

EVOTE

Monday Morning

New Jersey's Grassroots Disability Advocacy Network

July/August 2006

www.njcdd.org/mondaymorning.htm

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FY 2007 state budget passed

After an eight-day shutdown of state offices and services, Governor Corzine and the New Jersey Legislature passed a budget for Fiscal Year 2007. Here are some of the provisions that effect people with disabilities and their families:

Cost of living adjustment for providers

\$22 million is appropriated to provide a one-percent cost of living increase for community care providers in the Department of Human Services and the new Department of Children and Families.

Division of Developmental Disabilities

DDD is funded at the level proposed by the Governor. There is \$50 million appropriated for an *Olmstead* initiative "for residential and other support services and infrastructure for individuals transitioning from the developmental centers to the community and from the community services waiting list, and for family support services ..."

An additional \$5 million is available from the Balanced Housing Fund (Department of Community Affairs) for capital expenditures for group homes.

Early Intervention

Services for children, birth to 3,

received an addition \$20 million over the level that was proposed by the Governor. This increase is an acknowledgement that Early Intervention needs a long-term financing solution.

Co-pays for prescription drugs

Non-dual Medicaid beneficiaries are not included in this bill. The Governor's budget did include a proposal for co-pays for prescription drugs, for non-emergency use of emergency rooms and for outpatient hospital procedures. In addition, the budget eliminates the proposed prior authorization for psychotropic drugs.

Dual eligibles

The wrap-around program for dual eligibles for Medicare Part D is continued. The language allows for

"such sums as are necessary" to pay for the co-pays for dual eligibles under Medicare Part D and to pay for any prescriptions not in the formularies. This allows the State to expend whatever funds are needed, rather than limiting the amount of funds as in last year's budget.

Special Education

Special Education services have been funded at the level proposed in the Governor's budget. In addition, there is a \$19.5 million appropriation for in-district programs to train teachers and provide other services to assist school districts in maintaining children with developmental disabilities in their home schools. (\$15 million for students with autism and \$4.5 million for students with other developmental disabilities.)

Source: Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities (ABCD)

Open Public Forum on the Council's 2007 State Plan

Tuesday, August 1, 2006, at the John H. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Edward J Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, 33 Livingston Ave., 5th Floor., New Brunswick, NJ 08901; (732) 932-4100, ext.717

3 to 7 PM (open-ended, arrive and leave at any time)

Purpose: To obtain your thoughts about the State Plan and its objectives.

This public forum will be an open-ended event, with ample opportunity to approach council staff and members and discuss proposed objectives for the coming year. You may arrive and leave at your leisure, between 3 and 7 PM. This will be an occasion to record your thoughts and concerns on each topic for consideration by the Council.

Interested persons can find a copy of the plan on the council's web site www.njdc.org or request one by calling 609-292-3745

A New Plastic NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid card



The NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid program is replacing its monthly paper Medicaid eligibility identification card with the Health Benefits Identification Card, (HBID), a permanent, plastic, magnetic stripe card. In May, plastic cards were mailed to clients in three counties (Camden, Monmouth and Sussex). People who received the card in May began using it on June 1, 2006. In the next phase, clients who live in Bergen, Cape May, Gloucester, Mercer, Morris, Salem, Somerset, Union and Warren counties will receive their HBID cards in September 2006, and should begin using them on October 1, 2006. Clients in the remaining counties will receive their HBID cards in the near future. Once all clients have received the HBID card, paper cards will no longer be issued.

Key Facts about the HBID card:

- Each eligible family member will receive his or her own card.
- There will be no change in services.
- The card is for identification purposes only. Providers will verify eligibility.
- The HBID card is a technology upgrade, not a policy change.
- People receiving the HBID card should use it the same way they used their monthly paper Medicaid card.

Employment opportunities with Assistive Technology Services

Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey is expanding its Assistive Technology Services program and looking for specialists in the field of assistive technology.

Assistive Technology is any piece of equipment or adaptation to the environment that helps a person with a disability achieve a specific task. It may be as low-tech as a reacher or as high-tech as a computer controlled by voice.

The Assistive Technology Services department (ATS) helps people determine which technology will be most effective in meeting their goals.



Trained professionals visit people in their home, school, or workplace. After evaluating their functional abilities and goals, CP of New Jersey will customize a solution or recommend a device and provide information on how and where to purchase it and help them integrate the technology into their routine.

All positions are full-time and available immediately. Applicants should send resume and salary requirements to: Michelle Mergel, Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey, 354 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ 08608 Fax: (609) 392-3505; email: mmergel@cpofnj.org.

NJCDD New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities

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Monday Morning is a compilation of news stories from various sources, organized to provide information about proposed federal and state policies, programs and laws to New Jersey's grass-roots disability community. The opinions expressed are not necessarily representative of the opinions of all or a majority of the members of the N.J. Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Monday Morning is an initiative of the "Monday Morning Project," an effort by disability community advocates to mobilize people with disabilities to preserve the rights they are entitled to under current federal law; to preserve vital support services; and to give people with disabilities and their advocates a major role in determining how federal funds and matching state dollars are used.



Legislative Update

Two State Bills of Interest

By Sue Gottesman
Governmental Affairs Coordinator

Independence, Dignity and Choice in Long-Term Care Act - P.L. 2006, c.23 (A2823)

On June 21, 2006, Governor Corzine signed into law a bill that is intended to shift Medicaid funds from nursing homes to home- and community-based programs for seniors and people with disabilities. The bill was sponsored by Democratic Assemblymen Jim Whelan, Louis Greenwald, Nelson Albano, Jeff Van Drew, and Gordon Johnson.

Beginning with the budget for New Jersey's next fiscal year (FY 2008, which starts on July 1, 2007), the State will begin a five-year program to reallocate funds presently used to provide long-term care in nursing homes. The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) will use Medicaid funds currently

spent on nursing home care to expand programs that provide home- and community-based services. The law also directs the DHSS to develop a way to more quickly and effectively determine a person's eligibility and needs and to make it easier for eligible people to obtain home- and community-based long-term care.

The law also establishes a 15-member Medicaid Long-Term Care Funding Advisory Council to assist in the implementation of the bill. Unfortunately, the law does not call for the appointment of any self-advocates from the disability community to the Advisory Council. Instead, most of the members will be providers of institutional or segregated services. Others include a labor union representing hospital workers, a member of the New Jersey Elder Rights Coalition and a representative of the New Jersey Association of County Offices for the Disabled. The structure of the Advisory Council highlights how important it is for self-advocates to monitor the State's development of plans for implementing the law and to ensure that there are meaningful opportunities for public comment at appropriate stages of the process.

This law represents a major step forward in the way that long-term care is funded and delivered in New Jersey and is a welcome advance in the expansion of options for home- and community-based supports and services.

Prescription Drug Registry (A2537/S1396)

The Legislature recently passed and sent to the Governor a bill that

proposes to establish the "New Jersey Prescription Drug Price Registry" in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS). Consumers would be able to search by ZIP code to compare retail prices at local pharmacies for the 150 most frequently prescribed drugs. Prices would be updated weekly. The registry would be accessible to consumers through the Internet, as well as through a toll-free telephone service, and upon direct request to DHSS. It is hoped that this information will help consumers save money and avoid overpaying for prescriptions. Retail prices for prescription drugs sometimes vary widely between pharmacy chains. Differences of \$50-\$100 for the same prescription have been reported in New Jersey and New York. mm

FROM OUR READERS

Unfair and unbalanced?

For years, *Monday Morning* has subliminally spread the Democratic politics. I noticed it was the Republican congress who could not bring forth a budget resolution and emergency housing vouchers? Direct Support Worker Bill? It's not said that New Jersey has been controlled by Democrats for over six years. The Republican representatives are overridden constantly. Please make this clear to your readers. And it is appreciated by me to see a bipartisan slant.

—ELIZABETH WULSTER
Matawan

Men with Disabilities Health Conference



Saturday, September 23, 2006

Trenton Marriott at Lafayette Yard, Trenton, NJ

Workshop topics

Relationships & Sexual Health, Fitness, Nutrition, Wellness, Exercise, Mind/Body Connection, Mental Health Issues, Stress, Urological Health

Exhibits on Health & Wellness, Health Screenings

Look for details in August on the Council on Developmental Disabilities website: www.njcdd.org and in the next issue of *Monday Morning*.

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