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FAMILY SUPPORT

ADVOCACY UPDATE

May, 2009

MA 2010 BUDGET UPDATE

The overall funding picture for disability services in the MA FY 2010 budget remains bleak. Although advocacy efforts have been successful in partially restoring many cuts to the MA Budget in the House version of the budget, there are still many battles remaining. So far, the committee has responded with partial restorations to disability services provided by DMR (DDS as of July 1, 2009) for family support, autism and joint education/DMR services, as well as partially restored funds for the MRC Extended Employment Services program. However, critical reductions that affect hundreds of individuals, still remain for Day and Employment, Transportation, and annualization of Turning 22 services. Additionally, with the declining and dismal revenues seen in April, developmental disabilities advocates fear that some of the restoration gains made may now be reversed.

Overall nearly 11,000 families could face cuts to the support services they currently receive from the State. The 23 Million Salary Reserve Account also needs to be restored to the budget. Otherwise, the wages of direct care staff, already one of the lowest paid work forces in Massachusetts, will continue to lose ground and won't even keep pace with inflation. This issue will now need to be resolved in the Senate as the House did not restore it to their final budget.

The amendments listed below are supported by the following statewide disability advocacy groups: The Arc of Massachusetts, the Association of Developmental Disability Providers (ADDP), the MA Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC), MA Families Organizing for Change (FOFC) and MA Advocates Standing Strong (MASS). Family members, self-advocates and staff are being asked to contact their State Representatives, asking that they support the following amendments:

- ⇒ Employment/Day (5920-2025): needs \$7.45 Million to be restored -- Rep. Scibak
- ⇒ Transportation (5911-2000): needs 2009 increase annualized, \$3.6 Million -- Rep. Peisch
- ⇒ Turning 22 (5920-5000): funded at \$7.7 Million, but language needs to be inserted for 2011 annualization of \$18.6 Million - Rep. Harkins
- ⇒ Salary Reserve (1599-6901): needs \$23 Million to be restored, Reps. Khan, Coakley-Rivera & St. Fleur
- ⇒ Community First (4000-0650): needs \$3 Million, Rep. Keenan
- ⇒ DPPC (1107-2501): needs \$71,500 to maintain current level of services -- Rep. Calter
- ⇒ Early Intervention (4513-1020): needs \$9.2 Million - Rep. Kafka



For further information visit The Arc Action Center at www.arcmass.org or the ADDP Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/addp/issues/alert/?alertid=13157836&type=ST>.

How to Contact your State and Federal Elected Officials:

www.arcmass.org Click on State House Dome picture "Take Action Now" on Home Page. Enter your home zip code and you will get the names of your Congressional and MA State Legislature elected officials.

BUDGET CUTS END BACKGROUND CHECKS AT DPPC

The Disabled Persons Protection Committee recently announced to organizations that effective April 1, 2009, it would no longer process background checks for new hires in the provider community. This cut is a major setback for people with disabilities and provider organizations who depend on this criminal record and abuse reporting system when hiring direct service personnel.

As reported by The Arc of Massachusetts on their web site "the Commission received nearly 15,000 (in 2007) calls....These large increases have not been reflected in DPPC's budget causing delays in reviews of cases and other matters. The 2010 budget has a cut of \$110,000 compared to 2009." The Arc recommends a total budget for DPPC of \$2.55M.

GUARDIANSHIP TRAINING

SATURDAY, May 9, 2009 9AM TO 1 PM

Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, 75 Felton St., Marlboro, MA. Presented By: Special Needs Planning Practice Group at Fletcher, Tilton & Whipple, P.C. This comprehensive seminar is designed for parents, siblings, guardians and service providers and covers all aspects of guardianship. The training will review anticipated sweeping new changes to guardianships due to the passage in MA of the Uniform Probate Code, which takes effect on July 1, 2009. Further information can be obtained at www.ftwlaw.com or by calling Sara at smurphy@ftwlaw.com or at (508) 459-8021.

BEAVERBROOK STEP SPONSORS LEGISLATIVE "TOWN MEETING"

A forum on State budget cuts and their impact on services for people with developmental disabilities and their family members was held on Wednesday, April 29, 2009 from 6:45 to 8:30 P.M. at the Arthur J. Clark Government Center on School Street in Waltham, MA. Over 300 self advocates, advocates, family members and staff attended the event which was sponsored by Beaverbrook STEP, the Greater Waltham ARC (GWARC), Work, Community, Independence (WCI) and the Kelliher Center.

During the forum advocates and self-advocates expressed their concerns that proposed cuts to DMR and MRC services in FY 2010 would have dire consequences for people with disabilities and their family members. Advocates were particularly concerned with cuts to day and employment, family support, transportation and Turning 22 services, and also asked legislators to provide \$23 M in the budget for salary increases for human service direct care staff.

Legislators in attendance listened carefully and stated that they are working hard to raise revenues so cuts won't be necessary. They understand that these cuts would cause great hardships for people with disabilities.

TUFTS DENTAL PROGRAM FUNDS ARE CUT

The Arc of Massachusetts reports that funds for the Tufts Dental Program have been reduced in the House Budget by \$190,000 (Department of Public Health budget). This loss would bring the program back to 1999 funding levels, leading to a loss of access to a vital source of expertise in dental care for people with developmental disabilities. The Arc urges advocates to contact their State Legislators and ask them to restore these funds.

ADVOCACY EFFORTS POSTED ON FACEBOOK

Over 700 people have already joined 2 groups started by The Arc of Mass. on Facebook, an on-line social network. There are dozens of personal stories and comments from individuals, families and other advocates talking about the impact that State budget cuts will have on services to people with disabilities. The People First—Restore Disability Funding page address is <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=59186921773>. The Save Family Support face page is located on <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?>