

MetroWest

Center for Independent Living, Inc.

Budget Issues

Greetings!

Our last newsletter focused on the budget cuts specifically aimed at Centers for Independent Living. Unfortunately, these cuts are just one piece of the many proposed budget reductions to programs and services used and needed by people with disabilities. This newsletter will describe more proposed cuts to MRC (MA Rehabilitation Commission), MCB (MA Commission for the Blind), MCDHH (MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing), DDS (Department of Developmental Services) and DMH (Department of Mental Health). Be aware that while we describe the cuts in a line-item or discretionary way, many of these services and departments are intertwined and interdependent, and the consequences are not easily predicted. One other side effect of these budget cuts is that many people with disabilities and many people without disabilities are employed by the Social Services sector - either working for the state or working as service providers, and many will lose their jobs.



We also are very sorry to see the departure of Dr. Jean McGuire from her position as Assistant Secretary for Disability Policy and Programs. Her contributions to people with disabilities in MA have been invaluable, and may even be irreplaceable.

We haven't heard any discussions on the revenue side of the budget - either how more revenue could be raised, or how these cuts will affect revenues. We would like to know exactly how many jobs across the board will be affected by these social services cuts. The many layoffs which will be necessary to implement these cuts will certainly affect the state's revenue stream, as well as the overall state economy. We also think that reducing these safety nets could force some people into nursing homes and institutional care which is much more expensive than community supports. It's a lose-lose-lose track.

Upcoming events include Independent Living Education Day at the State House on March 14.

from Paul W. Spooner,
Executive Director

Editorial

I have worked for over thirty years as a disability rights advocate, and had the pleasure to work with many great and talented people



In This Issue

[Editorial on Dr. Jean McGuire](#)

[MRC Cuts](#)

[DMH](#)

[MCB](#)

[MCDHH](#)

[Adult Day Health](#)

[Day Habilitation](#)

[DDS](#)

[More](#)

[State Budget Process](#)

[How To Advocate](#)

[Independent Living Education Day](#)

[MA PCA Program](#)



MA Annual Independent Living Education Day at the State House

Monday, March 14, 2011
from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
at Great Hall in the State House.

Sponsored by the MA
Statewide Independent
Living Council.

throughout all levels of government, but few have had the range of knowledge, skill, and understanding about disability issues and programs as Jean McGuire.

Dr. Jean McGuire, Assistant Secretary for Disability Policy and Programs, is leaving state government after four years working for the Patrick administration. Over those years, Dr. McGuire has been at the forefront of issues related to Community First, the development of the state's Olmstead Plan, the closing of institutions, and many other critical disability issues. Her vast ability to understand and process key concepts and barriers related to the problems individuals with disabilities face in our current fractured service delivery system, has helped to implement many needed positive changes.



I have had the opportunity to work with Dr. McGuire both personally and professionally, and found that experience to be educational and rewarding. We did not agree all the time, but she always valued my involvement and insight. Her support for the rights of individuals with disabilities to make their own choices and express their views was unprecedented. I never saw her shy away from tough issues, and she had the ability to help many of us better understand the limits of government systems and the barriers they present.

Dr. McGuire will be missed and the Commonwealth is losing a major figure in disability policy. However, we will all carry forward in our work, knowing the struggle will be harder. I will miss my talks with Jean, and wish her well in her new endeavors and hope to work with her again in the future for the rights of individuals with disabilities.

Paul W. Spooner



MRC Cuts

The governor has proposed an \$807,000 cut to the "4120-4000" account of MRC - Mass Rehabilitation Commission.

- \$550,000 (or 12%) cut to Independent Living Services statewide. There are 11 Centers for Independent Living across MA. Statewide, Centers for Independent Living served 18,351 people with disabilities in 2010. MWCIL serves around 300 consumers. Most traditional services for people with disabilities have very specific and stringent rules about exactly who is eligible, and exactly what is offered. Not everyone fits into these categories. Centers for Independent Living work with people who have difficulty

Please join us to educate your legislators on the priorities and importance of Independent Living.

Call your legislator today and set up a time to visit them between 12 and 3. Tell them your story.

For more information, or to be a part of the MWCIL "delegation", contact us at 508-875-7853 or email us at info@mwcil.org by March 7.

March is
*National
Developmental
Disabilities Awareness
Month!*

\$\$\$ Tax Time \$\$\$

Spring is right around the corner, and that means so is the April 15 tax deadline. It's too late for 2010 taxes, but remember, you can write off charitable deductions for 2011 taxes by making a donation to the Metrowest Center for Independent Living today. Your generous gifts help keep our services strong for all those who need them, and we thank you.

MA PCAs

Personal Care Attendants are at the heart of the Independent Living Movement. By performing and helping with Activities of Daily Living and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living that not everyone can do on their own, PCA's give people with disabilities the

navigating the rules and services and who otherwise can fall through the cracks. This is why Centers for Independent Living work to get people out of nursing homes and institutions and into community based homes.

- \$250,000 more is being taken from the Adult Supported Living Program which is used to fund surrogate support for PCA consumers who aren't able to manage their PCAs. This cut will force a cap of 150 participants statewide. There may be 160 using the program today, but "attrition is expected" and no one will lose current support. However, next year this cap will probably result in waiting lists.

Also being cut from MRC is the total Housing Registry budget. Currently, this services receives 1200 searches/month.

If you or anyone close to you has been helped to become more independent by an Independent Living Center, or the Adult Supported Living Program, PLEASE tell your story to your legislator or contact us at MWCIL ([email](#)), and we will work with you to get your message through.

DMH - Department of Mental Health

Governor Patrick's budget proposes a \$3 million cut to clubhouses - the DMH Adult Community Mental Health Services 5046 account.

"Clubhouses provide people with serious mental illnesses help in finding employment, education and housing. The centers also provide peer support and leadership training for their members so they can become contributing members of a community. About 8,300 Massachusetts residents are helped by clubhouses."

Read more in this February 26 [Milford Daily News](#) report by Joe O'Connell.

MCB - MA Commission for the Blind

The MA Commission for the Blind is also facing a budget reduction of \$450,000 which will end the DBCAN (Deaf Blind Community Access Network) Program. The DBCAN program supplies deaf and blind supportive services so that people can live in the community. Service Support Providers using tactile signing (tapping on a hand) aid approximately 67 Deaf/Blind people with personal tasks such as reading mail, participating in fitness programs, running personal errands, and attending community events.

Saturday's [Boston Globe](#) provides a video and article by David Abel about people who use DBCAN services, and how the services help them.

Level funding of the rest of MCB's other programs is also a problem because several mandates and agreements have rising costs, leaving the commission with an estimated deficit of \$1.6 million. Since the Commissioner, Janet LaBreck, says that these community based services need to be available, and core services need to be preserved, it is unclear what the impact of this reduction really is.

freedom to work, to play, to live in the community and home of their choice, and to be independent.

MWCIL has partnered with other organizations to create the [PCAForever](#) website devoted to providing information about the Massachusetts PCA program as well as publicizing advocacy opportunities and needs.

The governor's budget has left the PCA program level-funded, however, there are many more cycles to go through before the budget is finalized. Please contact us with your situation so we can put *real stories about real people* on our website, and ensure that our legislators understand how important the PCA program is.

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Another issue for MCB is the level-funded Turning 22 program for young people with multiple disabilities. With a growing demand for these services, level funding will be inadequate.

MCDHH - MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Since 2009, MCDHH has been cut about \$1 million. They have worked hard to stretch their resources with improved effectiveness, and have continued to supply needed resources and services to deaf, hard of hearing, and late-deafened individuals. With more reductions this year, Commissioner Heidi Reed stated that the following services will be impacted:

- After hours emergency referral interpreters
- Reduced Independent Living services
- Reduced ability to respond to requests and complaints
- Inability to analyze the Commission's effectiveness
- Inability to develop new programs.

MassHealth - Adult Day Health

Adult Day Health services, under MassHealth is slated to be cut by \$55 million dollars. This cut will eliminate services to all but 20% of program participants. Adult Day Health providers predict that such a drastic restructuring will cause programs to close, costing 2500 employees their jobs, and making higher cost hospitalization or nursing home placements likely for thousands of elderly and disabled Adult Day Health patients. (source: [Mass Legal Services](#))

"The 140 adult day care centers in the state are primarily funded through the state's Medicaid program, MassHealth. The centers provide nursing care, medication monitoring, and social and physical activities for elderly and disabled residents." "Proponents of adult day health said as many as 11,000 adults - out of 11,500 who receive those services - would lose access." Already, hundreds of critics including lawmakers, consumers, families and employees, have articulated their opposition at a February 24th Hearing. Read more in this [Wicked Local report](#).

MWCIL opposes cuts to the Adult Day Health services because these services allow our most frail residents to continue to live in the community, typically with their families, and to stay out of nursing homes and institutions.

MassHealth - Day Habilitation

Day Habilitation Funding (also part of MassHealth) cuts are proposed at 4% or \$5.2 million. These services provide a social atmosphere, physical therapy and individual care for the developmentally disabled. In a public hearing with the MA Department of Health Care Finance and Policy (DHCFP), about 400 social workers, consumers, advocates, and families begged DHCFP to reject these cuts. The [MetroWest Daily News](#) reports on this February 23 hearing in Shrewsbury.

DDS - Department of Developmental Services

The governor's budget reduces the 5920-3000 account - Respite and Family Support - by about \$14 million. This program currently serves 11,000 people and their families. This cut means that 4000 families will lose their home supports.

The governor's budget level funds the 5948-0012 account - DESE/DDS Family Preservation in spite of the fact that there are 193 families on the waiting list. ADDP recommends adding \$1.5 million to reduce this waiting list. ADDP also recommends that the language of the line item changes, so that DESE uses the funds as intended.

The DESE/DDS Agreement is a joint program run through the Department of Education and the Department of Developmental Services. The purpose of the program is to enable families to bring back home a child in a residential placement, or to prevent an imminent residential placement from occurring. Services may include case management, respite, behavioral intervention and in-home training, and other individualized services that a family deems necessary to maintain their child at home.

Source: [March 2 ADDP Newsletter](#) (Association of Developmental Disability Providers)

And More

While the budget consists of narrowly defined line items, few people clearly fit in discrete categories.

DCF - Department of Children and Families: Commissioner Angelo McClain states the mission: "At DCF we believe that every child is entitled to a home that is free from abuse and/or neglect. This is why our vision is to ensure the safety of children in a manner that holds the best hope of nurturing a sustained, resilient network of relationships to support the child's growth and development into adulthood." An \$8 million cut to their budget will be achieved by:

- Reducing voluntary services by 90%. This reduction means that most families who could get help early, and prevent their family from spiraling down into crisis mode have *no* services.
- Eliminating one quarterly clothing allotment.
- Reducing clinical support by \$1.1 million

MWCIL opposes these cuts. A child growing up in a troubled household is a child who may not become a mentally and physically healthy adult.

DYS - Department of Youth Services - rehabilitates at risk youths. Cuts to this department seem to be for residential services. At risk youths also rely on services from DCF, DMH, Educational systems, police and judges... all programs which are also being cut. As Secretary Bigby said, "Kids who land in DYS did not get the services they need." - whether these are financial, educational, or developmental, the current budget doesn't bode well for any improvements. And as DYS Commissioner Jane Tewksbury

described, if DYS is unsuccessful at rehabilitating a youth, then taxpayers will pay between \$2 and \$4 million incarcerating them as an adult.

FYI: State Budget Process

The first step in the annual budgeting process, the Governor's Budget, was released in January. This budget now goes to the House (via the House Ways and Means Committee). Ways and Means will hold hearings and discussions, sometimes including the Senate, and reissue their own version of the budget in early April. In other words, between now and April is an important time for citizens to let their legislators know of any problems with the Patrick budget, and also let them know which existing programs are important to them. After this, the Senate will come up with their own changes, and the two legislative branches will agree on a combined budget.

Once the House and Senate have submitted their budget to the Governor in early June, the governor may sign it or send it back. It may take until July 31 before we know all the details in next year's budget.

Effective Advocacy

Find your legislators at www.WhereDoIVoteMA.com.

Ways to communicate:

- Personal contact is easier than you think. Most of our legislators visit our communities and are anxious to talk to their constituents. You also may be able to schedule a visit to their office.
- Handwritten letters are a very effective way to make sure your message is understood. In today's digital world, a handwritten letter will stand out.
- Phone calls and emails are quick and easy ways to contact your legislator.
- Letters to the Editor, and discussing your issues with your friends and neighbors can also bring additional support to your cause.
- Join political groups and/or attend rallies. More people mean a louder voice. Make sure your legislators know the rally is occurring, and that you attended.

What to say:

- Tell the legislator that you are a constituent. Typically you should provide your name, address and contact information.
- Identify the issue which you are advocating for or against. Be very clear.
- **Tell your story.** *You are the expert!* How does this program help you? How could this budget cut hurt you? *Why do you care? Why should the legislator care?*

FAQ:

1. Is it worthwhile to speak with a staff member instead of my legislator? Yes, but ask for the staff member who specializes in your particular topic instead of the person who answers the phone.
2. Where can I find information about disability issues? Many of your favorite organizations have newsletters with advance notice about rallies, and ongoing updates on budgeting. MWCIL has several Advocacy web links on our [Resources page](#).

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