

## 2011 Utah State Legislative Session, Week 2 Review

by [Disability Law Center](#) on Sunday, February 6, 2011 at 3:28pm

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Week 2 saw the budget begin to take shape and gave us our first look at some big questions looming on the horizon.

As I mentioned last week, many of our core issues remain near the top of the Social Services and Executive Offices and Criminal Justice Appropriations Committees' backfill priority lists, if there is money available at the end of the session. Additionally, at the suggestion of Sen. Jones, the co-chairs of the Social Services Appropriations Committee asked the Executive Appropriations Committee for permission to use funds from the tobacco settlement trust and the social services block grant to pay for items 1-26 on their list. The Executive Appropriations Committee is considering their request.

That being said, it is still critical to contact [members of the committee](#) as well as your own [senator or representative](#) to let them know what these programs and services mean to you or your family. Remind them that many of these cuts are on top of ones already taken over the last 2-3 years and do not include reductions previously scheduled to go into effect this year. To help make it a little easier, we have identified our top 10 priorities. They are:

- Eliminate transportation reimbursement for DSPD providers.
- Eliminate higher reimbursement rate for DSPD providers of intensive respite care.
- Reduce non-Medicaid child/adult mental health services by \$2 million.
- Reduce the Medicaid personal care option to 20 hours a month.
- Further limit the ability of Adult Protective Services to investigate the abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities in nursing homes and the elderly by reducing staff.
- Reduce the number of incapacitated adults receiving guardianship services through the Office of Public Guardian.
- Reduce residential mental health services for youth in state custody.
- Reduce state hospital funding by \$4 million.
- Increase the case loads and reduce reimbursement rates for DSPD support Coordinators.
- Eliminating 65% of remaining state funding for receiving centers and youth services.

In our minds, these are the programs that make the biggest difference for the largest number of people or are at greatest risk of getting cut. We recommend that you focus on the top two or three most important to you or your family. If you would like to talk about other items, here is the [original list](#).

In addition to the budget, several committees are discussing major policy changes that could dramatically affect these programs for years to come. Sen. Liljenquist and Rep. Sanpei are drafting a bill that aims to reduce costs in Medicaid by limiting growth to the inflation rate and changing the way doctors and hospitals are paid to encourage an

emphasis on cost-effective care and healthy outcomes. There are also conversations taking place around the possibility of shifting the responsibility of paying for beds at the Utah State Hospital to counties, which could have a big impact on the way all public mental health services are delivered. Lastly, if cuts are too deep, the Utah State Board of Education is exploring the idea of closing the Utah State Schools for the Deaf and Blind and transferring responsibility for meeting the needs of these students to local school districts. We are in the process of researching the pros and cons of each of these options and will keep you informed as they move forward.

Finally, for some good news, Rep. Menlove's [Employment First bill](#) should pass the House and move to the Senate this coming week. The bill requires the Department of Workforce Services, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Division of Services for People with Disabilities to prioritize providing the kind of supports that individuals with disabilities need to get and keep good paying jobs. Ultimately, it is hoped this will lead to more money for supported employment and other proactive programs.

Please do not forget to check [our website](#) for the latest updates to the bill tracker and committee meetings of interest. Also, do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. As always, thank you for your interest and support.