



Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

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TO: House Human Services Committee (Rep. Pugh, *Chair*; Rep. Haas of Rochester, *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

DATE: February 1, 2013

RE: 2013 Policy Priorities

Thank you for the invitation to speak about two key priorities for this session.

1. Integrated Family Services IFS is envisioned as a more holistic system of care intended to benefit children and families by providing the right services in the right amount at the right time. Unfortunately, services for families of children with a range of developmental disabilities are ending without support to meet their needs. It is estimated that up 1,000 families will lose personal care services. This is of particular concern for families of teens who cannot be left alone and are too old for child care. These families need support to help include their teens in community activities, and for needed respite breaks from care. Yet no funding has been identified, through MCO investment or other sources.

2. Developmental Services System of Care ~ Stabilizing our community based system of care

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the closing of the Brandon Training School. At that time a promise was made to support people with intellectual disabilities to have full lives in the community. Now is the time to stabilize the system of care following years of cuts by ending constant changes to the system of care plan; restoring the level of quality assurance; and ensuring that decisions are based on a current needs budget that is grounded in a thorough assessment of people's needs.

During budget adjustment testimony you heard from both Agency of Human Services Secretary Racine and Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living Commissioner Wehry about an increase in people and populations with significant needs.

We ask that you consider the following:

1. OUR SYSTEM ONLY SERVES A LIMITED NUMBER OF PEOPLE.

- The State estimates that there are 13,050 people with a developmental disability in VT. Only 2539 people ~ about 19% ~ have service packages.
- According to state estimates each year about 135 children are born, while 33 people die.
- In order to get services and supports people have to pass through several doors
 1. They need to meet eligibility based on their disability by
 - Having an IQ of 70 or below OR an autism spectrum disorder **AND**
 - Deficits in daily living skills

AND THEY MUST ALSO

2. Meet one of the "System of Care Funding Priorities.

2. THE SYSTEM OF CARE NEEDS TO BE REBUILT ~ NOT ROLLED BACK ~ AFTER YEARS OF EROSION.

- Over the last 10 years the number of people served has steadily increased, but the number of quality reviewers has dropped from 12 to 4.
- The current System of Care funding priorities are bare bones, and have no room for further rollbacks.
 - Current priorities provide for funding only when there is a dire situation, except for students leaving school with a paid job. For example, children now qualify for a package of services only after repeated psychiatric hospitalizations.
- Since FY2009 four budget cuts have been implemented. Agency budgets are an aggregate of individual budgets, so each round of cuts resulted in reductions in hours of care for individuals. Among the impacts were:
 - Loss of job developer positions that help match people with work
 - Less people working (from 42% to 37%), and decrease in hours worked (from 14 to 8 per week)

3. NEW CASELOAD FUNDING IS NOT KEEPING UP WITH ACTUAL NEEDS.

This year's projected shortfall is due in part to inadequate needs assessment

- The current System of Care Plan was not developed based on a thorough needs assessment, as required by law, that considered demographic trends like
 - People living longer
 - Aging family caregivers who can no longer provide care
- New caseload funding has been based on a past 3 year average that did not include recent trends
- Part of the increase in requests for services may be driven by people who had services cut in recent years whose situation worsened without needed supports.

4. MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH SEVERE FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENT IS IMPORTANT, AND NEEDS TO BE TRANSPARENT.

- Funding is needed for people with severe functional impairments [SFI] leaving Corrections, or who represent Complex Community Cases [CCC,] who are NOT otherwise eligible for developmental or mental health long term care funding.
- It is important to be clear that funding for people with SF/CCC is not part of the developmental disability system of care, and not part of developmental service base funding available for people eligible for developmental services.

5. SAFEGUARDS ARE NEEDED SO THAT PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES DO NOT HAVE THEIR ELIGIBILITY CURTAILED OR SERVICES CUT.

- The unique process for determining which eligible people may access services needs to provide more protection from rollbacks.

In closing I ask that any discussion of sustainability focus on sustaining the quality of care that supports people's lives in our communities.

Thank you.
