

To: MH/MR Administrators  
From: Michael D. Chambers  
Date: May 7, 2009  
Subject: Bullets

"Monkeys are superior to men in this: when a monkey looks into a mirror, he sees a monkey."- Malcolm de Chazal

**The State Budget:** This is a frightening situation. In fact, this is the most threatening state budget process that any of us have ever seen.

As you know, on May 5, I sent you an urgent message, encouraging you to speak with or email your legislators encouraging them to vote down Senate Bill. Since then Senate Bill 850 passed through the Senate on straight party lines. No original thinking or great leadership has been evident. The only visible goal is to produce a balanced budget, with no deficit, without raising taxes. Supporters of the bill stress that they are not raising taxes, but never discuss the damage that they are doing to real people in their own communities. They don't even mention that *de facto* they are assuring that someone else, notably County Commissioners, will have to raise taxes to meet their legal mandates. More on that will follow, below.

Meanwhile the House has introduced HB 1416, which more closely mirrors the Governor's proposed budget as released in February. The next step is consideration and amending of both bills by the House of Representatives, which generally results in a conference committee which drafts the final budget for approval of both houses and finally signature by the Governor.

The Senate left town following passage of its version of the budget. The House will take a few weeks off beginning next week and will return to the Emerald City on June 1. The fun will resume shortly thereafter.

We have already given you information about the cuts that would be made if SB 850 is incorporated into the final budget.

**About ODP:**

Kevin Casey estimates that the impact of the cuts would result in:

- Reductions of \$12,117,000 in Community Base Dollars - This would cut about 3000 individuals from service. Sometimes these are the people who have desperate needs and are not enrolled in a waiver.
- Reduction of Waiver Services funding by \$32,720,000 in combined state and federal dollars. This would eliminate the emergency initiative for next year. There would be no waiting list initiative and the list will continue to grow. ODP had budgeted to serve 760 people from the waiting lists in 2009/2010.
- Removal of 550 individuals who are currently in waiver services. These people are primarily in the Consolidated Waiver. Remember that ODP cannot just reduce services to waiver participants based on availability of funds, but they can completely remove individuals from the waivers.
- Reduction by \$15, 286,000 in combined state and federal dollars for autism services. Essentially, the Autism Waiver, and the ACAP program would be cut in half. OD would cut 245 of the 500 people they had planned to serve.

### **Having fun? Let's look at OMHSAS.**

Joan Erney's preliminary estimates follow. She plans to share more estimates, soon.

- The Senate cuts would total \$9,789,000. This would be applied to the mental health base allocations and would eliminate services to 4,132 Pennsylvanians. This is on top of the cuts that the Governor made in his proposed budget.
- Reduction of \$13,000,000 in the Behavioral Health Services Initiative (BHSI). That step would cut services to another 2,761 people.
- About 6,893 people who apply for services will be turned away. Three groups of special importance to Joan are veterans who are returning home from service to our nation, people who have been recently unemployed and victims of epidemic or disaster.
- We are afraid that cuts in General Assistance (MA medically needy only) will be deep if not complete. This will be devastating for people who need immediate behavioral health intervention, especially inpatient services, but are not already enrolled in Medicaid. Behavioral Health is "disproportionately impacted"

**That's the general picture.** I think about the impact on your communities and mine. A failing economy increases demands on the MH/MR and Drug and Alcohol service systems. Less money in your budgets means that you cannot effectively

respond to the increased demand. People with unmet needs then use other services if they are available. They are cut as well. Hospitals are already weakened as a result of providing uncompensated care. That cannot continue for long. Police and county prisons will be under incredible stress. Our citizens, if they are not served and become unemployed are more likely to become homeless and involved with the criminal justice system than they have ever been. More parents will become unable to care for their children and involved with your Children and Youth agency.

**Action is needed, now.**

Yes, our situation is dismal. The truly disappointing part of this is that it is likely that the cuts in SB 850 will actually be used to amend the house budget bill. The threat is real and immediate. This is not a drill. This is not hyperbole. This is a specter of our future if the train is not stopped and refueled with enhanced revenue. Legislators should be held responsible for their lack of leadership and problem solving skills. When they simply say that they are not raising taxes but they are quietly passing the expense to others at the expense of others, is not courageous or ingenuous.

The time is now and definitely before June 1. For the next few weeks legislators are likely to be in their home districts where you may have easier access to them than when they are in session in Harrisburg. Please talk to your Commissioners and ask them to support the CCAP positions on Human Services Funding and personally communicate their issues to your legislators.

CCAP, of course, is actively lobbying on behalf of all of the county-based human services and we support them in doing so.

Please make yourself known. Calls to district offices are better than emails or letters, but do whatever you can. You can identify legislators and write to them through CapWiz on the CCAP website or use the legislative resources on the Network of Care site. Please let me know what you are doing.

Thanks,

Mike

