WORK LIFE BALANCE

“The problem with the rat race is that even if you win, you’re still a rat.”

- Lily Tomlin

“Work Life Balance” is a controversial phrase because it’s debatable whether “balance”, if one imagines an equally weighted scale, is really possible (especially for most senior managers and executives). There’s no doubt, that the person who sleeps a good 8 hours each night, works for no more than 8 hours a day, and enjoys the remaining time with his/her family and friends is a rarity!

Nevertheless, the concept of “balance” is an important one for our health and well-being and working towards an enjoyable and fulfilling life outside work hours is an important and admirable goal. Research suggests that those who do live a more balanced lifestyle are not just healthier, but they also perform better in the workplace (often in fewer hours).

Accordingly, the following strategies are recommended for those wanting to achieve success in their careers AND their personal lives:

- Make time to exercise and cultivate relaxing and stimulating hobbies to offset your busy lifestyle. For many executives, it’s recommended such hobbies are non-competitive. For almost everyone, it’s recommended that at least some time each week is spend engaging in activities that are deeply relaxing.
- Pace yourself — through the day, week, month, and year. Take regular, short breaks rather than one long one at the end of the day, week, or year.
- View these breaks as an important part of your self-care and ideally, as a joy (not as a necessary evil).
- Make your breaks count by leaving mobile phones, PDAs, laptops, and other work-related devices in the office or switched off. Just as it’s important to be “on” when you’re at your desk or in the office, it’s just as important to switch “off” when you’re taking a break (this applies even during lunch times!).
- Be a healthy role model for your colleagues and staff — take all your annual leave and once you’ve left the office, try not to check emails or messages.
- Pay attention to how your colleagues and staff balance their lives (a stressed or burnt out employee is not going to be much use) and where appropriate, actively encourage others to take breaks.

It’s simply not possible to be an effective employee, let alone an effective manager or leader, if you’re sick and tired. Achieving a level of balance in your life is vitally important for you and those around you.

Reprinted with permission from Dr. Timothy Sharp, The Happiness Institute in Australia. This and other resources can be found at [www.thehappinessinstitute.com](http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com).

PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

When things out of the ordinary happen, we sometimes forget who we need to contact. As a licensed provider, you have an additional obligation to notify your licensor of events that impact your life and household. These can include having out of town guests, going on a vacation, having surgery, or emergency care for yourself, foster child/adult, or a family member. We need to be notified if your cell/home phone number or email address changes as well. We also try to return your calls promptly; we appreciate it when we hear from you promptly.
Gaining Compliance for Persons Who Are Their Own Guardians

Everyone enjoys working with adult residents who are always happy and compliant. What do we do when the resident doesn’t want to take their medication, follow the doctor’s orders, or maybe even take a shower? When a person is his/her own guardian and chooses not to comply, providers can feel frustrated.

While the following steps can be used as a guide in helping sort out the issues, there is no substitute for clear communication. Providers should be sure to communicate their rules and expectations in the home. If the rules are not clear, it is hard for the resident to know what to do. Throughout every step, clarifying the expectations and continuing open communication is key.

Here are some steps to take to help gain compliance:

- **Evaluate what impact the decision will have on the person.** Will it affect their own health or safety? What about the safety of others in the home? People have the right to make decisions that are ‘outside societal norms’ as long as they don’t cause risk of harm to themselves or others. Avoid judgments based on your own norms.
- **Plan.** Try to engage the resident in their own plans. Ask what they want to do and why. Let the person direct their goals as much as possible. There are times that the goals set up when the person was first placed in your home may no longer be a priority for them. It may be that the shower would be easier at night than in the morning. Help think of alternatives that gain compliance.
- **Educate.** Let the person know what the result will be if they do not comply. Will they end up in the hospital for not taking their medication? If all the money is spent on pop, they won’t be able to go to the concert. Help them see the consequences of their actions.
- **Talk to the resident’s team (with the appropriate permission).** Is there someone they trust that can aid in decision making?
- **Document the attempts and refusals.** Be clear and factual in your documentation. You will be able to show the person and others the patterns of noncompliance. Communicate with the person and the team your concerns.
- **Discharge.** Ultimately if you as a provider feel you cannot meet the health and safety needs of the person because s/he will not comply in an area that will place the person at significant risk or put others in the home at significant risk, discharge may be an option to consider. Providers must give a 30 day notice. We recommend that the notice include a written notice to the resident and the case manager or family members as appropriate.

Portions reprinted from Minnesota Department of Human Services Provider Alert 2013. Other alerts may be found at www.dhs.state.mn.us under “general public”, “licensing”, “maltreatment investigations” and “alerts.”

Let's Go Fishing!

The local chapter of Let’s Go Fishing is located in Bayport on the St. Croix River. This non-profit group provides FREE 1½ - 2 hour fishing excursions on a handicapped accessible pontoon boat. People can just enjoy the ride, too, and not fish. They serve both seniors and people with developmental disabilities. Participants must be able to tolerate a boat ride and not have significant behaviors. Also, remember that the volunteers are not “staff” and are there to assist with fishing. 10 people can go on a trip and that includes staff. They provide bottled water but people need to bring their own snacks. They are very dedicated to sharing their love of the river and LET’S GO FISHING! Go to www.letsgofishingstillwater.com or call (651) 707-5181.
**PROPER USE OF POWER STRIPS**

Over the years our use of electricity has changed. Older homes, even new homes, do not have the number of conveniently located outlets for all the gadgets we use and charge. This has led to the need for extension cords and power strips. All of you should be aware that extension cords cannot be used for permanent wiring in foster care homes. Extension cords for Christmas lights, temporary lights are ok but not for regular use. You should be using power strips for any outlet extension that is used regularly such as a computer, printer, or television. Only power strips with internal fuses should be used for permanent wiring.

Avoid doing the “daisy chain” of cords; plugging one power strip into another to extend the use or plugging the power strip into an extension cord to increase the distance to be reached. By adding one power strip to another, you are drawing more power through the first power strip and ultimately the building outlet than it was designed to provide. This electrical current overload can result in a circuit overload or possibly a fire. Please use power strips safely. Each power strip has a rating for the amount of current it can carry. They are usually rated for 4 to 6 individual items. If you need to reach a longer distance, purchase a power strip of the correct length. You may choose to rearrange the room so the equipment is closer to the outlet alleviating the need for the long power strip. Don’t leave a power strip hanging. It should be on a stable surface so as not to put extra strain on the plug. Be sure to avoid running cords across walkways, creating a tripping hazard. Safe use of the power strips will avoid dangers and meet your electrical needs.

Information from Power Strips and Dangerous Daisy Chains at [www.compliance.gov](http://www.compliance.gov).

**ADULT FOSTER CARE POLICY & PROCEDURE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING**

This training will address the following regarding policies and procedures: those you are required to have, those which are good practice to have, the language that must be included, training requirements, updating, requirements for posting, and organizing. We will review the grievance policy, drug and alcohol policy, internal reporting procedure, and program abuse prevention plan. In addition we will review DHS sample policies for incident reporting, medication administration and management, releases of information, and staff training.

**Date/Time:** Tues., April 22 • 6:00-8:30 p.m.

**Location:** Washington County Government Center, Lower Level Room 14

**Registration:** Robbin Rosen at (651) 430-4169 or robbin.rosen@co.washington.mn.us by Fri., April 18

**ADULT FOSTER CARE PROVIDER TRAINING GROUP**

Provider Training Group meets the 4th Tuesday of every other month, beginning in January.

**Title:** First Aid

**Date:** Tuesday, May 27 • 6:00-8:30 p.m.

This is a video-based, instructor-led American Heart course that teaches students critical skills to respond to and manage an emergency in the first few minutes until emergency medical services (EMS) arrive. First aid skills taught include how to treat bleeding, sprains, broken bones, shock, and many other first aid emergencies. Class includes a First Aid Student Manual and a First Aid Certification Card. The instructor is Ann Tomek from Lakeview Hospital.
SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY

Social media is any form of communication between people and the internet or cell phone networks. Examples of social media include: online networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, MMOGs or online gaming which allows users to chat with each other while playing games, text messaging, Blogs, and message boards. The most popular sites are always changing, often making it difficult to keep up with the latest social media trends. Regardless of what is popular, concerns about internet and online safety have increased with more and more people using social media.

While it may be tempting to forbid youth to use social media, this is seldom realistic. The internet and mobile devices are too widespread and accessible. In addition, forbidding social networking may make it harder for youth to fit in with friends. Instead, foster parents can provide guidance and boundaries to help youth use media safely. As with many parenting situations, you may need to start with close supervision and gradually provide more freedom as youth demonstrate responsibility.

Below are some internet safety tips that you as caregivers can use provided by the Child Welfare Information Gateway:

What are the benefits?
- **Maintaining social ties.** Youth can keep in touch with existing friends, siblings, and others and make new connections. This may be important for young people who have been moved from their communities.
- **Support.** Through online community groups, youth can share experiences with peers where appropriate and approved by the caseworker.
- **Family connections.** Youth may be able to share posts and other information with biological family members between family visits, where appropriate and approved by the caseworker.
- **Self-expression.** Videos, blogs, and other digital venues allow youth to express their feelings and ideas, which can help them shape their identity and contribute to healing from childhood trauma.

What are the risks?
While all youth may be at some risk for unsafe online situations, youth in foster care may be particularly vulnerable to inappropriate contact, cyberbullying, or child predators. In addition, social media use may aid in communication with adults or family members who are “off limits.”

Tips for safe use of social media by youth:
- **Discuss social media with youth in your care.** Ask youth how they use social media and why it’s important to them.
- **Talk with your caseworker.** Ask about safety needs or concerns that may affect your youth’s use of social media and whether there have been any past issues with social media use.
- **Set house rules early on for what’s okay and what’s not.** Rules will likely vary with youth’s age.
- **Set strict privacy settings.** Understand settings for each network used, so youth in your care can limit who can find them, what they can see, and how they can communicate.
- **Teach youth to keep personal information private.** Advise youth not to post a full name, address, school name, phone number, photo, or other identifying information.
- **Monitor use.** Keep computers in a common family space (not a bedroom) and keep track of mobile device use. Know what type of social media your youth uses. Consider asking youth for passwords and permission to let a trusted adult “friend” them. However, try to balance monitoring with privacy.
- **Conduct searches.** Every so often, search on a youth’s name and address and see what information or tagged photos are publicly available.
- **Explain the need to be careful.** Make sure youth understand that not everyone is who they say they are. Advise youth to avoid sharing intimate photos and talking online about sex.
- **Discuss cyberbullying.** Warn youth not to send, forward, or respond to mean or embarrassing messages or pictures. Help youth document, block, and report cyberbullying if needed.
- **Keep lines of communication open.** Encourage youth to let you know if an exchange makes them uncomfortable or if someone asks to meet them in person.
- **Be prepared to deal with mistakes.** When youth slip up and don’t follow guidelines, approach the situation as a “learning opportunity” and calmly work together with youth on what to do next.

For more information and resources, please visit: www.childwelfare.gov/management/workforce/tools/safety.cfm or www.commonsensemedia.org.
What is MNYTD?
MNYTD = Minnesota Youth in Transition Database. It’s Minnesota’s version of the federally required nationwide survey (NYTD) to learn more about the lives of youth who have experienced out-of-home placement. The Improve Group is the agency contracted by DHS to follow-up with and survey young adults at ages 19 and 21 after they complete the survey at 17 with their case manager.

What’s it about?
The questions are about financial self-sufficiency, experience with homelessness, educational attainment, positive connections with adults, high-risk behaviors, and access to health insurance.

What’s at stake?
Minnesota Department of Human Services will lose Chafee funds for Independent Living Services, Education and Training Vouchers, and other transition support services for youth in out-of-home placement if they do not survey all eligible youth. If Minnesota DHS loses funds it will mean less money to prepare youth currently in placement for adulthood.

Why does it matter?
This survey will allow us to see what situations are unique to Minnesota youth, and which ones are common issues that youth face across the country. We need to know how our youth are doing as they become independent. If they are doing great we need to know, just as much as if they are falling through the cracks.

How can I help?
If you receive something in the mail from MNYTD for one of your former or current foster youth, be sure to pass it on to them and encourage them to take the survey. All youth in placement at the time of their 17th birthday between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014 will take the survey with their case managers, they are part of Cohort 2 of MNYTD and select youth will be surveyed again at 19 and 21. Cohort 1 survey respondents will take the survey again around their 21st birthday between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015. Young adults who take the survey at 17 and are selected to take the MNYTD survey around their 19th birthday will receive a $25 gift card for completing it again, and $30 at age 21.

You are the key to helping our young adults’ voices be heard!
To learn more about MNYTD, go to: [http://mnytd.com](http://mnytd.com) or call us at (651) 315-8918.

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**CHILD FOSTER CARE SUPPORT GROUP IS BACK & MORE...**

We’re bringing back Child Foster Care Support Group. We will be offering two support groups; one for Relative/Kin providers and one for Non-Relative/Non-Kin providers. Please contact your licensor for additional information. See dates and times below:

**Relative/Kin Support Group**
Relatives Raising Children—Supporting One Another—Challenges & Special Joys

- **Date/Time:** Mon., April 21 • 6:30-8:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Woodbury City Hall, Poplar Room
- **Questions:** Ann Maudal at (651) 430-6485 or ann.maudal@co.washington.mn.us

**Child Support Group (Non-Relative/Non-Kin)**
Support for veteran and newer child foster care providers. An opportunity to consult, connect, and create community.

- **Date/Time:** Mon., May 12 • 6:00-7:30 p.m.
- **Location:** Oakdale Library, Public Meeting Room
- **Questions:** Kim Pfuehler at (651) 430-6598 or kim.pfuehler@co.washington.mn.us
Welcome New Child Providers:

October 2013  
- Melissa & Michael Franson,  
  Cottage Grove (Child)

February 2014  
- Michael Coffelt,  
  Cottage Grove (Kin)
- Sandra Kwiatkowski,  
  Forest Lake (Kin/Respite)

March 2014  
- Sally & David,  
  Framke,  
  Stillwater (Kin)

DID YOU KNOW?

FOSTER CARE & MA  
The Affordable Care Act extends Medical Assistance benefits to age 26 for youth leaving foster care on or after their 18th birthday. This eligibility is effective January 1, 2014. This new eligibility extension was created to seek parity with young adults who can remain on their parents’ health insurance until age 26.

To qualify, an individual must be under age 26, was in foster care in Minnesota, the foster care ended at 18 or older, and was enrolled in MA or Minnesota Care at the time foster care ended. They must not be eligible for MA under other categories including as an individual who receives SSI and has a disability. Individuals who are interested can apply on the MNSure website at www.mnsure.org.

PREPARING FOSTER CARE YOUTH FOR COLLEGE: FUNDING HELP & RESOURCES

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program  
The Minnesota Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV) helps current and former foster care and adoptive youth attend colleges, universities, vocational, or technical programs. Eligible students can receive up to $5,000 per school year to pay for tuition, fees, books, housing, transportation, and other school-related costs and living expenses. ETV funds are to complement the student’s own efforts to secure financial assistance to attend post-secondary school. The program is administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

Applying for the ETV Program:  
- Go to the ETV website:  
  www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_000553  
to confirm the student qualifies to apply for the program.
- Review the ‘Other Supporting Document Section’ for the required documents students must attach to their application.
- Review the essay and budget sections before clicking on the online application.
- Applications are accepted on July 1 and January 1 each school year.
- The ETV program suggests that students have all of their documents, their essay, and budget done before starting the application. Only complete applications will be reviewed and awarded ETV funds. Complete applications are the application, budget, all of the supporting documents listed on the website and, for 1st time applicants, the Verification of Eligibility form completed by the applicants county or tribal social service agency.

Tuition Waiver:  
Students who are state wards at age 18, are eligible to have some or all of the cost of their tuition waived. All 2- and 4-year Minnesota public colleges offer tuition waivers. Student will have to provide documentation such as a court order confirming their state ward status or a letter from their social worker. Students should request a tuition waiver from their school as early as possible, and especially before they apply for the ETV program.

Scholarship Resources:  
The ETV program encourages all students to apply for additional scholarships in addition to completing FAFSA and ETV applications to avoid taking out loans.
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available at https://fafsa.ed.gov/. Students can apply after January 1 for federal and state financial aid, grants, work-study, loans, and some private aid. The first step in applying for financial aid is to complete and submit this application. Free information and assistance is available at Minnesota College Goal, http://minnesotacollegegoal.org/; a statewide volunteer program that helps students and families who are applying for financial aid for post-secondary education in Minnesota.

Minnesota TRiO Programs:  
http://mntrio.org/. This is a nationwide, federally-funded organization of projects committed to providing educational opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstance. TRiO programs are designed to help low-income and first-generation Americans enter college, graduate, and move on to participate more fully in America’s economic and social life. TRiO projects are funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Technical assistance:  
on preparing youth for post-secondary education and completing the ETV program application can be provided by Jill Von Holtum. Assistance can be done in person or by phone conference with agency staff, youth, foster parents/caregivers, and others working with youth to provide information about the program and assist youth in completing applications. Contact Jill at jill.von.holtum@state.mn.us or (651) 431-4663.

For a basic budgeting worksheet to help your foster youth determine how much financial assistance they will need in order to attend a post-secondary institution, please follow this link: http://financialplan.about.com/od/moneyandcollegestudents/l/bcollbudget.htm.
WASHINGTON COUNTY

All trainings will be held at the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater unless otherwise noted. To register for trainings contact Anne Fildes at (651) 275-7259. All trainings are free to Washington County Foster Care Providers unless otherwise noted. *Reminder: Foster parents can seek up to $100 training reimbursement per calendar year per household.*

*Resource Family Trainings: Highly recommended for new providers seeking to have placements in their homes.*

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SUID (Sudden Unexpected Infant Death) / AHT (Abusive Head Trauma) Training

This training is required when caring for kids 5 and younger.

**Date/Time:** Wed., April 16 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Trainer:** Washington Co. Community Services Staff

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Resource Family Training: Effects of Caregivers on the Family — Module 10

Participants will learn to recognize signs of family stress and know the importance of developing and using support systems to prevent a family crisis. Procedures will be outlined that are required if allegations of maltreatment are made. Health, hygiene, and nutritional issues will be explored.

**Date/Time:** Thurs., April 17 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Trainer:** Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

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Resource Families Training – (A Five Part Series)

**Caring for Children who have Experienced Trauma**

Many children in the foster care system have lived through traumatic experiences. Understanding how trauma affects children can help you to make sense of their baffling behavior, feelings, and attitudes. The workshop will offer skills and techniques to help you respond appropriately to children’s behavior and support them in developing healthy attachments and coping strategies. You will also learn ways to reduce the stress of parenting a traumatized child.

**Date/Time:** May 6 (Part 4) • 6:00-9:00 p.m.

& June 10 (Part 5) • 6:00-8:30 p.m.

**Trainer:** Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainer

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Resource Family Training:  Permanency Issues for Children & Families — Module 11 & 12

Participants will learn the unique aspects of becoming a permanent home for a child who will not be returning to their biological parents. They will begin to understand how post-placement issues such as loss, identity, and loyalties can be complicated for these children and begin to prepare for them. This training also helps participants recognize the long-term adjustment to adoption for the parent and child; including dealing with grief, loss, identity, control, divided loyalties, fertility issues, and the fantasy of being a “dream family.”

**Date/Time:** Thurs., May 15 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Trainer:** Dept. of Human Services Contracted Trainers

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C.A.R.S. (Children and Restraint Systems) Training

This training is required when caring for kids 8 and younger. Limited seating! No walk-ins.

**Date/Time:** Tues., June 3 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Trainer:** Washington Co. Public Health Staff

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**METRO TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

**MN ADOPT Conference: Promoting a Culture of Adoption, Cultivating Adoption Identity**

*(A day for adoptive, foster, & kinship parents)*

**Morning Session:**

*Cultivating Adoption Identity: One Child, One Family at a Time with Rhonda M. Roorda* — This training will address the unique issues of adoption identity and offer ideas on how to talk to your child about complexities of his/her developmental process and how that journey continues throughout adulthood. Rhonda M. Roorda brings a personal narrative as she provides families with tools to help cultivate healthy adoption identity and how race, culture, attachment, grief and loss, and more affect a child’s sense of self and why adoption identity is essential to nurture in the home.

**Afternoon Session:**

*Exploring Adoption Identity: One Chapter at a Time featuring a panel of adult adoptees* — This rare opportunity brings together a panel of adult adoptees as they share their personal experiences and insights as transracial/transcultural adoptees. Topics to be discussed will include: the importance of birth family, birth culture, country, and language; considerations for racial, cultural, and family identity; and communicating with adoptive parents about adoption, race, and culture.

**Date/Time:** Sat., June 7 • 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

**Location:** Marriott Minneapolis West, St. Louis Park

**Cost:**

- Individual Adult: $25/person
- Adult Couple: $50/paying couple

**Registration:** www.mnadopt.org

**Presenter:** Rhonda M. Roorda, author & adoptee

**Questions:** (612) 861-7115 or (866) 303-6276
Linda and Bob Lennartson were first licensed in March of 1999. They have cared for disabled adults and the elderly in their home in Cottage Grove. Linda was the initial fulltime caregiver. Bob retired recently and now is able to help out more. They are currently tackling the new 245D Home and Community Based License requirements.

What prompted you to become licensed?
It was when Bob’s dad had a bad heart attack and was on life support which changed not only his life but ours too. To make a long story short, I quit my job and we moved Bob’s dad in with us so we could take care of him. After talking to many people, we discovered this whole new world of “Foster Care”. Needless to say that is the road we took and our lives changed. We have been doing Adult Foster Care for 15 years.

What keeps you going every day?
Knowing we can at least help a few people from going into a nursing home and to give them more personal care. And the families that find us are very grateful for what we do and the love we give their family member.

What is something you have learned that would be helpful to other providers?
The one thing we have learned is to have patience and understanding for the individuals you take care of. It takes time but you will get there.

What advice would you give to someone that is newly licensed?
Don’t be worried about everything; it always has a way of working out. We know it’s overwhelming at first but remember to have patience; you will learn it all in time. Also remember to find time for yourself and family; that it so important.

What have been the most helpful resources for you?
The most helpful resources are other caregivers who have been doing adult foster care for a while. Also your licensor is very important and we have been blessed with some great ones over the years. It takes time to learn all you need to learn and experience is the best teacher; remember to have patience.

What is your best memory of providing foster care?
It’s hard to have just one best memory; there has been many. I think for us and this might sound strange but taking care of people on hospice; it is very hard yet very rewarding. The families are at our home most of the time. You can help them go through the process of their loved one passing on and let them have someone to lean on and cry with. The families are always very grateful that we were there for them and to explain the process. The feeling we get is unexplainable; it is something very special.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFC

Brain Injury Basics
The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance provides low-cost workshops for individuals, families, and friends.

Date/Time: Adjustment to Brain Injury: Thurs., April 24 • 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Caregiving: Thurs., May 22 • 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Introduction to Brain Injury: Thurs., June 26 • 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Cost: $5 donation—individuals with brain injury/family members/friends;
$25/session for professionals
Location: Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Education Center
Registration: REQUIRED. www.braininjurymn.org or (612) 378-2742/1(800) 669-6442