
News

The 2012 elections maintained the **political status quo in our state government**. There are a few new faces in the legislature but the same party is in control of both chambers by the same count and the same executive management team is in place. Now is a good time to contact your state legislators and alert them to your situation. You can find your legislators on the Connecticut General Assembly web site through this link: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/CGAFindLeg.asp>

Connecticut is currently facing a \$365 million shortfall in the budget for the current fiscal year that will require **immediate cuts in state spending**. The General Assembly is expected to convene for a special session in December to consider a deficit-mitigation plan. Across-the-board spending cuts could mean significant reductions in the DDS budget for January-June 2013.

Watch for budget updates from DDS at:

<http://www.ct.gov/dds/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=433828>

The 2013 General Assembly will produce a **new biennial budget for FY 2014 and FY 2015**. The state is facing deficits of \$1.18 billion in FY 2014 and \$0.96 billion in FY 2015. That's about 5% of the entire general fund – so we must be prepared to fight proposals for significant budget cuts in DDS. In previous memoranda regarding the impacts of such cuts, Commissioner Macy has said that the extent of such reductions are unprecedented and they would touch every facet of DDS services including services to the most vulnerable.

Public Act No. 12-33 authorized the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the State of Connecticut to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement for self-directed Personal Support, Individual Home Supports, Individual Day Supports, Respite, Adult Companion, and Transportation among others. If you self-direct these services then your interests are represented by a Personal Care Attendant Workforce Council. The Act requires the Council to meet by September 1, 2012, to establish standards for wages, benefits and conditions of employment, however the Council has not yet convened any meetings nor issued any recommendations. Meanwhile the SEIU has surveyed our workers and prepared their position.

DDS is developing **new individual budgets and service rates for residential services at private providers** based on a person's level of need in accordance with the Legislative Rate Study Final Report. Transition to the new budgets and rates is expected to begin in 2013. Watch for more information at: <http://www.ct.gov/dds/cwp/view.asp?a=3166&Q=500400>

Earlier this year, the DDS South Region held a series of **forums about Creative Housing solutions** where families shared innovative residential arrangements in lieu of group-home placements for their adult members who live with intellectual disabilities. The North Region is planning a similar series of forums. Stand by for details.

Upcoming Events

State legislators will convene for a **special session during the week of December 17, 2012** to consider a deficit-mitigation plan for the current fiscal year.

The **2013 General Assembly** will convene on January 9, 2013. The Governor will deliver his biennial budget proposal to the legislature in early February. Public hearings on the budget will be scheduled in February and March. Stand by for announcements of public hearings on the budget and other matters of concern to families.

The FETF will be scheduling events where families can voice their concerns to the Governor and to the legislature. Stay tuned for announcements. You may request an informational meeting near to you by sending an email to family-empowerment@comcast.net.

The DDS North Region will be holding **forums on creative residential solutions** in early 2013. Stand by for details.

For more information about upcoming events, check our groups on Yahoo or Facebook – or send an email to family-empowerment@comcast.net

Join us on the Internet

Website: <http://family-empowerment.weebly.com>

Facebook: CT DDS Family Empowerment Task Force

Yahoo: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/family-empowerment/>

Email: family-empowerment@comcast.net

Support the FETF

You may support the FETF with a donation to our fiscal agent, Raising Voices for Action, Inc. Make your check payable to Raising Voices for Action, Inc. and please note on the check that it is for the FETF. Mail your donations to the FETF, 17 C Woodland Street, Vernon, CT 06066.

About the FETF

The Family Empowerment Task Force (FETF) is an informal, unincorporated, organization of parents, siblings, guardians, caregivers and self-advocates that works to sustain, enhance and grow the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) that are offered by DDS through its private provider network by: 1) Developing a supportive network of families and individuals who receive services; 2) Educating families about DDS services; and 3) Educating legislators and public officials about the needs of families.