



LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION
OF NEW YORK STATE

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STATEMENT ON GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS TO
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

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The Learning Disabilities Association of New York State (LDANYS) is a parent-driven statewide organization, providing advocacy and support services to thousands of individuals with learning disabilities, neurological impairments and other related disabilities, and their families. Because learning disabilities are developmental, neurobiological disorders, they frequently manifest themselves in all aspects of the lives of the individuals affected by such disorders. Their impact upon an individual's ability to be independent and self-sufficient can be, and often is, profound.

In his 2003-2004 Budget Proposal, Governor George Pataki has indicated his intent to cut funding for vocational rehabilitation services. This proposal, if enacted, will have a devastating impact on the individuals whom LDANYS serves. LDANYS firmly believes that vocational rehabilitation services are invaluable to individuals with learning disabilities, and in fact, are critical to their ultimate goal of achieving the highest possible levels of independence. For this reason, the inadequate funding VR services have received over the past several years is of grave concern to LDANYS. As individuals with developmental and other disabilities have become increasingly independent and in need of services such as job training and placement, the demand for vocational rehabilitation services has grown tremendously. In fact, VESID's current caseload of 66,000 people, it's highest in five years. Unfortunately, increases in funding to support this growing demand have not occurred. Rather, requests for increased funding have repeatedly gone unheard at both the state and federal level. The 2003-2004 budget proposal presents an even more dismal outlook for individuals with disabilities in need of vocational rehabilitation services. For these reasons, LDA urges the legislature to take the following action:

Restore \$2 million for case management services: The Governor's proposed reduction of \$2 million in case management services, and his failure to increase funding for supported employment services for the fifth year in a row make it **highly likely that an Order of Selection will be implemented. Such a process may well result in the total denial of critical services to individuals with learning and other disabilities, whose disabilities are not deemed "severe" enough to access VESID.**

Restore \$1.8 million for supported employment: This represents the amount needed to support individuals who previously received services under OMRDD but will now have to receive them from VESID. Without this funding, their services may be eliminated.

Ensure adequate funding for staffing & transition services: The Governor's proposals regarding VESID funding seriously threaten the continued viability of transition services for students moving out of high school and into the world of work or higher education. Inadequate funding has created an increasingly serious situation in which there are not enough VESID counselors to handle the volume of students needing transitional services. Therefore, the needs of students transitioning out of high school are not being appropriately met.

In an era of heightened fiscal concern, with the resulting need for responsible decisions, there is no question that the restoration of such funding will lead to reduced reliance by individuals with developmental disabilities upon more expensive long-term supports and services that

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will otherwise be needed if the potential for independence afforded by vocational rehabilitation services is no longer available to those individuals.