

IMPORTANT EMPLOYEE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Lexington Champions

Congratulations to **Maria Betts** who recently graduated with a doctorate degree from Walden University!

Way to go, Maria! We're so proud of you!



to our Recruitment Raffle Winners!

DECEMBER

Makayla Vogt—Western Fulton County
Alexandria Poyfair—Eastern Fulton County
Mabel Welsch-Murphy—Schoharie County
Nasiah Cobb—Albany County

JANUARY

Lisa Mosher—Western Fulton County
Katie Marriot—Eastern Fulton County
Keith Storm—Schoharie County
Safirah Milien—Albany County

Lexington Milestones

Congratulations and thank you to the following employees celebrating milestones through January 31, 2022

ONE YEAR

Mariama Balde, Residential, 1/04
Jaylah Jackson, Residential, 1/21
Jaytyanna Lamarre, Residential, 1/19
Safirah Milien, Residential, 1/19
Olivia Stewart, Residential, 1/17
Rebekah Wildman, Medical Services, 1/19

FIVE YEARS

Stephanie Andrews, Residential, 1/03
Carrie Durrin, Clinical, 1/03
Heather Introne, Residential, 1/30
Katlyn Ladd, Administration, 1/03
Qui'Arah Oliver, Residential, 1/03
Lauren Pica, Residential, 1/30
Rita Williams, Residential, 1/30
Bonnie Baryk, Clinical, 1/07
Tiffany Humphrey, Residential, 1/30
Mikayla Mitchell, Residential, 1/03
Melissa Stewart, Residential, 1/11

TEN YEARS

Sandra Beck, Residential, 1/03
Mike Hernandez, Residential, 1/03
Armando Iorio, Residential, 1/08
Ellen Lair, Residential, 1/16
Jennifer Mills, Kingsboro Catering/ Senior Meals, 1/21
Annette Thompson, Residential, 1/16
Nicole Metz, Residential, 1/09

FIFTEEN YEARS

Thomas Deering, Residential, 1/02
Lauren Repholz, Human Resources, 1/02
Adria Simonds, Residential, 1/02
Elizabeth Veeder, Residential, 1/08
Emma Vokins, Residential, 1/02
Joan Leppig, Residential, 1/08

TWENTY YEARS

Rachael Salvione, Residential, 1/07
Linda Shepard, Residential, 1/07
Patricia Stanton, Residential, 1/07
Valerie Wilson, Administration, 1/07

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Tamra Renzo, Residential, 1/06

RETIREMENT

Sharon Diefendorf, Employment Resources,
45 Years of Service, 1/07

Important Notice About OPWDD Bonuses for DSPs

Shaloni recently announced four new OPWDD funded bonuses. A copy of her letter can be found by clicking [here](#).

She and Dan also held employee meetings to help explain the bonus programs, the eligibility rules, the amounts and when they would be paid. We have summarized notes of the meetings for you below. We have also included the questions that were asked along with the answers that were given in the meetings. You can click [here](#) if you want to watch a recoding of the meeting.

FAQ's From Employee Meetings to Discuss Bonus Announcement

- The American Rescue Act was passed by the federal government and was intended to provide relief to businesses who were hard hit by COVID. The money was provided to states to help with recruitment and retention of workers. Our field was included in the NYS plan submitted to the federal government last July. The federal government approved the NYS plan last November. We expect to receive the money by 3/31/22, but we do not know for sure. This is one-time money. The amount provided to Lexington is expected to be about \$15 million and will be used for the four bonuses that Lexington announced.
- Eligibility – OPWDD determined the eligible employees to be those DSP's who are coded in the "200" category in our financial reporting system (see attachment that was sent out with this announcement).
 - * Lexington has no option to change the coding of our employees at this time because OPWDD will be auditing these funds. So, any employee who is coded outside the 200 category is not eligible for the bonus, even though they may have pitched in during COVID-19.
 - * Flame employees are eligible because their code is a DSP within the 200 categories.
 - * All clinical and medical staff are code 300, so are not included.
 - * LPN's/DSPs are the only group of LPN's that are included due to their job duties.
 - * You must be employed on the date that the check is given out per OPWDD rules (they want this money to help with recruitment/retention).
- Lexington will not retain any money from these funds. All funds received will be distributed to eligible employees.

COVID-19 service bonus – paid out on December 15, 2021

- \$1000 for full time DSP's, as defined by OPWDD in the "200 category".
- Eligibility was for those who worked at least 90 days from 3/17/20 – 9/1/21 and continued to be actively employed when the bonus was paid on 12/15/21.
- If an employee has a secondary job as a DSP, those hours qualify.
- The money has not been received yet, so Lexington advanced this money and supplemented it with \$550,000 for those who did not meet the DSP criteria as defined by OPWDD. \$500 was given to non-DSP's, and an additional amount up to \$500 was given to recognize senior employees, and pro-rated if employees were not full time.

Vaccination bonus – will be paid out on March 11, 2022

- For all full time DSP's (as defined by OPWDD) who were fully vaccinated by January 14, 2021, are eligible.
- \$500 for all full-time employees, prorated to \$250 for part time employees working 20-30 hours per week, and \$125 for employees with less than 20 hours per week.
- If an employee has a secondary job as a DSP, those hours qualify.
- Remember, the bonus eligibility is defined by OPWDD.
- The funds have not been received but Lexington will advance the funds and pay this out to employees on March 11.
- Employees must be actively employed on March 11 to receive this.

Longevity bonus – to be paid out once OPWDD sends the funds

- When this money is received from OPWDD, we have 90 days to disburse it to employees. Lexington is not advancing these funds.
- Eligibility – DSP's (as defined by OPWDD) who worked between 4/1/2020 – 3/31/2021.
- People hired after March 31, 2021, do not qualify for this bonus.
- Employees must be actively employed on the date that each check is given out.
- The amount will be paid out in three monthly installments.
- OPWDD will take our 2019 records and see what our direct care costs were by stripping away anything that is not base wages (OT, differentials, premium and bonuses) but will include any benefit time hours. They will use these wages to figure the 20% amount they will pay to us to distribute to eligible employees.

Lexington's Mission

We empower people with autism and disabilities to live their best lives, every day, by partnering with their families, our employees and our community.



Longevity bonus *(continued)*

- Calculation – the estimated funds for this bonus are about \$7 million which will be divided by all the employees who earned wages during the time period noted above to come up with a percentage. That percentage will be paid to all employees. The percentage will be 20% or more.
- For each employee, base wages will be calculated, and you will receive 20% of the base wages for the time-period of 4/1/2020 – 3/31/2021.
- Our accounting team will complete a final reconciliation of the funds at the end of the three months. If there is additional money remaining, it will be divided amongst the eligible employees at that time.

Retention bonus

- OPWDD has given agencies an option to develop their own plan because of unique retention/recruitment challenges.

**Lexington's plan includes three parts. Funding the salary bonus given in July 2021. Increasing the employee referral bonus from \$500 to \$1500 per successful referral. And providing a Temporary Monthly Gratitude Bonus.*

- The funds must be spent within six months of receiving the money from OPWDD.
- DSP's (as defined by OPWDD) who worked between 4/1/21 -3/31/22 qualify for this bonus.
- If hired after 3/31/22, Lexington's internal budget will cover the costs of this bonus.
- If an employee has a secondary job as a DSP, these hours qualify for the bonus.
- Bonus period - this started on January 30 and will last 180 days, or 6 months after we receive the money. We do not know when we will receive the money. We will announce future check dates as we know more.
- Calculations are based on hours worked as follows:
 - * Monday – Thursday from 7 am -11 am and Friday from 7 am - 3 pm, base wages only will get an additional 15% added
 - * Monday – Thursday from 11 pm - 7 am and the entire weekend, including Friday evening shifts, will get an additional 25% added
- Gratitude bonus – this is open to anyone working DSP hours; if you work a secondary job, you can be eligible for this.

***Excellence is the gradual result
of always striving
to do better***

– Pat Riley

Q. When COVID was first announced, I was in transportation, but I went into a house and clocked in under their cost center, but did not use a different job code, does that make me eligible for the longevity bonus based on those hours worked?

A. *The cost center does not matter. Eligibility is based on your job code.*

Q. Is this a COVID bonus?

A. *It is part of the American Rescue Plan that the federal government passed.*

Q. How will we know the total amount of the longevity bonus?

A. *Our accounting team will be doing calculations shortly and will let employees know the amount of their bonus.*

Q. So, if you retire before the pay date, am I correct in saying that employee would not receive a payment?

A. *Yes. You must be an active employee on each pay date to be eligible.*

Q. If someone had a leave, like family or medical leave, would they get it?

A. *The temporary monthly gratitude bonus is based on hours worked, so no.*

Q. The longevity bonus is paid in three installments based on wages earned between 4/1/2020 – 3/31/2021. So, if the employee worked as a DSP during these dates and is still actively employee on the three pay dates, they will receive the bonus. If you used any benefit time during this time, your wages would include this.

A. *If you are on leave on dates when the paychecks come out, you are still eligible. The criteria is that you must be employed on the date of the paycheck.*

Q. What about a cost-of-living raise?

A. *We did a pay raise in July 2021. We are told the NYS budget does include a cost-of-living raise, but it is not a final budget yet. We will let employees hear as soon as we know more.*

Q. Is this bonus money taxed?

A. *Yes.*

Q. For the Temporary Monthly Gratitude Bonus, does OT count for hours worked?

A. *Yes, all hours worked count but at your base wage only.*

Q. Will this be coming in checks or direct deposits?

A. *Bonus checks will be a live check, not direct deposit. The checks will go to the Managers for distribution.*

Q. Are residential LPNs included in the bonus?

A. *The group of LPN/DSPs who do shift work in our homes are included.*

Q. If Lexington puts aside money for a \$1500 employee referral and does not use it all, what happens to that money?

A. *At the end of the 180 days, we will reconcile all the monies that come in from OPWDD and anything leftover will be divided amongst the eligible employees and given to them. All funds will be distributed to employees.*

Q. Will the longevity bonus installments be the dates in the memo?

A. *No, the dates included in the memo are the first three dates of the gratitude bonus. We do not know the dates for the longevity bonus yet because we have not received the money.*

Q. When will the Temporary Monthly Gratitude Bonus checks be paid?

A. *The first three bonus dates are February 25, March 22 and April 19. Then once per month thereafter until we reach the deadline for its use which is 180 days after receipt of the funds.*

PTO/Unpaid Leave Clarification For Fulton and Albany Employees Only

We have received some questions from our full-time Fulton and Albany employees about Lexington's transition to the new PTO system in January 2022, and the ability to take time off without pay.

Under the former sick/personal/vacation system, eligible employees received an annual up-front vacation award on the first of the year and could use that time as needed throughout the year.

With the new PTO system, we award PTO each pay period instead of as a lump sum on January 1st each year. (Remember, your PTO award is based on your length of service and your regular work schedule.) During this 2022 transition year from the old vacation/sick/personal time off to the new PTO system, we allowed employees to put up to 2 weeks of accrued vacation time into their PTO bucket in January. Their remaining eligible vacation was paid out in a check on January 14th.

Many of our long-term employees were used to carrying over more than 2 weeks of vacation into the next year and some had already made vacation plans for early in 2022, assuming they would have more than 2 weeks of accrued vacation time available to them. So, for this transition year only, we explained in our benefits meetings that any employee in good standing who was in this situation was encouraged to speak with their manager to discuss

using "unpaid" time to cover any portion of their early 2022 vacation that exceeded their PTO balance.

Employees can not use unpaid time off for any reason other than an already planned early 2022 vacation in which they did not yet have enough accrued PTO.

To clarify, employees may not take time off without pay if they have available PTO. During this transition year, if you are an employee in good standing and do not yet have enough PTO to cover your planned absence (but you would have had time available under the old vacation system), we would make an exception and approve unpaid time off – *but only if you have no PTO available*.

After this 2022 transition year, taking unpaid time off is not generally permitted unless you are on an approved leave of absence.

Further information will be sent out in the coming days with helpful information regarding our benefits and how to use NYSSL.

If you have any questions about your PTO, how it is awarded, or any other benefit questions, please call the Human Resources Department for assistance at (518) 775-5423.

New Whistleblower Law

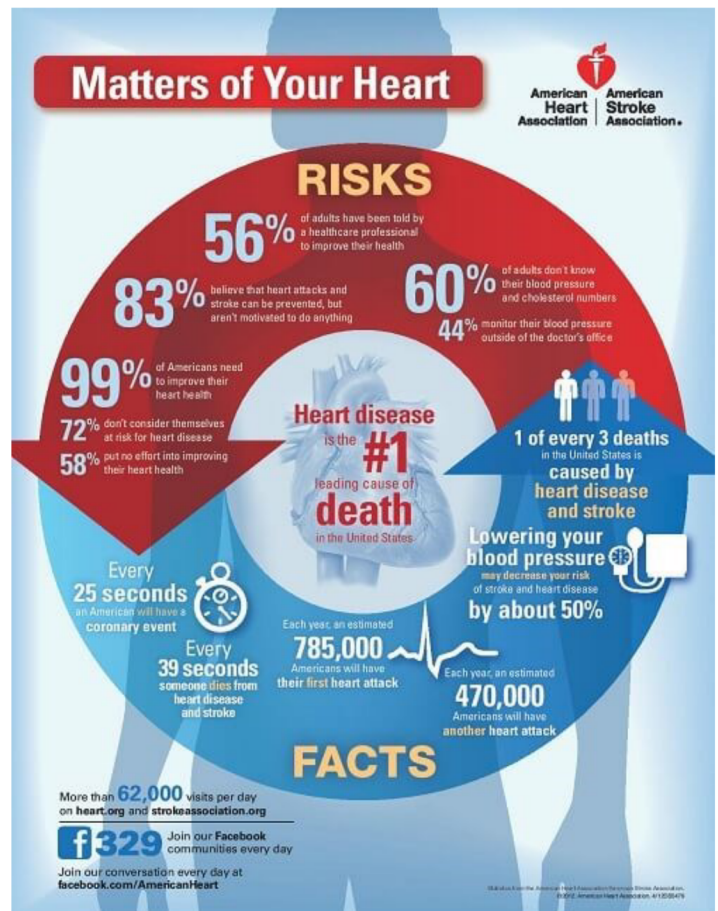
Employers are required to notify employees about New York State's amended Labor Law Section 740, which became effective on January 26, 2022.

The original law made it illegal for an employer to retaliate against an employee who reported or threatened to report their employer's illegal conduct related to a public health or safety violation. The amended law, effective this coming Wednesday, maintains that purpose but includes several important expansions that will significantly impact employers in New York.

The updated Whistleblower Law now says that a New York employer shall not retaliate against their employee because such employee discloses, or threatens to disclose an activity, policy or practice of the employer that the employee *reasonably believes* is in violation of law or that the employee *reasonably believes* poses a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety. *A violation need not have actually occurred* for the employee to be afforded whistleblower protection.

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to HR for clarification at (518) 775-5423.

Let Valentine's Day be your reminder to think about your heart health.



New FSA Debit Cards Have Arrived

As we previously announced, Rose and Kiernan will be switching the administration of our employee's flexible spending accounts (FSA) and HRA accounts to their sister company, American Benefits Group (ABG) effective January 1, 2022. ABG offers an improved website and a mobile app for access to your information at any time.

Your new debit cards should have arrived after a slight delay due to issues as a result of COVID-19. Please start using the new cards right away!

Free EAP Training Classes

Take advantage of free training benefits to boost your skills!

Looking to sharpen up your job skills this year? Good news! You can access more than 10,000 online trainings available 24/7. Courses are 3 to 60 minutes in length so it's easy to find ones that fit even the busiest schedules. Plus, you can earn certifications by completing courses. Best of all, there is no cost to you!

This training is available to you and members of your household from your EAP. [Click here](#) for a flyer to learn more about this great benefit!

Free Test and Mask Giveaway

The Federal government is giving away free COVID-19 Tests. You can obtain 4 free tests per home address if you register at www.covidtests.gov.

You can also get a free N95 mask issued by the Federal Government at the following locations, among others: CVS, Rite Aid, Sam's Club, Walgreens and Walmart, among others. Anyone who is interested in getting a free mask, should call their local stores to confirm availability. Masks are limited to 3 per person and only available while supplies last. No purchase is necessary to receive them.

For a full list of participating providers, click here: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/retail-pharmacy-program/participating-pharmacies.html>



Student Loan Forgiveness Update



If you are working toward meeting the requirements for student loan forgiveness, please see the link below for updated information from the US Department of Education that will help simplify the process.

<https://pslcoalition.org/resources/pslf-limited-waiver-fact-sheet/>



For assistance with any Human Resources related matter or information, please click here for a complete list of the Human Resources team and their responsibilities:

<https://bit.ly/3oBPace>

This newsletter will be archived at the following link:

<https://thearclexington.org/hr-updates>

Managers, please post and distribute to all employees.

Who's Who in Human Resources

HUMAN RESOURCES CONTACT INFORMATION

Elizabeth Karis – Division Director (404) 556-0985

Katie Epting, Director of Human Resources (518) 295-8130 x222 (Schoharie) Monday, Wednesday and Thursday,
518-775-5336 (Fulton) Tuesday and Friday

Mary Shafer, Administration Support/Receptionist: (518) 295-8130 x201

Human Resources & Benefits/Safety & Wellness

Fran Schneider – Assistant Director of Human Resources: (518) 775-5425

- Employee Relations, Policy Interpretation/Development, Job Descriptions

Michelle Peryea – Safety Program Coordinator: (518) 775-5420

- Manages Safety and Wellness Programs, Covid management support response

Bill Roe – Safety Manager: (518) 775-5473

- Workers Compensation Claims Management, Injury and Accident Investigations, Safety Training

Kaleena Castiglione – Human Resources Generalist/Leave Specialist: (518) 775-5426

- Administers FMLA, NY PFL, Short-Term-Disability, Long-Term-Disability, Employment Separations, COBRA

Jean Ginter – Employee Services Coordinator: (518) 775-5424

- Administers FMLA, NY PFL, Short-Term-Disability, assists with Safety and Wellness activities

Courtney Mickels – HR Generalist/Benefits Specialist: (518) 775-5422 & (518) 295-8130 x262

- Benefit administration, name changes, Perks, 401(k) administration, Apprenticeship Program; RKSolution/Employee Navigator assistance, Retiree Liaison

Employment

Ray Gawlak – Recruitment Manager: (518) 775-5373

- External Recruitment, Pre-Employment and Hiring Processes

Natasha Hayes – Employment Specialist: (518) 775-5423

- Internal and External job postings, transfer applications, employment verifications

Kiah Powell – Recruitment Coordinator: (518) 775-5307

Doug Blanc – Recruitment Coordinator: (518) 775-5439 (Part-Time/Evenings)

Vacant – Recruitment Coordinator:

Karlene Rulison – Employment/HRIS Specialist: (518) 775-5486

- Status Changes, Tax Withholdings, Questions regarding pay rates, paid time off accruals, System changes (benefit enrollment, transfers, pay changes, name changes), Tuition Assistance requests.

Dylan Goomansingh – Human Resources Tech

Training

Lauren Repholz – Training Manager: (518) 736-3885

- Leadership Training, New Hire Training Program Oversight

Tina Goldswor – Onboarding Manager: (518) 736-4276 Fulton

Heidi Blinsinger – Staff Trainer: (518) 736-3883

- New Hire and Update Training

Vacant – Staff Trainer: (518) 736-3884

- New Hire and Update Training

Becca Grossman – Weekend Staff Trainer

- New Hire Training, weekend training support

Laura Empie – Administrative Assistant: (518) 736-3882