

Talking Points for the Department of Human Services Budget Forums

Make budget decisions based on values. There is a human and personal impact behind every budget decision. We are urging for No Cuts to Services for People with Developmental Disabilities.

- New Jersey leaders continue to grapple with the challenge of meeting the public's growing needs in a time of limited public resources.
- At the same time, thousands of people with developmental disabilities and their families are already waiting years for some services because of insufficient resources. Any additional cuts will exacerbate the need.
- Adults with developmental disabilities -- like all adults -- deserve real opportunities to work and study, safely live in and contribute to their communities, participate in activities and recreation, and enjoy meaningful relationships with friends, loved ones and neighbors.
- Families of people with developmental disabilities -- like all families -- need information and support when a loved one has medical, behavioral or financial challenges, and the peace of mind of knowing that their loved ones will have what they need to be healthy, safe and happy throughout their life.

Cost of Providing Care

Current contracts to providers do not furnish enough funds for the actual costs of services.

- Agencies received no increase in the past two fiscal years (FY'09 and FY'10) and a 1.5% increase in FY'08, despite the fact that gas and other energy costs continue to increase as do health insurance and workers compensation.
- Staff at provider agencies need an adequate standard of living. Most staff have not received salary increases and their health insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs have increased. Due to no increases over the past few years, staff are being driven into poverty and being forced to use government sponsored programs such as FamilyCare and Food Stamps.
- The economic downturn is impacting agencies' ability to get lines of credit as well as their ability to receive funds from philanthropy and other fundraising measures, which in the past have been funding the gap between actual costs and contracts.
- The State must treat providers as full partners in serving our most vulnerable citizens by including an annualized cost increase in the budget.

Community Infrastructure

People with developmental disabilities who live in the community need medical, behavioral, and psychiatric supports along with barrier-free housing.

- To assist with the funding of these needed supports we urge the State to fully reinvest all federal funds from the Community Care Waiver to DDD community services.
- The State must increase services to individuals living at home with their families, including Family Support and transition to adult life on a regular basis with the base of funding increasing each year to account for increased service eligibility.
- The State needs a longer term solution for community services that includes the consolidation of Developmental Centers that will allow for additional State funds to be reinvested in these and other DDD community services.

Medicaid

New Jersey has a long-standing history of supporting preventative health care and ensuring that individuals, particularly the most vulnerable, receive quality health care services. New Jersey provides a comprehensive and expansive benefits package to individuals with significant disabilities.

- We are concerned that in an effort to balance the budget, some of the so called optional services and optional populations minimally required by the federal government under Medicaid will be cut. Services such as prescription drugs, dental benefits, durable medical equipment, prosthetics and orthotics, and therapies, are not optional for people with physical and developmental disabilities. These services are critical to the health care needs of individuals with significant disabilities and others and cannot be cut.
- We are once again concerned that Medicaid co-pays will be included in the budget. For the past seven years, the health and human services community have successfully joined together to fight proposals to have Medicaid co-pays. Coalition for a Moral Budget has documented that dozens of national health services research studies show that co-pays would force our neediest citizens to make a choice between paying for health care and other necessities.
- Medicaid co-pays would result in individuals with significant disabilities and those living in poverty not seeking care, exacerbating their illnesses, and cost the State even more in hospitalizations and more Emergency Room visits. During this time of economic crisis, it is important that the poor, including people with developmental disabilities, not have the additional imposition of Medicaid co-pays which are clearly a barrier to needed health services.