

ALLIANCE FOR THE BETTERMENT OF CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES

ABCD NEWS:

“Looking Ahead” Summer Edition

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NJ Budget Signed Into Early Law: Some Victories and Some Disappointment as ABCD Looks Ahead to FY 2008

Summer Edition:

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Using a new budget process, the State Legislature and the Governor announced agreement of the general budget on June 19th and by June 27th the Governor had signed the budget bill into law. This is the earliest a budget has been enacted in modern history.

According to the Legislature and the Governor, budgetary constraints limited the amount of funds for the Cost of Providing Care increase to 3 percent, effective January 1, 2008, rather than 4.1 percent, effective July 1, 2007 which the Cost of Providing Care Coalition had requested. The increase results in a 1.5 % increase for

providers for Fiscal Year 2008. The increase does set the stage for FY 2009 by giving providers a 3% base to work from in the next fiscal year, however, ABCD is disappointed.

The Cost of Providing Care Coalition is already gearing up to advocate for a COPC increase to be tied to the inflation rate and automatically included into the budget in FY 2009 and every year thereafter. As part of the Coalition, ABCD wants to thank everyone who participated in this advocacy effort and we will continue to depend on our partnership with all of you to ensure that returning legislators remain aware and supportive of community providers’ needs and that newcomers to the Senate and Assembly hear us and understand and support our issue.

As part of the Cost of Providing Care increase, Early Intervention (EI) providers received a 3% increase for reimbursement rates, beginning in January 2008. ABCD, representing the Early Intervention Provider Association, advocated for an increase in rates for EI providers. We are appreciative of the increase, however even with this increase the rates have not kept up with inflation. With the 3% increase, providers have received a 6.92% increase since 2004, significantly less than the 12.4% over that time period that the Medicare Economic Index has increased. The Medicare Economic Index is the annualized index that EI rates should be increased according to the Letter of Agreement with the Department of Health and Senior Services.

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 9,000 people with multiple physical and developmental disabilities and their families.

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Once again, advocates won to keep Medicaid co-pays from becoming a reality. For at least the sixth year in a row, the Administration proposed to include some type of co-pays on Medicaid beneficiaries. This year the proposals would have placed as much as \$80 a month in total co-pays for prescription drugs, outpatient hospital services, non-emergency use of the ER, and medical day care. However, a large diverse coalition, called the Coalition for a Moral Budget, that was comprised of advocates, trade groups for the pharmacy industry, and HMOs worked together, along with others in the hospital and medical day care industry, to fight off the co-pays.

The Coalition for a Moral Budget remains concerned that the Administration may again propose Medicaid co-pays next year. We plan to remain vigilant and proactive in educating the Administration and Legislature that any Medicaid co-pays are a barrier to access for needed health services. ABCD plans to continue to work with all of our coalition partners as well with others that are equally concerned about the negative impact on beneficiaries of Medicaid co-pays to ensure that New Jersey remains one of the states that protects access to health care services for people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

The final budget also maintained the Governor's initial proposals for the Division of Developmental Disabilities, including additional funding for Olmstead, a small amount of funds for a waiting list initiative (124 people over four years), and \$1.1 million in additional family support. ABCD is beginning to develop its strategy for the next fiscal year to ensure adequate funding for the Division.

ABCD is also pleased that the final budget provides Medical day care providers with a full increase based upon inflation. The Governor's proposed budget would have limited the inflation factor to one-half for medical day care providers, as well as nursing homes. ABCD has a number of member agencies which provide medical day care to people with developmental disabilities. The reimbursement rates for Medical Day Care do not take into account the fact that it costs more to serve people with developmental disabilities than seniors. A reduction in the inflation factor would have a significant negative impact on providers which serve people with developmental disabilities. ABCD plans to work with the Administration in the coming year on reimbursement rates that take into account the acuity level of people with developmental disabilities.

ABCD would like to extend special thanks to Assembly Budget Committee Chairman Greenwald, Assemblyman Cryan, Assemblyman Schaer, and to Senate President Codey, Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kenny, and Senator Vitale for their ongoing commitment to the disability community!





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ADVOCACY!

IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

The Cost of Providing Care (COPC) Coalition is certain that members of the Senate and Assembly clearly heard the message about nonprofit community providers' need for a COPC increase.

And we have all of you to thank for the impact we have made!

Although budgetary constraints allowed for less than what we strived to gain – 3 percent, effective January 1, 2008, rather than 4.1 percent, effective July 1, 2007 – our advocacy efforts have made an impact.

Governor Corzine originally proposed a 2 percent COPC increase, to be effective January 1, 2008. So, the 1 percent higher increase shows we were heard through a variety of effective advocacy strategies:

- Testifying at hearings
- Sending press releases and letters to editors statewide
- Meeting with State legislators
- Sending letters and e-mails to State legislators and Governor Corzine
- Holding a rally in Trenton

The COPC Coalition is already gearing up to advocate for a COPC increase to be tied to the inflation rate and automatically included into the budget in FY 2009 and every year thereafter.

We will continue to depend on our partnership with all of you to ensure that returning legislators remain aware and supportive of community providers' needs and that newcomers to the Senate and Assembly hear us and understand and support our issue.

So, take at least a moment to celebrate our achievements and be ready to fight for and achieve more in FY 2009 and beyond!

Recent Publications

- “Medicaid Co-Pays: A Tear in the Safety Net”
Arye, L. *Trenton Times*. June 12, 2007.
- In case you missed it, the May/June 2007 issue of *ABCD News* and all other back issues are available for download online!*

*Visit <http://www.abcdnj.org/pubs.html> to read all of ABCD’s recent and past publications.

Important Dates:

July:

- 11: Anti-Poverty Network Meeting at LSNJ**
- 12 & 24: NJ Economic Development Authority Presents “Social Entrepreneurship Workshops” for Non-Profit Agencies**
- 21-22: Partners in Policymaking, DD Council**
- 23: SPAN, Northeast Regional Summit**

August:

- 18-19: Partners in Policymaking, DD Council**

*Ongoing trainings for supported employment, direct support, essential life style planning, individual habilitation plans, and positive behavioral supports are available through the Elizabeth Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. For more information, go to <http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/>

*Please check ABCD’s Community Calendar at <http://www.abcdnj.org/about.html> for regularly updated announcements on ABCD and community-related events.

Spotlight on an ABCD Member Agency: Spina Bifida Association of the Tri-State Region

This month, ABCD recognizes the Spina Bifida Association of the Tri-State Region (SBATSR) for providing quality community services and support to over 7,000 individuals with spina bifida and their families. SBATSR serves individuals and families in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Since 1982, SBATSR has been providing care for people experiencing spina bifida and their families, while keeping with their mission of “empower[ing] the lives of people with spina bifida and promot[ing] the prevention of spina bifida through advocacy, education, collaboration, public awareness, research and programs.” Currently, SBATSR offers educational campaigns, recreation programs, family support, and in-home nursing programs. In addition, SBATSR also offers innovative services that are easily accessible from people’s homes, including teleconferences and telegroups.

**For more information about SBATSR,
visit them on the web at
<http://www.sbatsr.org/index.html>!**

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 emily@abcdnj.org.