



Tri-Valley

Opportunity Council, Inc.
Community Assistance Programs

Building strong families. Connecting people and resources. Strengthening communities.

JANUARY 2017

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc 1-800-820-7263
• Nancy Ramon • Maureen Hams
nancy.ramon@tvoc.org mhams@tvoc.org

Dear Families and Friends of Tri-Valley Opportunity Council:

I hope everyone had a Happy New Year and is looking forward to 2017 and what it will bring to our families, communities and schools.

I would like to share with you some of the other programs in the Community Assistance Program in Tri-Valley.

We have our housing/homeless programs which can assist clients with:

Rent Eviction

Security Deposits

Utility Disconnections

1st Month's Rent

Call 1-800-201-3475 for more information

Energy Assistance Program

Energy Assistance Program provides eligible families with assistance toward their winter heating bills, including electric bills, gas, propane, fuel oil, wood, and other fuel sources. Home owners on the program can also receive assistance with furnace repair or replacement.

For more information call 1-866-264-3729

IRS OFFERS 10 TAX-TIME TIPS

1. **Gather your records:** Make sure you have all your tax records. This includes receipts, cancelled checks and other records that support income, deductions or tax credits that you can claim. If you purchased health insurance you will need the information in form 1095A to file.
2. **Report all your income:** You will need to report your income from all of your Forms W-2, wage and tax statements, Forms 1099 and any other income, even if you don't receive a statement when you file your tax return.
3. **Try IRS free file:** Free file is available only on IRS.gov. If you made \$62,000 or less, you can use free name-brand tax software to file your federal tax return. If you earned more, you can use free file fillable forms, an electronic version of IRS paper forms. If you need more time to file, you can also use IRS free file to get an automatic six-month extension to file your taxes.
4. **Try IRS e-file:** Electronic filing is the best way to file a tax return. It's accurate, safe and easy. If you owe taxes, you have the option to e-file early and pay by April 15 to avoid penalties and interest.
5. **Use direct deposit:** The fastest and safest way to get your tax refund is to combine e-file with direct deposit.
6. **Visit IRS.gov:** It's a great place to get what you need to file your tax return. It can provide you with links for filing tips, answers to frequently asked questions and IRS forms and publications.
7. **Use IRS online tools:** The IRS has many online tools to help you file. For instance, the interactive tax assistant tool provides answers to many of your tax questions. It gives you the same answers that an IRS representative would give you over the phone.
8. **Weigh your filing options:** You have different options for filing your tax return. You can prepare it yourself or go to a tax preparer. You maybe eligible for free help at a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site or tax counseling for the elderly site.
9. **Check out number 17:** IRS publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax, is a complete tax resource that you can read on IRS.gov. It is also available as an e-book.
10. **Review your return:** Mistakes slow down your tax refund. If you file a paper return, be sure to check all Social Security numbers. That's one of the most common errors.

IF YOU WORKED IN 2016, YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR UP TO \$6,269.00 AT TAX TIME FROM THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

YOU EARNED IT! YOU CLAIM IT!

WORK-LIFE BALANCE: HOW TO LEAVE WORK AT WORK

The average person spends 90,000 hours working during their lifetime. We inevitably spend more time with our co-workers than anyone else during the week. This routine lasts upward to 45 years!

We need to physically and mentally check out of work when we punch the clock at the end of the day. We all know this is easier said than done. Tomorrow's to-do lists can keep us up at night, and the accessibility of our cell phones creates temptation to constantly check our e-mails. Research shows that the inability to disconnect from work can have significant repercussions.

Here are 4 tips for leaving your work at work:

1. Make a To-Do List for the following day: For many, it's a constant nagging of tomorrow's tasks or the fear of forgetting something important that keeps us from enjoying an evening or weekend away from the office. Making a to-do list for the following day can help rid our minds of some of this anxiety. It allows you to prepare for what's ahead, it also allows you to leave your anxiety on paper. Creating this habit at the end of your work day can provide a smooth transition from work to personal life. Just like turning off the lights at night signals your brain that it's time to sleep, completing your to-do list for the following day will eventually signal your brain that it's time to stop focusing on work.
2. Disconnect from Technology: Unfortunately in 2017, the very inventions that aid us in our work also have the ability to distract us from our play. Americans have adapted the idea that we must be connected at all times. It gets harder to ignore work-related emails outside of work. In addition to the to-do list make a habit of turning off email and chat notifications before leaving work. You can use inbox pause, to hold your emails until you are ready for them.

3. Don't dwell on your day: After a long, stressful day at work, we're often convinced that a quick vent session will cure all of our anxiety. So we talk to our spouse, family or friends to vent and often we don't feel any better.

This is called "co-ruminating" the clinical term for venting to the point of obsession, is not a successful way to let go of work struggles. Instead, practice mindful thinking. For example, during your evening commute home to act as a tourist, rather than driving on autopilot, can help your mind on "connecting with and discovering the richness of life around you.

4. Engage in humor: In the end, laughter can be the best medicine. Sometimes the best remedy for getting your mind off next week's big presentation or your overflowing inbox is a healthy distraction. Laughter releases endorphins that lower stress and tension and mentally revive you. Listen to a comedic podcast on your commute home, tune into your favorite comedy on tv, or browse the top ten human websites when you arrive home.

All in all, we must remember that, no matter how driven we feel, we must give ourselves time away from work to enjoy our personal lives. It's essential to our health and productivity. Give yourself the opportunity to enjoy your night and weekends, distraction free. Choose to leave work at work.



5 MYTHS ABOUT ADHD, DYSLEXIA, AND OTHER LEARNING AND ATTENTION ISSUES

(from parents.com)

Nearly one in five children in the U.S. may have learning or attention issues that impact their ability to succeed in school. But despite advances in understanding these issues, many myths still exist.

Better resources, teacher training, and diagnosis have helped countless kids with learning and attention issues get the help they need to thrive. But despite the fact that we already know so much about the most common learning and attention issues—ADHD, dyslexia, auditory processing disorder, and more—there are still some myths out there that refuse to die.

- 1. Children with learning and attention issues aren't as intelligent as their fellow students.** “The biggest myth is that having a learning disability means you are not smart,” says Dr. Gail Saltz. “Intelligence is most often not connected to the specific learning disability, and many people with a learning disability are very smart. They may have specific difficulty with decoding reading, speed of processing, or ability to maintain attention, but these issues are separate from their intelligence and therefore academic potential.”
- 2. If a child has learning or attention issues, the parents are to blame.** People always seem to blame parents for anything that goes wrong with their kids. But learning issues have nothing to do with parent prowess. “What we see are kids who are very capable in so many ways but find other things that come easily to most people much more challenging,” says Bob Cunningham, Ed.M., “This can be really confusing, and people often look for simple ways to explain what is going on. It's easy to point to “bad parenting” when a child is not performing well at school.
- 3. Children with learning issues need to be in special education classes.** “A common myth is that people with learning disabilities can't learn and should be placed in “special” separate classes. In fact according to Dr. Walfish, “with the proper educational therapy and support most kids with learning disabilities learn to accommodate by utilizing their strengths as supportive backup while exercising their area of weakness. They absolutely can and do learn, and most often they learn best when they are mainstreamed into regular classrooms.”
- 4. Special education classes aren't as rigorous as mainstream.** Parents often fight for mainstreaming, worried that their kids may fall behind if they're placed in special education. But experts say that special education may be the ticket to achievement for some kids with learning issues. “There is a mindset that special education is an easier place to be, but it's a harder place to be because students with learning disabilities have to work harder, says Steven Ray, director of special education. “Students with learning disabilities struggle academically, and have to work harder and longer to achieve at the same rate as their non-disabled peers.
- 5. Children with learning issues are just lazy.** “Many people still think that kids with learning and attention issues are just lazy, but we know this isn't true. When people aren't understanding the impact of learning and attention issues, I often ask them to think of the one thing in life that is most difficult for them. Then, imagine what it would be like to be asked to do that thing for hours every day for 13 years. And to have to do it in front of your peers. That's the reality at schools for kids with needs,” says Cunningham.



**OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR
HEALTH INSURANCE
THROUGH MNSURE
ENDS JANUARY 31,2017**

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council has navigators to assist the public with the on-line applications for health insurance in Minnesota.

There is no cost to you for this service.

Please call Nancy Ramon for more information at 1-800-820-7263

SNAP

SNAP offers nutrition to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. The Food and Services works with state agencies, nutrition educators as well as neighborhood and other organizations to ensure that those eligible can make informed decisions about applying for this program.



Websites for your family

A lot of resources and information is available for children and families on the internet. You need to be very careful about information you find and very cautious about websites, but there are many quality sites out there. Here are a few sites you can look at :

www.pacer.org– resource and information center for families and youth with disabilities, bullying resources

www.nami.org– a mental health advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families

www.macmh.org-training and resources for children and families promoting positive mental health

www.samhsa.gov– resources and information regarding substance abuse, mental health and services for children and families

www.health.state.mn.us/mcshn– a website for Minnesota children with special health needs and their families

www.fape.org-information about IDEA, special education and disability issues

www.parenttoolkit.com

www.parentsknow.state.mn.us– resources and information for parents

www.how-to-stop-bullying.com– resources and activities on preventing bullying and how to handle bullying