

Action Alert & Update

July 6, 2011

From Steve Larson, Public Policy Director

➤ *Continue to Take Action During the Shutdown*

As of this writing, Governor Dayton and Minnesota legislative leaders still have not reached agreement on a state budget. They have scheduled more talks for this afternoon. In the meantime, you can still take action.

Contact your state representative and state senator. Continue to give them a message similar to one you gave before the shutdown.

“With the government shutdown, we need to finalize a budget agreement now. Support a final state budget that protects services that help people with disabilities live in the community and keep families together. Please also support increased revenues as part of any final agreement.”

When contacting your state legislators, attach your personal story if you have one written. If you don't have one written, add a personal note to your message to legislators, showing them the importance of the services and supports you receive. Send a copy of your message to House speaker Kurt Zellers and Senate Majority Leader Amy Koch.

To find your legislators' contact information, go to www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts. If you have problems sending a message to your legislators, go to the [state legislative directory](#) to find alternative contact information for them.

Rep. Zellers' contact info: 651-296-5052; rep.kurt.zellers@house.mn

Sen. Koch's contact info: 651-296-5981; sen.amy.koch@senate.mn

➤ *Update on Services Operating During Shutdown*

As we mentioned in the June 30th *Public Policy Update*, Ramsey County Judge Kathleen Gearin issued a decision ordering Minnesota budget officials to continue funding certain “essential services” during a government shutdown. Judge Gearin's ruling calls for two major categories of services to continue on in the event of a shutdown:

- 1) Services that ensure the health, safety, and welfare of Minnesota citizens (including Medicaid, TANF, Group Residential Housing, General Assistance, and Minnesota Supplemental Aid).
- 2) Services considered critical core government functions (including services that ensure immediate public safety, public health, and internet security).

Judge Gearin's list of “essential services” can be found near the end of her [legal order](#). It is similar to the list recommended by Governor Dayton, with some differences.

People with disabilities whose services are funded through Medicaid are still receiving those services during the shutdown. School districts, cities, and counties will also receive local government aid (LGA) payments from the state. Medicaid-funded disability supports will continue

to be paid for during the shutdown. Here is updated information about some non-Medicaid funded disability services and other disability-related issues during the shutdown.

- State payments for Consumer Support Grants will continue.
- State payments to counties for Semi-Independent Living Services (SILS) and Family Support Grants will not continue and will not resume until a final budget agreement is reached.
- Counties may still be paying for SILS and Family Support Grants even during the shutdown; each county will have to make its own decision about these programs. Each county will also have to make its own decision about Day Training and Habilitation Services and respite care services that are funded by the county; the state has no jurisdiction over these decisions. Contact your county human services agency to determine if they still are paying for these services. If they are not, contact Mike Gude, The Arc Minnesota Communications Manager (mikeg@arcmn.org).
- The Department of Human Services identified a few staff in the Disability Services Division (DSD) as critical to work during the shutdown. These staff are expected them to handle emergency situations for DSD, which could include concerns related to guardianship, among others.
- Governor Dayton has recommended that the Department of Human Services begin conducting background checks again on those applying for jobs with disabilities providers, starting July 18. The Special Master during the shutdown, Judge Kathleen Blatz, is considering this recommendation.
- The Minnesota Ombudsman Office for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (OMHDD) will operate on a limited basis. In an e-mail, OMHDD Ombudsman Roberta Opheim said, “I encourage you to contact our office if you become aware of cases where someone might be in immediate jeopardy regarding a life, health, or safety issue. Please include cases that if not addressed could cause harm or significant deterioration of physical or mental health or well being of the person, including the provision of and access to care and services that promote and protect the life, health, safety, and well-being of clients..We will continue to receive death and serious injury reports. We will be prioritizing them based on life, health, and safety issues for the client or other clients who might be in jeopardy, and we will be geographically available to intervene in priority cases where our staff might turn the course of events to prevent harm.”
- According to OMHDD, the Department of Human Services Licensing Division is shut down, including the investigations of maltreatment. The Office of Healthcare Facilities Complaints (OHFC) at the Minnesota Department of Health will be open with reduced staffing, “working on the most egregious situations,” according to OMHDD. OMHDD will not be able to replace the regulatory work and investigations conducted by DHS Licensing and OHFC.
- We await Special Master Blatz’s ruling on whether The Arc’s Housing Access Services program will be funded during the shutdown.

Several resources can be helpful in the event of a shutdown.

- The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits has created a central resource webpage on the [2011 Nonprofit Budget/Shutdown Crisis](#) that includes links to key resources and media coverage that can help you get the information you need about the shutdown process and its effects.
- The [Minnesota Disability Linkage Line](#) will not be funded by the state during the shutdown, but it will continue to function on a very limited basis, thanks to reserve funds from some disability organizations.
- The Minnesota Office of Management and Budget also continues to operate their [Shutdown Resource website](#) as well.