
MANHATTAN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

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Services for People with Developmental Disabilities

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We are families, friends, self-advocates, and professionals working together on behalf of people with developmental disabilities. Developmental disabilities—such as intellectual disability, autism, and cerebral palsy—are incurable, life-long conditions, ranging from mild to severe. People with developmental disabilities rely on a range of vital services funded through the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

We are counting on our legislators once again this year to ensure that people with developmental disabilities obtain the level of supports they require.

URGENTLY NEEDED: ADDITIONAL 24-HOUR RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

- **The Governor's budget proposes \$60 million in state funds** for new residential, adult day, and other services. But half of this money would go for continuation of funding for programs begun last year. Only \$30 million would be available for brand new services. This \$30 million would need to cover all types of new services, including residential, adult day, employment, respite, and many other services.
- **In New York State about 6,400 people need residential placement within two years!** Of those, roughly 3,000 are from New York City. A current statewide survey confirms that thousands of families' most urgent need by far is for 24-hour residential services.
- **OPWDD has committed to ensuring residential services for certain populations:** students aging out of residential schools, individuals who are homeless, or whose caregivers have died or become disabled, or who are ready to leave hospitals or nursing homes. These people do have critical needs and should be served.
- **Families with urgent needs must also be priorities, including those who have children with intensive, costly needs.** Once OPWDD fulfills its commitments, there will be only budgetary crumbs for families who have saved the state millions of dollars by keeping their children home—even for families on the brink of crisis, who are too old, too ill, or too exhausted to continue to care for their adult children at home.

➤ **We urge our legislators to add funding for new 24-hour residential services for 300 people living at home with their families—as well as for critically needed adult day and at-home services—particularly now that the fiscal situation has improved.**

UNDERPAID DIRECT SUPPORT STAFF STILL NEED WAGE INCREASES

- **We appreciate the much-needed salary increase in the budget for direct support staff**—a welcome acknowledgement of the importance of their work. Direct support staff provide the hands-on care that keeps people healthy and safe, whether it is help with dressing, hygiene, monitoring blood pressure, or managing money.

- **These dedicated staff are so poorly paid, even with the recent increase,** that most need to work two or more jobs, just to survive. Starting pay averages a meager \$10/hour to \$12/hour! Sooner or later, the low pay forces many to quit for higher-paying work in other fields.
- **Direct support is not a minimum-wage job.** The work is extremely challenging and requires extensive and ongoing training—for example, in medication administration, managing extremely challenging behaviors, transferring non-ambulatory individuals, and teaching new skills. Wages must be commensurate with job responsibilities.

➤ **We urge our legislators to enact legislation linking any increase in the minimum wage to salary increases for direct support staff. Rates for providers must be increased to accommodate the wage increases.**

IN JEOPARDY: PRESCHOOL SERVICES and EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- **The 4410 non-public preschool special education programs provide essential services to 3-5 year-olds with significant disabilities.** With no tuition increases for six years in the face of rising costs, classroom-based 4410 preschool providers are facing unsustainable losses. Several providers have already been forced to close, and others are seriously considering whether they can afford to continue. 4410 preschools are in desperate need of a financial lifeline for their very survival.
- **Now that New York State has finally recognized the importance of early childhood education** and has increased funds for Pre-K services, it is unconscionable to deny equivalent resources to its most vulnerable children.

➤ **We urge our legislators to provide a 5% increase AND a legal mechanism, perhaps tied to inflation, that would ensure annual tuition increases for classroom-based 4410 preschools.**

- **Early Intervention (EI) provides highly cost-effective developmental and therapeutic services** to infants and toddlers with quantified delays, ages birth to 3, the ideal time for influencing permanent brain development. Studies prove that EI services increase children's skills and decrease their future need for costly disability-related services.
- **EI is in crisis.** Operating on the original inadequate 1992 rate, EI providers have received only one small increase in over 20 years, despite rising costs. Moreover, a 5% cut five years ago forced many established providers to close their doors. The remaining providers are dangling over a fiscal cliff, assessing daily whether they can afford to continue.

➤ **We urge our legislators to provide a 4.8% funding increase to preserve essential EI services.**