

Public Policy Update
February 16, 2010
www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org
From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director



➤ ***Governor's Supplemental Budget:***

Governor Pawlenty released his supplemental budget proposal on Monday, February 15th. His proposals, if enacted, will have a profound and negative impact on services and supports for persons with disabilities.

Key cuts to disability services in Fiscal Year 2011 (7/1/10 – 6/30/11) include:

- A 2.5% cut to all Medical Assistance programs supporting individuals with disabilities. Also known as the provider rate cut, this would cut \$37,271,000 from these programs.
- A temporary cap on waiver growth, allowing only 72 new slots for the developmental disabilities waiver (180 were approved in 2009) and only 60 new CADI waiver slots per month – a cut of \$2,116,000.
- Eliminating adult coverage for physical, occupational and speech therapy, cutting \$1,820,000.
- Subtracting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments from Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) payments for individuals with disabilities. This would cut their income by \$30 million.

The Governor's budget proposes \$347 million in cuts in health and human services. Many of those cuts are in Medical Assistance funding. For each Medical Assistance dollar spent, 40 cents come from the state and 60 cents come from the federal government. This means that for every 40 cents we cut in state funding, we lose 60 cents in federal matching funds.

The Governor's budget spared K-12 funding for schools from any cuts. The budget also anticipates \$387 million from enhanced federal Medicaid funding. This funding has not been approved by Congress. If it is not approved before the end of Minnesota's 2010 Legislative Session, the Legislature and the Governor will need to look at additional cuts equaling that amount or raising some revenue. This wild card could have a profound impact on what ultimately happens to programs for persons with disabilities during this legislative session.

The House and Senate have stated that they will release their proposed budgets to close the \$1.2 billion deficit after the February forecast, which will come out in early March. For a more detailed look at the Governor's budget cuts, go to <http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/doc/budget/bud-op/op10/supp10.pdf>

➤ ***Testimony on the Governor's Budget:***

The Senate and House Health and Human Services committees will take testimony on the impact of the Governor's budget the week of February 22nd. If you have been impacted by further provider rate cuts; are on the waiting list; have had PCA services reduced or eliminated; or have had occupational, physical, and/or speech therapies eliminated, and you want to testify, contact your local chapter of The Arc. Our chapters will work with The Arc of Minnesota to help facilitate your testimony.

➤ ***Disability Day at the Capitol – A Huge Success!***

About 400 people came to Disability Day at the Capitol in St. Paul on February 11th. Hundreds gathered outside the House Chambers as legislators and Gov. Pawlenty gathered for his State of the State address.

Hundreds also gathered in the Capitol Rotunda to come together and call loudly and often, “Cuts to Human Services are a Tax Increase on our Vulnerable Citizens!” Thanks to everyone who came. Keep up your advocacy, including participating in Tuesdays at the Capitol (see below).

➤ *Tuesdays at the Capitol:*

The Arc of Minnesota, working with the Minnesota Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities, is hosting Tuesdays at the Capitol. This is a variation of the vigil we conducted for the last month of the 2009 Legislative Session, when individuals with disabilities and their allies lobbied outside the Senate and House chambers and met with their legislators to discuss our issues. This year, different disability organizations will sponsor each Tuesday. To learn more about sponsoring a Tuesday at the Capitol, please contact Anni Simons at 651-523-0823, ext. 112 or asimons@arcmn.org.

➤ *Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS) Hearing:*

Thanks to Jean Bender, Patricia Wright, Lynn McDonald, and Amy Hewitt for sharing stories and research data with state legislators on February 9th on the effectiveness of Consumer-Directed Community Supports. The four women testified at a hearing of the Minnesota House Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

➤ *Community Counts!*

The Arc of Minnesota held a press conference at the beginning of Disability Day at the Capitol to unveil its Community Counts! initiative. More than 100 people gathered to hear Nathan Bauer, Angie Diebel, Gail Hoffmann, and Erich Hoffmann share their success stories in becoming more independent, thanks to community-based services and inclusive education. Rep. Patti Fritz from Faribault stopped by to encourage us in our advocacy and get us fired up for the rest of our Day at the Capitol. The Arc of Minnesota’s Public Policy Committee will continue work on this initiative to set statewide goals and benchmarks for services and supports for people with disabilities. The committee feels that a comprehensive plan is needed to determine if we are achieving our goals, both for individuals and for our system of supports.