

Pennsylvania Elks Home Service Program



Since 1963, the Pennsylvania Elks Home Service Program has been helping to improve the quality of life for thousands of children and adults throughout Pennsylvania. They provide support and advocacy services to individuals of any age who have a developmental disability.

The program is primarily funded by donations from the 80 Elks lodges in Pennsylvania as our Major Project.

The Pennsylvania Elks State Association, an alliance of 80 Elks Lodges that proudly serve many communities in our great Commonwealth, is justifiably proud of our Elks State Major Project. This charitable undertaking is known as the "Pennsylvania Elks Home Service Program." Dedicated to helping persons with developmental disabilities, it was originally called the "Pennsylvania Elks Cerebral Palsy Nurses Program." The program had its beginning in 1963 under the leadership of Past State President James Ebersberger, a member of the Latrobe Elks Lodge. The first home service visit was made to a client in Irwin, in Westmoreland County, and at that time the program only served persons with Cerebral Palsy. Today, the Pennsylvania Elks State Association employs 21 highly trained Registered Nurses and home visitors who also assist individuals with other developmental disabilities as well as spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, Down syndrome and hearing and visual impairments, to name just a few. This Pennsylvania Elks Program is a TOTALLY FREE service that is available in any of the 67 counties comprising the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The target population of the Elks Home Service Program is any resident of Pennsylvania who has a developmental disability. A *developmental disability* is defined as a severe, chronic disability of a person, which is attributable to mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairment manifested before the person attains the age of twenty-two (22). This disability is likely to continue indefinitely, and results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity:

- Self-care
- Receptive and expressive language
- Learning
- Mobility
- Self-direction
- Capacity for independent living
- Economic self-sufficiency

Physical things, everyday events that so many of us take for granted, can be great victories for those individuals facing these challenges. Just learning how to feed themselves a single bite of food can be a satisfying accomplishment. For one of our clients to just stand up, or even simply flash a brief smile, can bring him or her a real sense of pride. We who are able-bodied are obligated morally to give our fellow human beings whatever we can to allow them to experience just one of the everyday activities we enjoy; a drink of water without spilling it; writing their own

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name legibly; taking a step without faltering. It isn't pity they need, just some help and understanding; the hope that one compassionate human being can give to another.

Unfortunately, as enlightened and informed as today's society is, many of us do not care about anything but our own little world. We are unaware of the challenges that many persons with developmental disabilities face. Many people "fall through the cracks" of today's social service system and have no one to help them. These are the people who benefit most from the Pennsylvania Elks Home Service Program. A group of highly-dedicated Registered Nurses and staff who constantly search for new ways to help their clients become more independent and contributing members of their communities. These efforts have allowed many persons to establish a viable communication with loved ones and friends. In some cases, our clients have gained employment to become contributors to the world in which they live. This is not charity, but merely a hand to people who can and will help themselves.

While you read this, the world's doctors and scientists are looking diligently for ways to prevent or cure these disabilities. However, today's bureaucratic red tape usually requires a lawyer's mind when it comes to obtaining the assistance the Elks clients need to become as independent as possible. The knowledge, skill and compassion needed to do this job right are all traits the 26 Pennsylvania Elks Nurses and home visitors possess. The staff knows HOW to cut the red tape and HOW to find services that exist. They know WHERE to find educational opportunities, and they know the rights of not only the person with the disability, but also those of their family members.

The clients in the Elks Home Service Program pay NOTHING AT ALL for this in-home consultation service that is primarily financed by the 110 Pennsylvania Elks Lodges. It is now budgeted at more than one million dollars annually, and this sum includes the salary and vehicle with all expenses for each nurse. The only criterion needed to become an Elks Home Service Program client is a developmental disability; nothing else is considered; not gender, not religion, not finances, not race or any other personal preferences. The members of the Pennsylvania Elks State Association see only a neighbor, another human being who needs support. Just as the Elks in Pennsylvania have done since 1963, we respond to this need with compassion and knowledge.

Today, our more compassionate society views many things in a different light, and more individuals with disabilities are becoming involved in the communities where they live. The Pennsylvania Elks Home Service staff have no cure, no magic waters, no cute little treatments; just a little bit of hope. They can provide a chance for independence for the people who need it most, and thus give them a chance to enjoy simple everyday life.

The Pennsylvania Elks Home Service visitor is usually called in when someone is a few dollars over the cutoff point for government help. A referral can be made when a dedicated mother finds her life dominated by a child's developmental needs, or when our fast-paced, "bottom line" society allows a person to "slip" through the cracks. It is here, at the point where other programs end, that the Pennsylvania Elks Home Service Program truly BEGINS. You see, our staff doesn't have to obey edicts made by people who enjoy good health and income, nor do we have to worry about our clients being a dollar ABOVE or BELOW a certain income. Because of this, the Pennsylvania Elks Home Service visitors are able to devote all of their energies into helping their clients. They have sat at a hospital waiting for a client who has no other family, and they have located apartments for young adults who merely want a life of their own on their own.

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By being totally unencumbered by the rigidity of rules made by those who have no knowledge of the problems, the Pennsylvania Elks staff has a flexibility that allows them to give the individual client maximum attention.

Beyond the obvious medical assistance, it's at that point when no one else steps forward that the Pennsylvania Elks Home Service visitor really shines. She CAN and she WILL stand up for the rights of a child or adult with a disability. The Elks want them to have the best education possible; to live independently; to travel and to fully enjoy ALL the privileges and rights that all citizens are entitled to. We can do this because our staff is not hampered by special interests or the will of ambitious and unscrupulous people. None of the members of the Pennsylvania Elks Major Projects Board of Directors is paid a penny, and this means that the Elks Home Service Program is one program where EVERY PENNY given is used as it was intended to help our clients in YOUR community!

All administrative expenses are provided for by a grant from the Elks National Foundation, therefore every dollar earned by the Elks lodges goes directly to help the children and adults we serve. Each year of maintaining this vital program takes an increasing amount of money, all of it raised through voluntary contributions obtained through the 80 Elks Lodges in Pennsylvania. By holding countless Dinners, Dances, Bingos, Parties, Picnics, Golf Outings and a myriad of other events, the Pennsylvania Elks Lodges manage to bring in the money we need to allow our staff to devote as much time as is needed in each case they have. But we also, quite shamelessly as a matter of fact, solicit money from members and non-members alike, because what we raise is used ONLY here in Pennsylvania, and that means in EVERY community.

We don't ask a monthly stipend to help a child in a foreign land, which as a noble effort indeed, but our members are asked instead to contribute just \$10.00 PER YEAR to help a child in YOUR COMMUNITY; in their community. We will accept donations from any interested individual, and they are tax-deductible under the 501c3 IRS guidelines. If you are an ELK in Pennsylvania this donation is as easy as setting aside two thin dimes, that's just 20 cents of your hard-earned money, every week for a year; and you're even allowed the customary "two-week vacation." But when your year ends, we'll have our needed \$10.00 from you. Why not try putting your pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters into a small jar every night, then use the contents of that as your, let's not say donation, but your way of CELEBRATING your own healthy life! It's a terrific way to not only acknowledge your own good fortune, but it WILL allow one of your Pennsylvania neighbors to live more independently and you'll be doing all this for only 20 cents a week!

There is no better way to remember a loved one than with a donation or bequest to the Pennsylvania Major Projects Legacy Trust Fund. The Legacy Trust Fund is a permanent fund where all donations are wisely invested, and only the dividends from these donations are used to augment the current Elks Home Service Program income; thus, the ever-expanding principal remains intact forever. This means a bequest is the most feasible way of making your donation work for others well into the future. We thank you, and we wish you GOOD HEALTH!

Read on to learn more about the program and how to make a referral.

Services are provided:

- By a Nurse and/or Medical Case Coordinator
- To Pennsylvania residents

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- In the person's home environment
- Without discrimination
- FREE of charge

Who is eligible to receive services?

- An individual of any age who has a developmental disability (a disability that is manifested before the age of 22)
- A child or adult with physical or mental delays or a combination of both
- Services can continue throughout a person's lifetime, if needed

How are referrals made?

- By a friend or concerned Elk
- By a health care professional
- By school personnel
- By community and human service agencies
- By a family member

***Permission must first be obtained from the individual or family

When a referral is made:

- A visit is made to the home for an intake and initial assessment. The needs of the family and environment are noted at this time
- After discussing the needs with the individual or family, we help to determine the appropriate referrals for services
- When referrals are made, we can assist with follow-up. Home visits are then made on an as needed basis.

