

ABCD NEWS

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FY 2007 BUDGET PASSED!!!

After a significant budget impasse between the Senate, Assembly, and the Governor, a budget for Fiscal Year 2007 has been passed. People with developmental disabilities fared well during a difficult fiscal crisis. Below is a description of some of the more significant provisions of the budget for people with developmental disabilities.

Cost of Living Adjustment for Providers \$22 million is appropriated to provide a 1% cost of living for community care providers in both the Department of Human Services and the new Department of Children and Families.

Division of Developmental Disabilities is funded at the level proposed by the Governor. There is \$50 million for an Olmstead initiative “for residential and other support services and infrastructure for individuals transitioning from the developmental centers to the community and from the community services waiting list, and for family support services ...”. An additional \$5 million is available from the Balanced Housing Fund (Department of Community Affairs) for capital expenditures for group homes.

Early Intervention received an addition \$20 million over the level that was proposed by the Governor. This increase is an acknowledgement that Early Intervention needs a long term financing solution. (See article on Page 3 for more information)

Co-pays for prescription drugs for non-dual Medicaid beneficiaries are not included in this bill. The Governor’s budget did include a proposal for co-pays for prescription drugs, for non-emergency use of Emergency Rooms, and for outpatient hospital procedures. In addition, the budget eliminates the proposed prior authorization for psychotropic drugs.

The wrap-around program for dual eligibles for Medicare Part D is continued. The language is allows for “such sums as are necessary” to pay for the co-pays for dual eligibles under Medicare Part D and to pay for any prescriptions not in the formularies. This is excellent language because it allows the State to expend whatever funds are needed rather than limiting the amount of funds (which was what last year’s budget did).

Special Education has been funded at the level proposed in the Governor’s budget. In addition, there is \$19.5 million for in-district programs to train teachers and other services to assist school districts in maintaining children with developmental disabilities in their home schools. (\$15 million for autism and \$4.5 million for other students with developmental disabilities).

ABCD is a statewide organization that provides policy analysis and education related to people with developmental disabilities. ABCD represents member agencies that provide an array of community-based services to more than 8,000 people with multiple physical and developmental disabilities and their families.

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DSP Career Path Forum

The 2006 Direct Support Professionals Career Path Forum was held at the New Jersey Hospital Association Conference Center on Thursday, May 25, 2006. The Forum was sponsored by ABCD and the other members of the New Jersey Workforce Development Coalition to explore the creation of a statewide career path program that would link competency-based training to salary increases and promotions for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Ninety people from all over New Jersey participated, including a significant number of people who worked as DSPs or who had been DSPs at one point in their careers.

Our primary speaker and consultant was Amy Gerowitz, from the Ohio PATHS program, a growing career path process in Ohio. We also had a speaker from SPIN, an agency in Northwest Philadelphia, who has developed a national reputation for its professional development programs. Three New Jersey agencies that have developed their own version of a career path program were part of a panel discussion: The Arc of Mercer County, Bancroft Neurohealth, Inc., and Matheny Medical and Educational Center, Inc.

Each working group reported back to a general session with a summary of its discussion and recommendations for action steps. The Workforce Development Coalition Steering Committee met on June 6 to evaluate the Forum and begin planning its next steps. If you would like to learn more about the work group reports, the action steps the groups recommended, or the Coalition's future plans a complete copy of the *2006 DSP Career Path Forum Summary Report* can be found on our website at:

In order to keep the momentum going, ABCD and its Workforce Development Coalition partners, would like to encourage six simple steps to help you and your organization move in a positive direction in terms of strengthening your organization by supporting your direct care staff.

1. Learn more about the issues. Share copies of this newsletter, the *2006 DSP Career Path Forum Summary Report*, and the recent federal report on workforce development. All are available on the ABCD website.
2. If you want to be part of the Workforce Development Coalition listserv, email bill.gaventa@umdnj.edu.
3. If you want to be on one of the working groups, contact:

Organizational Culture:	Brian Horsmon, 856-348-1157, bhorsmon@bnh.org
Curriculum/Credentials:	Bill Gaventa, 732-235-9404, bill.gaventa@umdnj.edu
Structure and Access:	Jonathan Campbell, 609-581-8375, jonathan@abcdnj.org
Resources and Funding:	Keith Kearney, 201-436-2200, kearneykj@yahoo.com

4. Have your agency appoint at least one direct support professional to be part of the New Jersey Direct Support Professional Association. Till further developments, the quickest way to join is to ask to be on the listserv, NJDSPA@lists.umdnj.edu. Email Beth Ong at Elizabeth.ong@umdnj.edu to be put on this listserv. Also think about joining the National Association of Direct Support Professionals, NADSP.
5. Encourage the use of the term "direct support professionals" in your agency and in your communications.
6. If you want someone to come to your agency or organization to talk about this coalition, this career path initiative and related issues, contact Jonathan Campbell at 609-581-8375 or Jonathan@abcdnj.org.

Early Intervention

Adequate funding for EI is imperative. A long term funding solution to EI is needed to support the continued growth rates. Over the past several years, short-term fixes were necessary to ensure adequate funding.

At the end of Fiscal Year 2006, providers were initially informed that they would not receive full reimbursement for services because the Early Intervention had an \$11.5 million shortfall. ABCD and others discussed this issue with Legislators, the Governor's office and others in the Administration. Due to these advocacy efforts, the Administration found the additional funds and providers received their final reimbursement checks for the fiscal year.

The FY07 final budget includes an additional \$20 million in Early Intervention funding. The Department of Health and Senior Services initially estimated a \$20-25 million shortfall. Even with the increased appropriation, additional funding will more than likely be needed in FY'07.

Some in the Administration have discussed the possibility of a cap on services to children and families at approximately \$6,000 per child.

Instead of this proposal, ABCD is advocating for a supplemental appropriation request to account for the growth factor in eligible children. ABCD has been in touch with the Administration and Legislators advocating a supplemental appropriation. ABCD also supports the examination of other long term financing fixes including applying for a federal Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Waiver for Early Intervention as proposed by Senator Karcher in S.223 and mandating that Early Intervention services be part of private health insurance benefit packages. Both of these proposals need to be explored thoroughly.

New Jersey Legislative Administrative Notes

S1090/A2947 Directs Division of Developmental Disabilities to prepare plan to ensure community-based living for certain individuals with developmental disabilities.

Requires the Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities to develop a plan with established benchmarks to ensure that, within eight years of implementation, each resident in a State developmental center who expresses a desire to live in the community, and whose individual habilitation plan recommends a community-based setting, can do so.

This bill has passed both the Senate and the Assembly and is waiting for the Governor's signature.

S1220/A3010 Directs the Department of Education to include information about adult disability services in a booklet for parents of special education students and to require schools to designate staff member as parent liaison.

The bill requires the Department of Education to include in its "Parental Rights in Special Education" booklet information describing services available through, and contact for, State agencies serving people with disabilities.

This bill has passed both the Senate and the Assembly and is waiting for the Governor's signature.

Visit www.abcdnj.org/pubs.html for complete coverage of New Jersey's June Legislative Administrative Notes.

Recent Publications

Legislative Administrative Notes June 2006

A synopsis of legislation that affects individuals with disabilities in the 212th legislature

*Publications available online at www.abcdnj.org.

ABCD Publications Page has new section on Direct Support Professionals (DSP)-Workforce Development

Currently, there is a summary report of the 2006 New Jersey DSP Forum that took place in May. The report outlines future steps needed to develop a statewide career path. There is also a link to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report on the supply of DSPs.

<http://www.abcdnj.org/pubs.html>

Important Dates

July

26: Strengthening Inclusive Ministries and Congressional Supports: A Summer Networking Day

The Boggs Center, New Brunswick 10:00 am
<http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter>

Hold These Dates!

Fall 2006 DDD Lecture Series:

October 6 Woodbridge, NJ
October 20 Woodbridge, NJ
October 27 Mt. Laurel, NJ
November 17 Mt. Laurel, NJ

Spotlight on an ABCD Member Agency Passaic County Elks

The Passaic County Elks Cerebral Palsy Center was established in 1947 as a treatment center for children with special needs. The CP Center, a pioneer in the rehabilitation field for children with special needs, continues to provide services to more than 250 families through programs designed to meet the needs of each individual with developmental disabilities.

Passaic County Elks Cerebral Palsy Treatment Center provides preschool, elementary, and high school programs, as well as adult medical day care. The CP Center also provides a variety of therapy services, including physical, occupational, and speech therapy, as well as assistive technology.

Passaic County Elks Cerebral Palsy Center's mission is to enable individuals with disabilities the opportunity to achieve the highest potential as productive citizens.

They accomplish this by employing deeply committed, specialized staff members who provide a positive foundation in a setting that includes educational, medical, vocational, and social supports.

William G. Weiss, ED.D., Executive Director of the Center is the chair of the on ABCD's Special Education Committee and is Vice President of ABCD's Board.

For more information about Passaic County Elks please visit their website at www.passaiccountyelkspsc.org

ABCD NEWS is published periodically and provides an update on the activities of ABCD and on major issues facing people with multiple and physical developmental disabilities in New Jersey. For an electronic subscription, send your e-mail address to Jonathan@abcdnj.org