Biennial Budget & Legislative Update

Biennial Budget

We would like commend everyone who took the time to advocate on behalf of individuals who have developmental disabilities or acquired brain disorders. It is strong family voices that have always driven New Hampshire to do what's right. You joined so many other individuals and families statewide, calling and emailing your representatives, participating in the Statehouse Rally, communicating with your Senators, giving testimony during the House and Senate public hearings, writing letters to the editor and expressing yourselves in so many ways, all communicating the need for New Hampshire to continue providing funding for essential services. **It was evident that your voices were heard and that the strength of your advocacy made an important difference!**

After a week of difficult negotiations, on June 16th, the Committee of Conference comprised of House and Senate conferees was able to agree on HB 1 and HB 2, which together constitute the biennial state operating budget for fiscal years 2012-2013, The Committee of Conference reached agreement on the revenue and spending budget and presented it back to the House and Senate on Wednesday June 22nd. Of primary interest to all of us is the fact that the conference committee held to the Senate-approved budget of the Bureau of Developmental Services. This includes the $6M that the Senate added for the services to individuals on the Developmental Disabilities Waitlist.

The Budget was approved by the House and Senate and sent to the Governor on June 22nd. On June 24th at about 1:00 PM the Governor Lynch allowed HB1 & HB2 to pass without his signature.

While there are still cuts within this budget, the Bureau of Developmental Services stands alone as a piece of the biennial budget that is actually an improvement from what the Governor had presented in his original budget. Under the current economic circumstances and political climate, the budget that we achieved is certainly the best outcome possible. However, overall, the state will spend $4.4 billion over the next two years, a reduction of 11 percent over current spending levels and many vulnerable citizens will be affected by these reductions.

Medicaid Managed Care Bill Passed into Law

In spite of our efforts having prevented major reductions in the budget and while still facing a lack of resources to help people who will not receive WL funding, there is another major challenge on the horizon. During this difficult legislative period, a significant piece of legislation was passed and signed into law by Governor Lynch on June 2nd. This law mandates the Commissioner of Health and Human Services to contract with a managed care organization to administer NH Medicaid Services beginning July 2012. The Commissioner will be preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) by October 15th, with awarding of the contract by January 15, 2012. The budgetary intent is to save $32M in the second year of the biennium through managed care. Dependent upon how the Commissioner proceeds with implementing this law, there is great potential for the community developmental service system, currently managed through the Area Agency system, to change dramatically.

The ten Area Agencies, including Region 10, are committed to working together through our association, the Community Support Network (CSNI), to preserve the person centered, values driven, quality services that individuals and families expect. CSNI has already been engaged with a national consultant to learn how other states have implemented managed care and the outcomes achieved, is working to develop educational resources for individuals and families, elected officials, and other community members to learn more about managed care and our boards are engaged in developing a proposal to assist the Department to develop a model that preserves our values and quality while utilizing our strengths as established and respected community organizations.

During the upcoming months, we expect that there will be opportunities presented by the Department for individuals, families and other stakeholders to give their input about how this law should be implemented**. So once again, your family voices will need to be raised to guide New Hampshire to do the right thing!**

If you are not already on our Policy Watch email tree to receive updates on important public policy matters and want to be included, please contact Terri Cadorette at TCadorette@region10nh.org. Also, please be sure to check our website periodically for updates at www.region10nh.org.