

BUDGET/VIGIL UPDATE

Speaker Meets at 4 PM on Tuesday – Wednesday Last Day



Speaker Robert DeLeo met with some representatives of the vigil at 4pm on Tuesday, Oct. 27. The Speaker stated he appreciated the concerns of individuals and families about potential cuts and that the vigil made him and others very aware of the impact of their decisions. We discussed potential cuts with him explaining we had no specifics on targets within DDS, MassHealth and elsewhere. We did share how devastating these cuts will be and shared two stories related to the previous cuts. Speaker DeLeo couldn't give us any guarantees about outcomes but left the door open to further discussions as this crisis continues.

Also on Tuesday, participants got to have a session with Senate President Therese Murray. She came out to meet with vigil attendees and stayed for some time to hear their concerns.



From our recent meetings and conversations with the Governor's office and Legislature we know that:

- The vigil is having an effect upon the Governor as well as the members in the House and Senate
- We still face an uphill fight to protect disability services and are gearing up for the Governor's announcement on Thursday
- Expanded 9C is critical in the short term
- Revenue is still needed but we're a long way from seeing that happen

On Tuesday we were fortunate to have the participation of several organizations to serve as resources on the vigil—thank you to the May Institute, The Arc of the South Shore, North Suffolk Mental Health, SNCARC and Lifeworks, The Arc of Northern Bristol County, Eliot Community Human Services and TILL Inc.

Today the vigil at the offices of the Speaker and Senate President will end.

Other Specific Budget crisis news

In addition to DDS and other specific agencies, MassHealth programs are at risk:

1. Possible Mass Health cuts in short term or as part of 2011-- day habilitation, personal care attendant (PCA) services, adult foster care, dental care, (not a complete list). In the past dental care, for adults was terminated during a budget crisis. Beyond the immediate impact, such a means the loss of dentists to the MassHealth program on a longer term basis.
2. The Tufts Dental program continues to face serious shortfalls at DPH. If cuts in MassHealth also take place it will be devastating.
3. An update on Early Intervention and dental are below. Hearings on EI will be the first step toward new cuts in the program.
4. Services for adults and children are at risk. This is for real. A cut at DDS of 5% to 10% ranges from \$60Million to \$128 Million. It is not a small adjustment; it translates into loss of homes, reductions in employment, day and family support services on top of the \$45 Million suffered already this year.
5. Stay tuned for our press release on Thursday or Friday morning after the Governor's announcement!

See below for:

1. Early Intervention Update
2. Dental Care update including Tufts program
3. Training on working and benefits is being offered by Disability Law Center in the Northeast area of the state.

Early Intervention Update

From: Martha Levine, MEIC President and Mary Ann Mulligan, MEIC Legislative Consultant

Re: Call to Action: EI Part C Public Hearings Approaching- We Need All EI Programs to Participate

Date: October 27, 2009

Early Intervention Part C IDEA Public Hearings

When: Friday, November 6, 2009

**Where: Mc Cormack State Office Building
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA**

Time: 10:00AM – 1:00PM

November 12, 2009

Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel

**181 Boston Post Road West
Marlborough, MA
1:00PM – 3:00PM**

2 Early Intervention Part C Public Hearings Fast Approaching – Consortium Prepares 3-Pronged Strategy: The Early Intervention Federal Part C IDEA hearings are fast approaching and we are asking all 58 Early Intervention programs to help the Consortium with a 3-pronged strategy designed to educate DPH; the Governor and the Legislature about the scope of the fiscal crisis facing the Early Intervention system and the fact that the entire Early Intervention service system in Massachusetts is at risk if alternative funding solutions are not identified to avoid drastic and devastating eligibility and service cuts.

Here is the 3-Pronged Strategy:

Step 1: Ensure a Strong Presence at the 2 EI Hearings - This year we are asking each of the EI regions to ensure a presence by securing program directors, staff parents and EI supporters at one of the 2 hearings. Our goal is to have a strong showing but to save some of our energy and effort for Steps 2 and 3 as well.

Step 2: Written Testimony – We are asking all 58 Programs to participate in this effort. The written testimony is the most critical because we can use to educate all of our audiences: the Governor: the Legislature and even the press (if permission is granted). Electronic written testimony is the best but any and all testimony is welcome and will be used for all the Consortium advocacy efforts. Please engage all EI supporters in this effort. We need testimony from Executive Directors; Program Directors; Parents; Pediatricians/medical professionals; School systems/LEA.

Step 3: EI State House Advocacy Day – Thursday, November 19th Room 511 from 9AM – Noon We will gather in Room 511 and then fan out across the State House to take our message and testimony from the Part C hearings directly to the Legislature. We need to make sure that Representatives and Senators know what is at stake at these DPH hearings. We will be asking Program Directors to bring staff and parents to the State House to visit with their legislators and ask for their help to preserve Early Intervention. Please stay tuned for further details.

Our Message: We want to keep the Consortium’s message simple, compelling and economic: Any changes to the Early Intervention must meet two criteria:

1. Save the Commonwealth money (specifically DPH/EI) and
2. Preserve eligibility and services to the greatest extent possible.

Cutting eligibility with a goal of saving DPH funding does neither. In fact, for every dollar saved by restricting EI eligibility, we lose \$3.50 from other payers (third party insurance and federal matching from Mass Health). The Commonwealth actually pays more if EI is significantly reduced through significantly higher Special Education costs borne by cities and towns and increased Mass Health costs when children are forced to access OT, PT and Speech Pathology in outpatient clinics.

The Consortium has identified several cost savings and cost shifting options to address the EI funding needs and projected shortfalls for 2010 and 2011. We need the Governor and Commissioner Auerbach to work with the Consortium to aggressively pursue alternative, non-state funding sources and cost shifting options. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Sample Letters and Templates Attached to Prepare Oral and Written Testimony

To facilitate the process of preparing written and oral testimony, we have attached the following templates and sample letters:

- Parent Sample letter and guideline for preparing testimony and additional sample letter
- Physician Letters and Template
- LEA Template and LEA sample letter to share with your local school systems

Please note, we are asking that the testimony be addressed to both Governor Patrick at the State House and Ron Benham at DPH. This will ensure that the Governor and the Administration as a whole, understand the real impact that any effort to move beyond 30% eligibility or eliminate eligibility categories will have a devastating and lasting impact on the health and development of children and their families and economic consequences for the Commonwealth.

Here is how all testimony should be addressed:

**Governor Deval Patrick
State House Room 360
Boston, MA 02133**

**Ron Benham
Director, Bureau of Family Health and Nutrition
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02108**

Dear Governor Patrick and Director Benham:

Please bring 2 copies of the testimony to the hearing and plan to submit one copy to Ron Benham (who will be conducting the hearing) and give 1 copy to Mary Ann Mulligan (who will be attending the hearings) to be hand-delivered to Governor Patrick at the State House. If you're not attending the hearing, please mail or email the testimony to both Governor Patrick and Ron Benham and please send a copy to your EI Program Director.

ACTION ALERT
TUFTS DENTAL FACILITIES (TDF)
SERVING PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
10-27-09

**** You can help protect MassHealth adult dental benefits for our patients ****

The state is facing a large budget shortfall and is expected to significantly reduce state spending in response. Governor Patrick is expected to make decisions about the budget this week. We must act now to protect our patients' MassHealth adult dental benefits and the Tufts Dental Facilities program serving persons with special needs!

CONTACT GOVERNOR PATRICK NOW!

HERE'S HOW:

- **Contact the Governor's Constituent Services Office by phone or by email at (617) 725-4005 or goffice@state.ma.us**
- **Tell them that you have a family member or work with a patient that goes to the Tufts Dental Facilities (TDF) and are calling to ask Governor Patrick to preserve MassHealth adult dental benefits and to minimize cuts to the TDF program.**
- **Ask him to preserve funding for line item #4512-0500.**
- **The MassHealth dental program for adults was eliminated during the 2001 state budget crisis. This cut resulted in needless pain and suffering for some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens, and resulted in the State spending millions of dollars on emergency room and inpatient hospital care.**
- **Let them know that the citizens of the Commonwealth are fortunate to have Tufts Dental Facilities serving patients with special needs, which improves**

access to quality preventative dental care and treatment for patients with developmental disabilities.

- **Ask them if the Governor will work to minimize budget cuts to oral health programs for patients with special needs (line item #4512-0500).**
- **Thank them for their time / provide your contact information if asked.**

Employment and Benefits Conference

A Free Training About Work for People with Disabilities

In Spanish and English

Learn About:

- Avoiding problems with SSI/SSDI if you go back to work
- Your rights when applying for a job
- Getting the accommodations you need at work

Also, Sign up for: Individual sessions on your Social Security and work issues. Everything discussed in these sessions will be kept confidential.

Thursday, December 3, 2009

Lynn Housing Authority
Community Room
10 Church Street
Lynn, MA 01902

<http://www.lhand.org>

Presentation: 9:30 – 1:00

Individual Sessions: 1:30 – 3:30

Light Lunch Provided

Presented by Attorneys from the Disability Law Center.

[Registration here or insert address below into your web browser:](#)

http://www.dlc-ma.org/_conf/EB.asp

CONFERENCIA SOBRE EMPLEO Y BENEFICIOS

UN ENTRENAMIENTO GRATUITO SOBRE EMPLEO PARA PERSONAS CON INCAPACIDADES

En Español e Inglés

Aprenda:

- Cómo evitar problemas, al momento en que usted decida trabajar nuevamente, con el programa de Ingreso Suplementario del Seguro Social (SSI, sus siglas en inglés) y el Seguro de Incapacidad del Seguro Social (SSDI, sus siglas en inglés)
- Cuáles son los derechos que usted posee al momento de solicitar empleo
- Cómo obtener las acomodaciones que usted necesita en el trabajo

También, inscríbese en la lista para que participe en: Las sesiones individuales opcionales sobre asuntos relacionados con su Seguro Social y trabajo. Todo discutido durante estas sesiones se mantendrá confidencial.

Jueves 3, de Diciembre de 2009

Lynn Housing Authority
Community Room
10 Church Street
Lynn, MA 01902

<http://www.lhand.org>

Presentaciones: 9:30 – 1:00

Sesiones Individuales: 1:30 – 3:30

Se ofrecerá almuerzo

Presentado por abogados del Disability Law Center

[Inscripcion:](#)

http://www.dlc-ma.org/_conf/EB-sp.asp