



Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

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TO: House Human Services Committee (Rep. Pugh, Chair; Rep. Haas, Vice Chair; Rep. Donahue, Ranking Member; Rep. Batchelor; Rep. Burditt; Rep. Frank; Rep. French; Rep. Krowinski, Clerk; Rep. McFaun; Rep. Mrowicki; and Rep. Trieber.)

FROM: Karen Schwartz, Executive Director

RE: SFY2014 Budget Adjustment

DATE: January 14, 2014

Thank you for your invitation to speak about the budget adjustment request made by the Agency of Human Services and Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living.

VTDDC is vitally interested because we are mandated by federal law to act as an independent advocate and bring the voices of people with developmental disabilities and their families to the policymaking table

The administration proposal for budget adjustment is striking for its inclusions and omissions.

The Department of Mental Health and the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living propose to return a total of \$1.2 million. These funds had been earmarked to serve people with serious functional impairment and complex community cases – people who are not otherwise eligible for mental health or developmental services long term care. What is the impact on Vermont of not meeting their needs?

At the same time DAIL is not requesting budget adjustment funds for developmental services, but is instead moving forward with cuts totaling almost the same amount -- \$2.23 million this year.

The Administration has said the cut will annualize as \$4.46 million in FY2015 -- **double** what had been targeted, representing a loss of almost \$4 million in federal matching funds over eighteen-months.

Unlike other rescissions detailed data has not been released so we are not able to see trends and tell whether people were affected differently based on where they live. We are hearing reports that people were notified of cuts, rather than having input as promised in the rescission instructions to agencies. Most significantly, DAIL says it has not developed a way to determine the impact of the cuts on people, even though this has been the fifth cut in 5 years. We do know administrative savings were only 8%, and that more than 500 people lost services, with a significant cut to community supports that help people be active and included in their communities.

As part of your budget adjustment inquiry it is critical that you require full and complete disclosure about how much has been cut and the impact on people currently receiving services and their families. Questions include

- ⇒ What notice did people get?
- ⇒ How many people have been moved into contracted service packages with minimal oversight?
- ⇒ How many were moved into segregated day settings?
- ⇒ Did where you live affect what happened?
- ⇒ How many aging parents are losing respite supports?
- ⇒ How many had prior cuts?

Please also consider this cut in the context of the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Act principles of service (page 3), and the erosion to the system of care that has taken place over a number of years. In the past decade quality reviewers have gone down from 12 to about 5 FTEs. Developmental Services now skips its annual report every other year. The system has become crisis driven, instead of fulfilling the promise of quality lives for people as part of the community. To quote the Act “When people with disabilities are segregated from community life, all Vermonters are diminished.”

We appreciate the support you have shown through tough times, and ask you to protect the investments you have made to include all Vermonters.

Thank you for your consideration.

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Act Principles of Service

Condensed from 18 V.S.A. Sec. 8724

Children's services. Children, regardless of the severity of their disability, need families and enduring relationships with adults in a nurturing home environment.

Adult services. Adults, regardless of the severity of their disability, can make decisions for themselves, can live in typical homes and can contribute as citizens to the communities where they live.

Full information. People with developmental disabilities and their families need complete information about the availability, choices, and costs of services, how the decision making process works, and how to participate in that process.

Individualized support. To be effective and efficient, services must be individualized to the capacities, needs, and values of each individual.

Family support. Effective family support services shall be designed and provided with respect and responsiveness to the unique needs, strengths, and cultural values of each family and the family's expertise regarding its own needs.

Meaningful choices. Effective services shall be flexible so they can be individualized to support and accommodate personalized choices, values, and needs and assure that each recipient is directly involved in decisions that affect that person's life.

Community participation. When people with disabilities are segregated from community life, all Vermonters are diminished.

Employment. The goal of job support is to obtain and maintain paid employment in regular employment settings.

Accessibility. Services must be geographically available

Health and safety. The safety and health of people with developmental disabilities is of paramount concern.

Trained staff. All individuals who provide services to people with developmental disabilities and their families must receive training as required by Sec. 8731 of this title.

Fiscal integrity. The fiscal stability of the service system is dependent upon skillful and frugal management and sufficient resources to meet the needs of Vermonters with developmental disabilities.