**
at 1-888-508-4758 V/TDD
or email pshufeldt@leagueofhumandignity.com





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Call us at 402-441-7871
for more about this great product!



Can You Spare Your Unused Durable Medical Equipment?

From time to time the League of Human Dignity puts out the call for donations of gently used durable medical equipment needed for our Equipment Loan & Rental Program – and this is one of those times.

The program has been active at the League's CILs for many years but now is expanding to League Medicaid Waiver offices in **Kearney, North Platte** and **Scottsbluff**.

While the League's Centers for Independent Living have an ample supply of many items, including lifts, wheelchairs, crutches, commodes and the like, shower benches and chairs and transfer benches typically are in short supply.

Anyone with equipment that is in good condition that they would like to donate, please call the League office nearest you to see what is needed.

People with disabilities – whether temporary or permanent -- in counties served by the League have access to the equipment, which can help them remain independent. Included is durable medical equipment used for daily living, bathing, personal mobility and more.

The program includes a small, one-time handling fee and is open to people who live in residential locations, including foster homes, boarding houses and fraternity and sorority houses. People who live in nursing homes, college dorms or halfway houses are not eligible.

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