

DDAdvocate Newsletter #15 Mental Health Budget Cuts for 2010-11

The following is a joint effort of DDAdvocates, Jerry Exner, Marianne Huff and Millie Jones. It does not mince words. There are people in Lansing who apparently believe the Community Mental Health System ought to be stripped of all but mandatory federal funding. There are over 300 people on the DDadvocates distribution list. Each of us needs to:

1. ***Read the message below***
2. ***Tell our story to our Representative and Senator (sample letter attached)—personalize it, paste it into an email and send it. It must arrive by Monday April 12. Ask your representative and senator to see that your message is entered as written testimony to the House Sub-Committee meeting on the 14th.***
3. ***Send a cc of your letter / email to ddadvocates@gmail.com so we can see who has been contacted and where we need to follow-up.***
4. ***Send a cc of your email to at least 10 of your email contacts; ask them to forward it to THEIR representative and senator. There are significant specific Wayne County reductions not shared across the board in the proposals, BUT EVERY COUNTY WILL BE IMPACTED BY THESE PROPOSALS.***
5. ***This effort needs to be accomplished before the next House Sub Committee Meeting on the 14th. If we all do our job, there could be 6000 messages in Lansing on Monday morning.***
6. ***Come to grips about how you feel about tax increases to maintain these programs; whether you support tax increases or not, be prepared to defend the value of these programs to our most vulnerable citizens—ahead of other state spending—including as an example 3% salary and wage increases for state employees.***

Please forward to all interested parties.

Dear friend, family member, consumer, or advocate of mental health:

Your help is needed to keep Michigan's public mental health system from being dissolved! The system that has been protecting our state's most vulnerable citizens is in danger of being unable to fulfill its obligation to its Developmentally Disabled and Mentally Impaired consumers!

On March 25 the Michigan State Senate passed a bill that will cut funding to the state general fund by almost \$58 million for fiscal year 2010-2011. Because the Community Mental Health Agencies depend on the general fund dollars to access matching federal Medicaid dollars, this cut will be catastrophic as its real effect will be as much as three times that much.

In the last budget the Community Mental Health Boards survived a \$34 million cut to the state general fund with the largest cuts made to Oakland and Detroit-Wayne County CMHs. As stated above, the Senate has passed the \$58 million reduction. In addition, there is another proposal for an additional \$35 million cut to the Detroit-Wayne system directly. These reductions will reduce the ability to draw down Medicaid funding and result in cuts to every program – even the most basic throughout the state.

The senate bill is now being referred to the Michigan House of Representatives for passage. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ANYONE AND EVERYONE WHO CARES ABOUT THE PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM LET YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE KNOW HOW DEVASTATING THE CUTS ARE. If the senate

budget bill is adopted the community mental health program will become totally federalized and smaller community health programs will cease to exist. We are in danger of reverting back to the "old days" where folks with psychiatric disabilities and persons with developmental disabilities were forced to live in institutions because there will not be enough funding to support these individuals in the community!

In addition, The Senate is discussing the reduction of Medicaid spending by \$160 million to \$500 million by dropping so-called optional Medicaid services or the number of people eligible for Medicaid. Here is a partial list of optional services:

- Prescribed drugs
- Medical care or remedial care furnished by licensed practitioners under state law
- Diagnostic, screening, preventative, and rehabilitative services
- Clinic services
- Dental services
- Prosthetic devices
- Eyeglasses
- Physical therapy and related services
- Intermediate care facility for the MR
- Home health care
- Case management
- Respiratory care services for ventilator-dependent individuals
- Personal care services
- Private duty nursing services
- Hospice care
- Home and community-based waiver services
- Skills building including work shop settings

The cuts have started and will continue unless we speak up!

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1) Call or write your state representative and senator and urge them to consider a kinder way to balance the state's ailing budget without taking away resources that provide critical services to persons with disabilities. If you are a family member, friend of a consumer, or a consumer yourself....

TELL THEM NOT TO PASS SENATE BILL SB-1152 WITHOUT REDUCING THE GENERAL FUND CUTS. OUR REPRESENTATIVES PROBABLY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT THE GENERAL FUND CUTS WILL HAVE ON THE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM. LET THEM KNOW! TELL YOUR STORY!

Here is a link to the leadership at the House of Representatives:<http://house.michigan.gov/leadership.asp>

You can also locate your member of the house at: http://house.michigan.gov/find_a_rep.asp

2) Write an email to the Detroit News or Free Press urging them to write articles on the severe cuts to the mental health system.

3) Contact The Detroit News at: letters@detnews.com. or The Detroit Free Press at <http://freep.com/article/99999999/opinion04/50926009>

IT IS CRITICAL THAT ALL OF US WHO HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY THE PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM DEFEND IT--OR IT WILL EITHER BE GONE OR IT WILL BE UNABLE TO SUSTAIN THE NEED THAT IS GROWING--ESPECIALLY IN SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN.

TAKE ACTION NOW. THE LEGISLATURE MEETS AGAIN ON APRIL 12.

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Ed Diegel,
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ddadvocates@gmail.com
and now at ddADVOCATES.com

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