

Legislative Alert – Action Needed February 16, 2010

The Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee asked all agencies under its purview, including the Department of Children and Families, to propose cuts of 15%. In a worst case scenario, 15% general revenue cut would be necessary to fill the \$2 billion plus hole in the state budget. With no talk of revenue increases, cuts seem to be the only way to balance the budget.

DCF will be presenting its 15 percent cut list which includes a proposed 31 percent cut to adult Substance Abuse, 35 percent cut to Mental Health and the entire elimination of funding for the Reinvestment Grant.

On top of these cuts would be the \$15.2 million in substance abuse and mental health community projects that are no longer funded after June 30.

The Secretary is clear he is not supporting these cuts and he believes they will be detrimental to the citizens of Florida. However, forced to propose cuts and wanting to protect services to children, adult substance abuse and mental health are targets.

The Chair of the House Health Care Appropriations Committee (Rep. Denise Grimsley) provided committee member rankings of budget items that have the highest and lowest funding priorities (e.g., priority #1 on the low priority list is the lowest priority).

THE PROPOSED REDUCTIONS AND PRIORITY LISTINGS WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE FULL APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 19. The low priority list actually cuts almost twice the target amount so it can be reduced next week. There is still a lot of work to be done by the Committee. What we do know, however, is that some members of the committee believe the following items are a low priority. The CJMHSA reinvestment is included in the Adult Mental Health Services line item.

HOUSE LOW BUDGET PRIORITIES

Program/Service	Total Funds (in millions)	Partial Funding - %*	Target Amount – Total Funds (in millions)
Adult Substance Abuse Services	\$38.53	30%	\$11.56
Executive Direction & Support Services – Executive Leadership/Support Services	\$3.08	0%	\$3.08
Adult Mental Health Services	\$239.13	33%	\$77.72
Adult Mental Health Treatment Facilities – Civil	\$104.62	23%	\$23.54
Restore Nonrecurring Mental Health Services	\$21.48	83%	\$17.90
Adult Mental Health Treatment Facilities – Forensic	\$150.13	10%	\$15.01
Executive Direction & Support Services – Mental Health	\$19.08	60%	\$11.45
Restore Nonrecurring Substance Abuse Services	\$9.28	0%	\$9.28
Homelessness/Housing Programs	\$2.81	0%	\$2.81
Total	\$588.14	29.3%	\$172.35

The Legislature intends to act quickly in developing a budget. House appropriations staff told us last week that the plan is to finish budget work by the third week of the session (March 19). This will allow several weeks for discussion between the two chambers prior to conference. As you know, once cuts are proposed in a budget, it becomes more difficult to fight them in conference.

Our job is to make sure there are minimal, if any, cuts in the House and Senate budgets.

To be successful we are going to need an extraordinary effort from each and every member this session. This is not the session to sit back and let others do the job.

- Call today to set up meetings next week with your legislators (the final week they are home before the session starts). Point out to them the jobs that will be lost, services that you will be forced to shut down, and the impact this will have on their community.
- Plan to come to Tallahassee during the second and third week of the session. It is harder to cut services when legislators are staring their constituents in the eye.
- Call the editorial board of your local newspaper to set up a time to discuss the impact of cuts on your community.