



Maintain and improve essential services for our most vulnerable children and assure that changes are based on the needs of children and not on budget shortfalls

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Issue Overview

Strong communities are created when we make planned informed choices about how to use our limited public resources. That is why NH CAN must work to support a responsible state budget and avoid making short term budget cuts that result in long-term consequences for our children. The budget that was adopted for fiscal years 2010 and 2011 is based on optimistic assumptions and reduces funding in areas critical to child well-being in NH, destabilizes families and communities at a time when they most need safety nets and undermines NH's future capacity to grow and prosper. Funding in the '10-'11 budget was reduced for

- Services for children and families served by the Divisions for Children, Youth and Families and Juvenile Justice Services
- Alcohol and substance abuse prevention and treatment
- Diversion and prevention programs

Appropriations for other programs are based on what appear to be optimistic assumptions about the demand for services

- A waiting list for child care assistance has begun; while families already receiving child care scholarships will keep them, only those families receiving TANF can be added to the program. In addition, payments to child care programs that meet higher standards and provide supports for families will cease on Dec. 31, 2009.
- TANF caseloads are only slightly more than budgeted, but the overall demand for TANF funds, for direct grants to families, supportive services and other programs lead to a projected \$4m shortfall by the end of the biennium.
- There is already talk about imposing a cap on enrollment in Healthy Kids Silver because of the increased demand and potentially inadequate appropriation.

The state must cut \$25m in personnel costs through either lay-offs or other means. The Department of Health and Human Services faces an additional requirement to reduce costs by \$21m/year through personnel or service changes or reductions. The Legislature did not require a plan to do so without causing further harm to children and families due to inadequate staffing to process applications, lack of timely access to assistance due to lack of services, or to provide the legislature with impact reports to be able to promptly respond to further fiscal morass .

Proposed Solution

We will carefully monitor the implementation of the state budget to measure and document its impact on children and families. This will include:

- Gathering budget and service data from NH DHHS
- Maintaining close contact with service providers and their clients to learn of their direct experience with any service changes
- Working with representatives from DHHS, the Legislature and the Governor's office to evaluate proposed changes in service delivery, including rates paid to providers, eligibility, limits on services, etc.
- Publicizing the results of our efforts

Call to Action

Members of NH CAN can monitor their own experience with changes in state support for services, ensure that clients and potential clients are aware of the situation and steps they can take, and speak out about any changes that represent a backwards step for NH's children and families. They can provide real stories about the real impact and true cost of service reductions.