
MANHATTAN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

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WORKFORCE ISSUES

Presented by Lisa Gilday
Chief Operating Officer, Birch Family Services
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Significant workforce issues are confronting our non-public special education schools. These schools are approved and funded by the NYSED to provide special education services in 4410 preschool and 853 school age programs. Their students are public school children who are placed there after the Committee on Preschool Special Education or the Committee on Special Education determines that there is no other appropriate setting in a local public school. We educate the most vulnerable children who have no other educational options.

These programs are at risk because of ongoing, inadequate funding. 4410 and 853 schools have received minimal tuition increases over the last 8 years. The governor is currently recommending an increase of \$769 million (3%) in school aid and an additional \$15 million in prekindergarten expansion, but nothing for 4410 or 853 programs. Since 2012, education funding has been increased by 35%, but the 4410 providers have received only a 6% increase, and the 853 providers only 18%.

Lack of adequate funding has resulted in significant hiring and retention issues. Providers are not able to pay teaching staff anywhere near what school districts pay. School districts can pay an average of \$20,000 to \$40,000 more than our 853 and 4410 providers. The salary differential is now 25% more in NYC, 40% more in Long Island, and up to 60% more in the Mid-Hudson region.

The discrepancy is substantial and growing. Our providers cannot attract and keep their staff as staff are actively recruited by school districts. This results in further financial loss as providers losing teaching staff have to close classes and turn away students. Some programs are utilizing their supervisory and administrative staff to cover classrooms, taking time away from their own jobs and sacrificing the ability to provide support and professional growth to new staff members.

Some providers have had to close their doors. Others are not sure that they will be able to continue. Ultimately, the students will be most affected as they will not receive the educational supports that they require to become functioning members of society.

4410 and 853 schools must be included in the education budget to receive regular increases consistent with the increases that all education programs receive.