

Shirley Beer, 78, Pennsylvania Health Consumer Advocate

Shirley Beer, Chairperson of the Consumer Sub Committee of the Medical Assistance Advisory Committee to the Pennsylvania Medicaid agency and a long time consumer advocate from Kittanning, PA, died in Los Angeles on June 14, after a brief illness. Ms. Beer was attending a board meeting of the National Health Law Program in May when she was hospitalized with problems related to coronary disease.

Shirley Beer was born in Kittanning and raised two children with her late husband who was blind. She came to consumer activism as a board member of the Armstrong County Legal Services Program. As a welfare and Medicaid beneficiary, Ms. Beer fought to obtain improvements in services for low-income people in her community from all agencies serving them. Her efforts resulted in reimbursement for transportation to medical providers for rural and other Pennsylvania Medicaid recipients, increased screening of children for health problems and service with dignity for all persons served by government programs.

After many years helping rural Western Pennsylvania residents, she became active in state and national advocacy, serving on the boards of the Pennsylvania Legal Services Corporation and the State Bar of Pennsylvania's Interest on Lawyers Trusts Accounts as well as the National Health Law Program. Despite multiple medical conditions she travelled extensively to Harrisburg and national advocacy meetings. Always polite, Shirley developed a strong voice for low income health consumers. Angered by Medicaid recipients having to travel more than fifty miles to see a doctor willing to accept Medicaid and the way in which health care for low income people was exploited by the medical industry at the expense of consumers, she became an articulate advocate.

Ms. Beer's tireless efforts and outstanding contributions to all she undertook will be remembered by all with whom she worked and memorialized in the many policy improvements she accomplished.