



North Star News



APRIL 2012

Budget Blues: What to expect in this budget year

Special thanks to Sharon Ward, Executive Director of the PA Budget and Policy Center, for sharing her expertise on the Governors proposed 2012 state budget.

It's that time of year again! to worry about which programs will be cut and how it will affect the programs that serve as a safety net for so many vulnerable, at-risk populations. Pennsylvania is faced with a shortfall of approximately 500 million dollars. To make up for this shortfall, below is a recap of a few of the health and human service programs that will change if the proposed budget is passed later this year.

- One of the biggest cuts to the Medicaid budget is to the General Assistance (GA) category. This will affect caregivers of sick people, domestic violence sufferers, adults in drug and alcohol care, and those who make the least amount of money on Medicaid. It includes \$28 million in inpatient and outpatient lines and \$142 million reflecting reduced enrollment in managed care.
- The Medical Assistance for Worker's with Disabilities Program (MAWD) will have a premium increase from 5% to 7.5%
- Long Term-Living Waiver services received a decrease of \$3 million in state funds and \$19 million in federal funds.
- Home and Community-Based Services and Attendant Care are each slated for \$8 million in cuts resulting from review of high cost cases.
- Autism services reduction is proposed from \$29.3 million in state and federal funds to \$25 million.
- The proposed budget combines funding for several other programs into a single grant called the Human Services Development Fund Block Grant. This grant will reduce funding by 20% for the Medical Assistance Outpatient, Behavior Health Services, Mental Health Services, ID Community Base Program, County Child Welfare, the prior HSDF and Homeless Assistance.

To learn more about the proposed 2012-2013 budget, please visit www.pennbpc.org.

The Healthy Hospital Workgroup and our ongoing efforts to reduce hospital readmissions through education and empowerment of seniors and their caregivers will be running a series of focus groups.

We are recruiting seniors, age 60 and up who have had at least one hospital stay in the last three years; and caregivers, age 18 and up who have assisted a loved one through a transition, to participate. Participants in the focus groups will receive \$25 and a free meal as part of their participation in the focus group. The group will meet one time for 1.5 hours.

If interested, please contact Sally Jo Snyder, (412) 456-1877 x 203 or email

ssnyder@consumerhealthcoalition.org

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Advocates Speak Out: Featuring Janet Evans

“I dread being in the hospital, that’s why in 2009 when I acquired a MRSA infection in my leg, I was so happy that I would be able to remain in my home and still receive treatment,” Janet Evans, a Lift Up Your Voice graduate, shared with the CHC staff. “It’s horrible when I have to spend time in a hospital. I have a hard time doing certain things on my own and without my special medical equipment like my remote control bed and accessible bathroom I have a really difficult time.” Understanding Janet’s situation, her doctors worked with her to quickly get the infection under control in a few days, and then were able to send her home with the help of a visiting nurse. The visiting nurses assisted Janet with her bandages and cleaning her leg on a regular basis for almost four months. “The nurses kept in direct contact with my foot doctor and everything was taken care of right away. If I needed something I just asked. My pharmacy even delivers my prescriptions right to my home. I try to teach others to speak up! It is important to let your doctors and nurses know what your needs are so that they can help.”



Advocacy Toolbox: Giving Public Testimony

Sharing your thoughts on an issue through public testimony is a great way to get your legislators to listen! The next time a town hall meeting is scheduled to discuss an issue that affects you or those around you, sign-up to share your testimony. It’s a quick and easy way to have your voice heard.

Here are some tips to help you in preparation:

- 1) Schedule a time to give your testimony or show up early to sign-up to speak. Time is often limited, so keep your statements between 2 – 3 minutes.
- 2) Be clear and concise. Make sure that you make a connection between your situation and the policy that you want to change. Share your own personal experience with the issue or describe how it will affect other people around you.
- 3) Be professional and respectful, even if others are not.
- 4) Bring along copies of your testimony so that you can distribute one to each of the public officials.

Remember! If your legislators do not hear from you they are going to think that you don’t care



News You Can Use

Check out these two great Letters to the Editor written by Lift Up Your Voice Graduates, Joyce Schlag and Rosemary Prostko. They ran in the Post Gazette this month! Congratulations Joyce and Rosemary!

A Good Law

The Affordable Care Act is under scrutiny of the Supreme Court. Why do we need this law? The costs of our current system continue to rise while there are 40 million uninsured persons. In our current system, compassion compels us to treat the true emergency patient in the hospital whether that person has insurance or not. So who pays the bill? You and I pay through increased premiums or tax-based government programs.

How would the Affordable Care Act be different? One of the differences is in mandating shared responsibility. That means that the person who now pays nothing for very expensive emergency treatment or for emergency episodes of chronic conditions such as asthma, share a responsibility to pay for their care. Why can't the uninsured get coverage now?

Employers may not offer it. Private insurances can either deny coverage to persons with a pre-existing condition such as cancer or they charge unaffordable premiums. This law applies to the young healthy adult and to the person who has "never been sick a day in my life."

Accidents do happen. Car accidents, sports injuries, victims of violence: we don't know when or if these things would happen to us. The Affordable Care Act provides coverage and responsibility.

Many arguments against the law are based on the fear that our freedom is being taken away. This makes as much sense as the question, can the government force me to buy broccoli?

JOYCE SCHLAG

People of Faith Should Help Fellow Citizens

As I listen to the numerous debates raging around the Affordable Care Act (Obama care), I hear so many say or imply, "I worked hard for mine, you must work hard for yours. Don't be lazy. In the U.S. everyone has an equal chance."

This reminds me of Jesus saying to his disciples, "I was hungry and you did not feed me. I was thirsty and you did not give me to drink. I was naked and you did not clothe me." His followers cried in despair "When, Lord, did we do this to you?" "When you did this to the least of my people, you did this to me" (Matthew 25).

Whether you are a Christian or not, it is a good challenge to be your brother's keeper. Most people of faith have a "Golden Rule."

Many are saying, "Let religion do it, as in the past." But the numbers and complications of the health care system have grown beyond the ability of fragmented guardianship. Perhaps it is time for Caesar to provide for the needs of God's people.

In this, the holiest season of the Christian year, how can a follower not want his neighbor to have health care in Jesus' name?

ROSEMARY PROSTKO



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Consumer Health Coalition was founded in 1996. We are a non-profit health care advocacy organization with a mission to "inspire a consumer movement to advance health and enhance access to quality, affordable health care."

We believe that access to quality, affordable health care, and ultimately good health and wellness, are critical to a person's ability to reach his or her potential. We also know that people experience disparate "starting points" or access to resources that are unfortunately correlated with socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic background, and disability status. CHC is dedicated to the eradication of disparities in health access and outcomes, and will continue pushing until every person has the health coverage and care they need.

Mark your calendar for these important dates!

April 2012

MONDAY APRIL 2

Healthy Hospitals Workgroup
6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
CHC Offices

THURSDAY APRIL 12

PA CBC Conference Call
State Budget Blues
10:00 am to 11:00 am
Call-in: (712) 432-1630
Access code: 411307#

TUESDAY APRIL 17

Lift Up Your Voice Training
10:00 am to 3:00 pm
East Liberty Presbyterian Church
Please call 412-456-1877 to register

WEDNESDAY APRIL 25

Advocacy Workshop
Mr. Smith Goes to Harrisburg
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
CHC Offices
Please call 412-456-1877 to register

May 2012

MONDAY MAY 7

Healthy Hospitals Workgroup
6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
CHC Offices

THURSDAY APRIL 12

PA CBC Conference Call
10:00 am to 11:00 am
Call-in: (712) 432-1630
Access code: 411307#

WEDNESDAY MAY 30

Advocacy Workshop
You had me at Hello!
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
CHC Offices
Please call 412-456-1877 to register