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A publication of

LifePath
options for independence

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THE GOOD LIFE

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Personal Care Attendant Lead Nurse Laura Dunn

By Janis Merrell,
Editor of *The Good Life*

Laura Dunn is a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) lead nurse at LifePath. She has worked at LifePath for three and a half years. Her responsibilities include completing in-home assessments and the MassHealth Application for PCA Services. She also assists with training new nurses. According to Laura, “A typical day is a mix of phone calls/emails, in-home evaluations, and writing up evaluations.”

The PCA Program at LifePath fosters independence in individuals with disabilities by supporting them in the management of their own home-based services. To qualify for the PCA Program, an individual must require physical assistance with two activities of daily living, such as mobility and transfers, medication assistance, bathing and grooming, dressing and undressing, toileting, and feeding.

Participants find and hire their own Personal Care Attendants and pay them with funding from MassHealth. PCAs can include family members and friends, although spouses are not yet eligible (legislators are working to change this).

If PCA participants need help managing the employment of PCAs, they can utilize volunteer surrogates who can help hire, train, and supervise their PCAs. Surrogates can be family members, friends, or volunteers. As of January 2020, participants can also utilize Administrative Proxies to assist with certain functions of PCA management.

An Administrative Proxy can be the participant’s legal guardian, a family member, or any other person who is responsible for performing certain administrative functions related to PCA management that the participant is unable or unwilling to perform.

According to Laura, the PCA Program helps consumers maintain their independence, manage their own care, and stay in the comfort of their own home, safely. When asked what Laura finds rewarding about her work, she says, “I find it very rewarding that it helps reduce the need for facility-based care, helping consumers be able to stay in their own homes.”

Prior to working at LifePath, Laura worked in a substance abuse treatment facility as a dosing nurse. She decided to become a PCA lead nurse because she was looking for a different type of nursing that she had never done before. Laura lives in Royalston with her husband, her 2 kids, 2 dogs and a cat. She says, “They all keep me busy!”

Laura recently did an evaluation along with an Occupational Therapist at a long-term nursing facility, to help a



Laura Dunn



I love working in the PCA program, we have a great team!



consumer get the assistance she needed to be able to live back in her own home. When asked about challenges in her role, Laura says, “One challenging thing is doing evaluations for consumers with terminal illnesses—it can be heartbreaking. I am glad we are there to help support them and their needs.”

Laura sums up her experience at LifePath with “I love working in the PCA program, we have a great team!”

If you are interested in PCA services for you or a loved one, please contact our Information and Caregiver Resource Center (ICRC) by calling 413-773-5555, X1230 or by email at info@LifePathMA.org.

If you are interested in becoming a PCA, you can register on the statewide PCA Directory (<https://www.masspcadirectory.org/>) or call 1-888-MASSPCA.

Openings Available at LifePath’s Community Engagement Center!

LifePath’s Community Engagement Center (CEC) is an innovative social day program that provides respite and resources for caregivers, while providing socialization and meaningful activities for participants, two days per week. We currently have openings in our Wednesday/Friday program group. To learn more or to request a referral, please call our Information & Caregiver Resource Center (ICRC) at 413-773-5555 x1230, or email info@lifepathma.org.

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- Hang up if the caller tries to pressure you.
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- Resist the pressure to act quickly.
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