

67 Legislative Session, NOW/COMP Waivers, Waiting Lists and More

Dearest Advocates:

Happy New Year to everyone. I realize that you are probably shocked you have not heard from me by now. Unfortunately, we have continued to experience many issues between medical concerns with Jacob, as well as, disability waiver issues to resolve. I hope I'll be able to send out information on a quicker basis but please be patient as we are all experiencing difficult times. I continue to receive over 200+ emails a day and can not respond to everyone directly. This is why I spend the time issuing newsletters so everyone can hear what is going on and how to get involved! This also helps me maximize my time to help everyone I can via this format. Thanks for understanding.

As you are aware, the GA legislative session started on January 12th with Governor Perdue speaking on the budget on January 14th. Due the economic downturn, there is going to be significant cuts to the budget. Many options are being discussed with both the House and Senate. As we find out ways to advocate for those programs needed for individuals with disabilities, I will let you know. AADD did send out a summary email regarding the Governor's speech and budget recommendations. See below for specific information regarding the budget proposal, cuts and the Governor's speech.

I am still hearing and dealing with issues families are experiencing due to the implementation of the NOW/COMP disability waivers. As I hear more information that may help you during this transition, I will forward along. Greg Kirk (disability advocate) has been actively following the situation as well. To see additional information and concern, please go to the following website: http://www.disabilitiesissuesandanswers.com/new_systems_now_comp

I concur that there are many problems with the implementation of the new waivers, as well as, opportunities for improvement on how to best use the small amount of \$\$\$ we do have for the actual services and **NOT** the bureaucracy of the system with burdensome paperwork. Our families need to have access to care and providers! More to come in the future-

In addition, Fox News Geraldo Rivera has continued to cover the issues surrounded the waiting lists in the United States. More information go to: "The Waiting List: America's Health Care Crisis" is at <http://www.foxnews.com/geraldo/index.html>. There are 6 separate videos that can be viewed on this page. We need continue to support the media as they bring these issues to those that don't understand what is really going on in the United States!

If you missed Julie and Katie Beckett talk at the CDC last month, you can view the recording of this lecture at http://www.aucd.org/template/news.cfm?news_id=3399&id=16

Also- Self advocates day at the Capitol has been scheduled for Feb. 9th. More information below.

Yesterday was an exciting day for our country. It will be interesting to see how President Obama supports the services needed for individuals with disabilities and their families in the coming months ahead.

Fun activity to announce: an upcoming Valentines Dance. See below for more information.

Will keep you posted as always-

“UNITED – WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!”

Sincerely,

Heidi

(Proud Mother to Jacob - 8 yrs old with Down syndrome and Jared - 7 yrs old)

“Help the Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!”

www.heidijmoore.com

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The Governor's Budget Address

Governor Perdue delivered his State of the State Address yesterday. Included in this address was his budget proposals for the amended budget for Fiscal Year 2009 and his full budget for Fiscal Year 2010.

He thanked the legislature for working with his administration to help replenish the Rainy Day Fund, which now stands at \$1.2 billion. In these budgets, Governor Perdue recommended using the maximum amount available for appropriation from the reserves, appropriating \$187 million for the education midyear adjustment, \$50 million in 2009 and \$408 million in 2010. In 2009, a number of one-time strategies unavailable in 2010 will be implemented to balance the budget. Therefore, Governor Perdue recommended the largest portion of available reserve funds be committed to the 2010 budget.

Governor Perdue will also introduce legislation to ask those who receive Medicaid payments to help fund the system. This proposal takes advantage of the fact that every dollar used toward Medicaid purposes draws down almost two additional dollars from the federal government. The budget will reflect, and an accompanying bill will propose, a 1.6 percent fee on hospitals and health insurance plans to, not only fill the hole in Medicaid, but also to do what the healthcare community has asked of Governor Perdue's administration. This proposal will significantly raise Medicaid rates,

particularly for hospitals; and in conjunction with the SuperSpeeder legislation, provide \$60 million for trauma to sustain and expand the state's trauma hospitals, EMS and trauma physician infrastructure.

However, even with these very important steps to mitigate cuts to human services, these budgets will leave more families and individuals with disabilities in crisis in the future. The budget cut 135 MRWP services that were funded during last year's session. It also cuts important contracts to providers of disability supports and funds for much needed training in our ever changing system. The good news in the budget is that it funds 150 new MRWP slots and 100 new ICWP slots for those persons currently being supported in institutions and nursing homes, so that they can live in the community as part of the Money Follows the Person program. These services are part of our state's efforts to implement our Olmstead Plan and are in line with the settlement the state signed recently with the Federal government to continue to show progress in this area over the next few years.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts made with these budgets by the Governor to lessen harmful cuts to supports for families and individuals with disabilities who would be very vulnerable without them. The Governor said in his speech, "political mantras aside, cutting more than 10 percent from a budget cannot be achieved by simply cutting waste. While we have worked for six years to do more with less, at some point, in business or in government, it becomes less with less." We agree. Georgia is 49th in the country for our fiscal effort in community supports. Unfortunately, families and persons with disabilities are getting what we pay for. We, therefore, must continue to ask the General Assembly to look for revenue solutions that will keep Georgia moving forward.

Governor Perdue outlined a proposal to restructure the Department of Human Resources. The plan calls for the creation of a new Department of Behavioral Health which will include all mental health and addictive disease programs. The bill also establishes a Department of Health, a combination of the public health and oversight programs in DHR and the current functions of DHR. Remaining social services, such as Developmental Disabilities, Aging, DFCS and Child Support, will come together under a reconstituted Department of Human Services.

The Full Text of the Governor's State of the State Address

http://gov.georgia.gov/00/press/detail/0,2668,78006749_78013037_130508560,00.html

Video of the Governor's Speech

<http://tmp12.georgia.gov/02/gov/video/0,2218,78006749,00.html>

Budget Documents

2009 http://www.opb.state.ga.us/media/9678/2009-01-08_web_afy2009_state%20of%20georgia%20budget.pdf

2010 http://www.opb.state.ga.us/media/9675/2009-01-08_web_fy2010_state%20of%20georgia%20budget.pdf

More information to follow...

Dave Blanchard
Unlock the Waiting Lists Campaign
www.unlockthewaitinglists.com

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Valentine's Dance for teens and adults (ages 14 and up) with developmental disabilities

- > Sponsored by:
 - > Metro Atlanta YMCA Happy Club
 - > Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities
 - > The Junior League of Atlanta
 - > Date: Saturday, February 14, 2009
 - > Time: 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM
 - > Cost: 5.00 per person
 - > (chaperones and support staff can attend at no charge)
 - > Location: Ashford Dunwoody YMCA,
> 3692 Ashford Dunwoody Road,
> Atlanta, GA 30309, 770-451-9622
 - > Includes:
DJ Music & Dancing
Sweetheart Photo
Refreshments
- Please make your reservation to attend this event by February 10th
RSVP at 404-307-5653 (Ruth).

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Self Advocates Day at the Capitol

Date: Feb 9th
Time: 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

There will be a table inside the capitol where you can pick up handouts to give to your legislators.

We will have phone conference call-in training:

Date: Jan 28th

Time: 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

Free to all who want to participate

If you would like to participate in the phone conference contact Cheri Mitchell at (678) 755-6015.

Or email Cheri at cherijm63@bellsouth.net for more information and to get the phone number and code for the conference call.

This event is sponsored by People First of GA but you do not have to be a people First member to participate. All self advocates are welcomed.

The conference call will feature;

- * Tips on how to speak to legislators by Center for Leadership in Disability, GSU
- * Home Access Bill by Concrete Changes
- * Olmstead, Transition, Children's Freedom Initiative and Home and Community based Health Care
- * Purpose and a description of the events on Feb 9th by People First of Georgia

We would like to thank all those who helped make this event happen!

- * People First of Georgia
- * Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
- * Georgia Advocacy Office
- * Center for Leadership in Disability, GSU
- * Concrete Changes

For more information, contact Stacey Ramirez at sramirez@gsu.edu.

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