



In the Spotlight

Monthly Issues of Interest Presented By
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Budget Deficit Needs Thoughtful, Targeted Approach

If adopted, the Governor's 10% Local Assistance cut would threaten the health and safety of individuals with developmental disabilities receiving services.

Desperate times call for desperate measures and there is no doubt, New York State's looming budget crisis has resulted in some desperate times. The projected \$3 billion deficit the state is facing in the current fiscal year will require significant and immediate cuts to the budget in order for the state to meet its obligations. However, the Governor's proposal of a 10% across-the-board cut in Local Assistance programs ignores the fact that some programs and services funded by the state have more at stake than others. One area where this is particularly true is in the OMRDD system. Cuts of the magnitude the Governor is proposing, would not only result in immediate cuts to services already being received by individuals with developmental disabilities but would also ensure that no new individuals with developmental disabilities coming into the system are served for some time. If adopted, the Governor's 10% Local Assistance cut would also threaten the health and safety of individuals receiving services. Many programs that individuals with developmental disabilities rely on that are operated by community-based nonprofits will be shut down and as a result, many agency staff, including the direct care workforce, will see numerous job cuts.

Of greatest concern is that the Governor's proposed Deficit Reduction Plan of \$65.4 million in Medicaid cuts from OMRDD is only the State share. Under the Federal stimulus bill, the Federal share of New York's Medicaid spending is approximately 60% and the State share is approximately 40%. Therefore the cut is not \$65 million but approximately \$150 million. Even more devastating is that this figure is for the five months remaining in the current fiscal year so when the cut is annualized it could grow to an estimated \$370 million.

For many individuals with developmental disabilities, services they receive through OMRDD are vital to their ability to maintain independence and dignity in adulthood. OMRDD services allow individuals with developmental disabilities to remain in their homes with their families while receiving in home support services through programs such as residential habilitation. OMRDD also funds residential services that allow individuals with developmental disabilities to live independently in their own homes and apartments or in group homes with their peers if they so choose. Through supported employment programs, individuals with developmental disabilities are provided the skills and sup-

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The Learning Disabilities Association of New York State (LDANYS) was chartered by the New York State Board of Regents in 1958 and is a statewide 501c3 nonprofit, parent-driven organization that advocates on behalf of children and adults who have learning disabilities. LDANYS is the New York state affiliate of the Learning Disabilities Association of America. Our regional affiliates located throughout the state provide a variety of programs and services for children and adults with learning and other developmental disabilities and their families.

For more information about our organization or about the content contained here, please contact our state office at 518-608-8992.

Targeted Approach – continued

port they need to find a job and ongoing support from case managers to maintain those jobs. As working Americans, individuals with developmental disabilities contribute back to the economy through personal income taxes and through purchases they make with their hard earned dollars. Without these programs and services in place, many individuals with developmental disabilities will experience a negative impact on their quality of life. New York State has been a national leader when it comes to funding and providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities and in the face of hard economic times, New York has before it an opportunity to step up to the plate and once again show the rest of the nation that despite these hard times, we will continue to honor the commitment we've made to our

most vulnerable citizens who have fought long and hard for the programs and services that provide them with the same opportunities as everyone else. There is no doubt that some cuts will be necessary and any cut, no matter big or small can indeed be "painful" as the Governor has put it. However, instead of an across-the-board approach to cuts, a more flexible approach that allows for more targeted cuts should be considered.

As the legislature debates the Governor's proposed Deficit Reduction Plan over the coming weeks, LDANYS urges our state policymakers to be more thoughtful in their approach to dealing with the deficit, to reject the Governor's across-the-board plan and in so doing, preserve programs and services vital to the livelihoods of so many New Yorkers with developmental disabilities.