

# Public Policy Update

March 22, 2010

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From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director



## ➤ *Health and Human Services Budget Bill*

The Minnesota House of Representatives set their committee budget targets on Wednesday, March 17. (Go to <http://minnesotabudgetbites.org/2010/03/17/house-sets-719-million-target-for-health-and-human-services> for more info). The House is anticipating \$408 million from the federal government for enhanced Medical Assistance payments officially known as FMAP. The Senate in Washington has passed this bill, and it has to be resolved now with the House version. Even with the additional federal dollars, the Minnesota House anticipates \$155 million in further cuts to health and human services programs. This compares favorably to the \$347 million that Governor proposes to cut in his supplemental budget proposal but is still a substantial reduction in services.

According to the *Pioneer Press*, if the federal jobs bill is passed along with federal health care reform, the cuts to programs in Minnesota could be minimized. For the full article in the *Pioneer Press*, go to: [www.twincities.com/politics/ci\\_14713126?source=email](http://www.twincities.com/politics/ci_14713126?source=email)

On Friday, March 18th, Rep. Tom Huntley, Chair of the Minnesota House Health Care and Human Services Finance Committee, released the timetable for action the House's supplemental health and human services budget bill:

- April 6th 1:00 pm. - Release budget to the public; overview by committee staff.
- April 7th – Public testimony on this bill. Contact Jan Horner to testify at [jan.horner@house.mn](mailto:jan.horner@house.mn) or 651-296-5496. Please coordinate your testimony with your chapter of The Arc and Steve Larson.
- April 8th – Review amendments and vote on the HHS budget bill.

## ➤ *State Operated Services Redesign: METO and 3 Dental Clinics to Close*

The Governor's Supplemental Budget proposal calls for \$17 million in cuts to State Operated Services (SOS) programs. Included in those cuts is a proposal to close the Minnesota Extended Treatment Options (METO) program that was featured in the report "Just Plain Wrong" by the Ombudsman's Office in September 2008 highlighting the use of handcuffs and other improper restraints.

In addition, it calls for the closure of three state-operated dental clinics in Fergus Falls, Willmar, and Cambridge. If you use any of these clinics, please e-mail me information on the impact that these dental clinic closures will have on you, your family members, or individuals you serve.

## ➤ *House Holds Second Hearing on Bill To Accelerate PCA Cuts (H.F. 3442)*

On Wednesday March 17<sup>th</sup>, House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division held a hearing on H.F. 3442. This bill would move up the effective date of cuts approved in the last legislative session to personal care attendant (PCA) services. Effective July 1, 2010, PCA recipients must be dependent in at least two activities of daily living (ADLs) or have significant behavior issues (officially called "Level One Behaviors") to be eligible

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for PCA services, instead of July 1, 2011 as planned under current law. H.F. 3442 would also make cuts to a number of services for older Minnesotans and require personal care attendants to pay an annual \$50 registration fee to the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Kurt Rutzen, public policy advocate for The Arc of Minnesota, and I testified about the devastating impact that this bill would have on many individuals currently eligible for PCA services. After some debate, the bill was laid over for future consideration. This means that Committee Chair Tom Huntley can decide to either ignore this bill or include all or some of it in his committee's Omnibus Bill. In other words, stay tuned.

### ➤ *Kyle's Bill (SF 3087/HF 3157):*

SF 3087 received hearings in the Senate E-12 Education Policy Committee on Wednesday, March 17 and the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday, March 18. This bill, authored by Senator Dave Senjem of Rochester, was initiated by college students at Concordia College after reading a story about Kyle, an elementary student, who had been abused in a school setting. Kyle's parents were not notified about an investigation until several months later. This calls for notification of parents about investigations within 10 days of the initiation of the investigation. The Arc of Minnesota testified in support of the bill in the Education Committee.

### ➤ *Messages to Legislators*

In your contact with state legislators, please communicate the following messages throughout this session:

- Maintain independence of persons with disabilities.
- Cuts to human services are a form of taxation that targets our most vulnerable citizens.
- Cuts to human services create more job losses.
- Innovations in disability services will provide sustainable solutions (e.g., CDCS).

When you communicate with legislators by phone or e-mail, make sure you identify yourself as a constituent. When sending an e-mail, identify yourself as a constituent in the subject line of your message (e.g., "Protect PCA Services: A Message From A Constituent"). Legislators and their staff will more likely give your communications a higher priority if they know you live in their legislative district.

### ➤ *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. This year, different disability organizations will sponsor each Tuesday. For more on sponsoring a Tuesday at the Capitol, contact Anni Simons at 651-523-0823, ext. 112 or [asimons@arcmn.org](mailto:asimons@arcmn.org)

### ➤ *Federal Health Care Reform*

The U.S. House of Representatives approved the bill overhauling our nation's health care system late Sunday night, March 21 on a 219-212 vote. Four Minnesota representatives voted for the bill: Reps Ellison, McCollum, Oberstar, and Walz. The other four members of our House delegation voted against it: Bachmann, Kline, Paulsen, and Peterson. It has many important protections and benefits for people with disabilities and their families. For a summary of the key provisions affecting people with disabilities, see the attached file

The House-approved bill was the one approved by the Senate last December. It will now go to President Obama for his signature. The House also passed a separate bill with changes to the Senate bill. That measure will go to the Senate, where it is expected to pass.