

# The Soldier and Family Voice

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## GAO Upholds TRICARE Award to Express Scripts

By DOD January 12, 2004 (abridged)

Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, announced today that on Jan. 12 the Department of Defense (DoD) received notice that the General Accounting Office (GAO) upheld the award of the Tricare Retail Pharmacy Contract (TRRx) to Express Scripts Inc. (ESI) of Maryland Heights, Mo. The Tricare Retail Pharmacy contract is for a pharmacy benefits manager to provide a nationwide network of retail pharmacies to fill prescriptions for Tricare beneficiaries in the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The GAO review was prompted by protests filed by four of the losing bidders: ACS State Healthcare LLC, PharmaCare Government Services Inc., PBGA LLC, and Humana Military Healthcare Services Inc.

"We are pleased with the GAO's decision and look forward to continuing our work with Express Scripts on the transition of this important healthcare benefit to a new and innovative contract. This decision is a clear recognition of the integrity and diligence applied by the government team that had the daunting task of reviewing a large number of highly competitive proposals," said Winkenwerder.

The new contract is designed to improve service and satisfaction for Tricare beneficiaries and substantially reduce the cost of the benefit to the American taxpayer.

## Who's Who In The Doctor's Office?

By Ceridian Corp January 8, 2004 (abridged)

The last time you went to the doctor's office, you may not have even seen a doctor. Many hospitals, clinics, and doctor's offices rely on the services of other types of medical professionals, including physician's assistants, registered nurses, or nurse practitioners. All of these specialists have different levels of training and certification, and all are perfectly qualified to deal with most health issues.

Physician's assistants, or PAs, are able to complete physical exams, order tests like lab work or x-rays, diagnose illnesses, and write prescriptions. They can also deal with routine procedures like stitches or broken bones. Just about the only thing these highly trained medical professionals can't do is work independently of a physician. PAs must complete at least two years of premed classes and graduate from an accredited PA program and then pass the Physician's Assistant National Certification Examination.

Registered nurses are trained to work as part of a health care team in a hospital, clinic, or doctor's office. RNs may also work in community or public health settings, hospice programs, or at schools. RNs are trained to assess the health of a patient, and plan and implement care. RNs cannot order tests, make diagnoses, or write prescriptions, and they usually work under the direct supervision of a doctor. An RN may hold either a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from a four-year university or an Associated Degree in Nursing from a two-year college. All RNs must pass the Registered Nursing Licensing Examination to practice as a professional RN.

Nurse practitioners, or NPs, are registered nurses who have advanced education and clinical training. NPs can perform routine exams, order tests, prescribe medications, and diagnose minor illnesses. They can perform many of the same duties as a physician, but they cannot diagnose or treat acute or chronic diseases such as meningitis or cancer. NPs typically specialize in one area like physicians do, such as family practice, gynecology, or pediatrics. All NPs have a Master of Science degree in Nursing and a nursing license.

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## Teenagers and Chores

By Ceridian Corp January 8, 2004 (abridged)

There's a reason why so many parenting experts refer to the struggle to get teenagers to do household chores as "the chore wars." Sometimes getting your teenager to complete chores reliably can feel like a battle, but it's a battle worth fighting. Though they seem like mundane duties, chores can help your teenager learn about responsibility, consequences, and what it means to be a contributing member of a household. Chores are also a way to help prepare your child for life on her own. After all, if she never has to take out the garbage, do laundry, or fix a meal, how will she know how to do all of these necessities once she's living on her own?

Even if your teenager has been doing chores regularly since early childhood, he may start resisting chores now. Teenagers tend to rebel against chores because they are at a stage in their life when they are struggling to be independent and free of the routines and bonds of childhood, and chores are often a reminder that they are still subject to parental oversight.

Your teenager may question the necessity of chores, or "forget" about them for weeks at a time. And the work you put in getting her to do chores can feel like more of a burden than just doing the job yourself. By learning how to be responsible for tasks even when they don't want to, your teenager will develop a sense of self-discipline. So don't give up on chores!

Below you'll find some ideas for getting your teenager to do chores without constantly hounding him.

- Review the list of chores you are asking your teenager to complete. For example, if you've been requiring your teenager to clean the living room and bathroom once a week but he never seems to be home to complete either task, you may find it easier to change the duties than to continually ask him to do his chores. Sit down with your teenager and ask him what he thinks he could do to contribute to the household. If your teenager has a driver's license, consider asking him to do the grocery shopping with a list once a week or pick up clothes from the dry cleaners, both of which are chores that your child can do independently. If your child doesn't have a driver's license, he can still do any number of things at home, including laundry, cleaning up after meals, taking care of pets, collecting and bringing out trash or recycling, changing sheets, or washing the car.

- Agree on what the consequences will be if your child doesn't do her chores. Following through on these consequences can be tough, but it's the best way to teach your child that she has to be responsible. Talk with your child about what appropriate consequences might be. Ask her to suggest some consequences that she thinks might be fair.

Remember to be realistic -- even the most well behaved, responsible teenagers will probably need occasional reminders about their chores. ☐

Most doctors' offices also have medical assistants and licensed nurses on staff. Medical assistants usually do routine tasks such as taking medical histories, drawing blood, or removing stitches. They cannot diagnose or treat patients or write prescriptions. Medical assistants do not have to complete special training in most states, but some may attend a certification program.

Licensed nurses fall into two categories: Licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) work under the supervision of doctors and RNs. They provide nursing care that requires technical training, but not the long-term, in-depth training required to become a physician or RN. Licensed nurses are required to complete a nursing program that is usually about nine months long and pass a state-licensing exam.

All of these medical specialists play vital roles in the health care system. Doctor's offices rely on PAs, NPs, and RNs to help them handle patient loads and deliver efficient and informed care. Many of these professionals handle routine medical issues such as physicals so that doctor can concentrate on other issues. If you're not sure what qualifications the professionals in your doctor's office have, just ask. ☐

## Pearly Whites

By Ceridian Corp January 8, 2004 (abridged)

Tooth whitening procedures and products are a multi-million dollar market these days. There are two main ways to get whiter teeth: a dentist's office procedure or an over-the-counter product. Whitening procedures in the dentist's office can cost up to \$600, and often result in noticeably whiter teeth. The procedure involves coating your teeth with a hydrogen peroxide-based gel, then blasting them with strong lights to enhance bleaching.

Other options include whitening trays, which are available in dentist's offices and over the counter. These are thin, plastic molds filled with a whitening agent, which are placed over the teeth for about an hour a day. Plastic trays can cost anywhere from \$20 in a drugstore to \$500 custom-fit models from a dentist. The least expensive -- and often least successful -- options are the many strips, wands, and toothpastes that are available over the counter.

Medical experts haven't done much research on the effects of whitening procedures, but many people report that their teeth feel more sensitive to heat, cold, or pressure after treatment. But if you use known products according to the directions, you should get whiter teeth without any side effects. ☐

DoD will implement the new contract in 2004 as a key part of the transformation of the military health system. The DoD and the outgoing and incoming contractors will take every measure to assure uniformed services beneficiaries of a seamless transition of the retail pharmacy and all other healthcare benefits.

The contract was awarded to ESI on Sept. 26, 2003. The total value of the contract, which does not include the cost of prescriptions paid with government funds, is estimated at \$245,439,268 for the period of performance, including the 6-month base period and five 1-year option periods. The transition to the new retail pharmacy contract began on Oct. 1, 2003, with the turnover of responsibility for delivery of retail pharmacy services occurring nationwide on April 1, 2004. The contract was competitively procured with seven offers received, and the Tricare Management Activity, Aurora, Colo., is the contracting activity. ESI was previously awarded a contract in September 2002, to provide a worldwide full-service mail order pharmacy program to the 8.9 million Military Health System beneficiaries. Φ

## Helping Your Child Deal with the "In" Crowd

By Ceridian Corp January 8, 2004 (abridged)

As a parent, you probably know how much importance teenagers attach to belonging to an "in" crowd. You may be surprised to hear that many younger children are also aware of cliques or exclusive groups and where they do -- or don't -- fit into them.

For the first few years of life, children see themselves mainly as part of a family, the cornerstone of their identity. That begins to change after they start school and are exposed to other social influences. Research has shown that as young as age 8, children begin to define themselves in terms of a peer group and its status. Even in elementary or middle school, they may think of themselves as "popular" or "unpopular." Your lovable second-grader may be crushed because she didn't get invited to a birthday party, or because a group wouldn't let her sit with them in the lunchroom. How can you help?

First, try not to overreact by making harsh criticisms of an unfriendly child or group. Remember that your child probably feels hurt because she likes the people who excluded her or wants their friendship. If you criticize them, your child may think that she's "wrong" to feel bad. Instead, acknowledge her painful emotions. You might say, "You sound sad that you didn't get an invitation to Bethany's party," or "It must have been hard when the older girls wouldn't let you sit with them. What did you do after that?"

Your child may bounce back quickly from a single incident if you keep it in perspective. But what if the wounding snubs continue? It's important to make sure she understands that the situation isn't her fault. When they feel left out, many children

assume they've done something to cause others to reject them. You might ask your child why she thinks someone excluded her. Then help her explore the reasons why someone might act in unfriendly ways -- for example, the person might be shy, jealous, upset about something unrelated that happened at home, or not realize that it's fun to get to know new people.

As you talk about snubs, your child might find it reassuring to hear about your own experiences with groups. Being snubbed is upsetting to children partly because they may not realize that the situation won't last forever, or they may not know how to make other friends. Your child might find it a comfort to hear about a similar experience in your childhood and how you coped with it. If the boys in Little League made fun of you, did you go out for another sport, join the Scouts, or sing in a choir where you made new friends? Be sure to talk about similar things your child could do to meet people, and help him get started. Give him many opportunities to make friends who share his values, whether he finds them in 4-H Club or Saturday-morning judo or karate class.

It can also be helpful to talk to your child about "good" and "bad" popularity. Contrary to the impression left by some movies and television shows, not all people are popular because they are rich, athletic, or handsome. Some have a lot of friends because they are genuinely kind and caring people. To help your child understand the distinction, you might ask her to tell you about her favorite people (or characters in books) and why she likes them. Would she like Harry Potter if he were mean to his friends? If Harry used his powers to try to hurt good people instead of to help them? By talking to your child about such issues, you can help her see that she can have good friends without imitating the kind of hurtful behavior that she has experienced.

Finally, make sure your child sees you treating other people as you would want them to treat her. When you're kind to people who don't have expensive clothes or prestigious jobs, you show that people don't have to belong to an "in" crowd to be accepted and valued. Like most children, she's likely to have many struggles with popularity along the way. But she'll have seen that good people can make friends who will treat them with the respect they deserve. Φ

## Learning About Home Schooling

By Ceridian Corp January 8, 2004 (abridged)

Home schooling is one of the fastest-growing forms of education in the U.S. There are now many networks for homeschoolers, and many companies offer year-by-year curriculum packages for parents educating children at home. Some networks hold annual conferences that allow home-schooled children to compete in spelling bees, put out yearbooks, and attend graduation ceremonies. If you'd like to learn more, you might begin by visiting the Web site [www.askeric.org](http://www.askeric.org), an online resource center with a vast database of articles on many topics related to education. Φ

## Breathing Lessons

By Ceridian Corp January 8, 2004 (abridged)

One of the best ways to deal with stress and other strong emotions is also the most natural -- proper breathing. It may seem hard to believe, but there are right ways and wrong ways to breathe. And if you're like most people, you're probably not living up to your full breath potential. Study after study has shown that proper breathing techniques can relieve stress and help you feel calmer. Good breathing techniques can also help you manage strong emotions, such as fear (like right before an important presentation at work), pain (think of how breathing is used during childbirth), anger, and stress. And once you've learned how to harness the power of breathing, you will have it at your disposal any time and any place you need it.

How do you know if you're breathing properly? Because breathing isn't something that most of us think about, you may not even be aware that you could improve your breathing habits. But if you make an effort to pay attention to your breathing, you may notice that when you're stressed, scared, or angry, you tend to have fast, shallow breaths or an out-of-breath feeling. This could mean that you would benefit from learning some new techniques for breathing.

Breathing techniques have been used to achieve better health and well-being for centuries. Why is the way you breathe so important? Breathing is how we introduce oxygen into our circulatory and respiratory systems. It may seem like an obvious process, but many people don't get a full load of oxygen when they breathe, which can lead to heightened anxiety or fatigue. Oxygen also plays an important role in other bodily functions, including digestion. In general, the more oxygen you're taking in the better, and the best way to get more oxygen is to breathe more deeply and slowly. Below you'll find some information on deep breathing as well as some exercises you can use to feel more relaxed in stressful situations.

One of the best ways to learn about deep breathing -- also known as diaphragmatic breathing because it comes from the diaphragm -- is to feel it. Your diaphragm is a large, curved muscle that separates your lungs from your abdomen. The diaphragm should do most of the work of breathing, but many people take shallow breaths, using their chest muscles instead of their diaphragms.

Lie down or sit comfortably and place one hand at the bottom of your ribs, just above the waistline, to feel your diaphragm. Place your other hand on your chest. Take a normal breath. If most of the movement that you feel is in your chest, you're not using your diaphragm. Now take a deep, slow breath through your nose and bring all the air down to your diaphragm. You should feel an expansion of the diaphragm, instead of your chest, as it fills with air. Then breathe out

slowly through your mouth, taking twice as long as you did to inhale. Let the hand on your stomach move inward as your diaphragm empties. That's it!

You can use diaphragmatic breathing whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or angry. It can work anywhere -- right before a stressful meeting at work, in the middle of a heated discussion with your partner, or when you're stuck in a major traffic jam and tension is running high. Just take 10 deep, slow breaths using your diaphragm and really try to concentrate on your breathing. Φ

## Emotional Eating

By Ceridian Corp January 8, 2004 (abridged)

Have you ever noticed that sometimes a football game is better when you're enjoying it with some chips and a beer? When you're bored or feeling down, do you tend to migrate to the refrigerator?

Many people tend to eat emotionally, a practice that can be dangerous for the waistline and for your emotional well-being. When your emotions trigger eating, you may not even be aware of how much you're consuming or even the fact that you might not be hungry at all. And while food may temporarily make you feel better after a fight with your partner or when you're feeling down, it doesn't get to the root of the problem.

To find out if your emotions influence your eating habits, keep a short food journal for a few days. Write down what you ate and how you were feeling when you ate it. If you notice that overeating is connected to your emotional state (that piece of cake you had right after an argument), you may need to find some new, healthier ways of coping, such as taking a walk, listening to music, or talking to someone you trust. Φ

## GREETINGS

### Questions or Comments

If you have any questions or comments related to anything in this newsletter--Email Tony Raimo at [anthony.raimo@usarec.army.mil](mailto:anthony.raimo@usarec.army.mil)

Don't see something that you would like to see? Let me know!