

Summer 2005

CDCS: A Few Steps Forward in an Uphill Battle

President's Column



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Is it just me, or has it begun to feel like the Legislature is in session all the time? Public policy for The Arc of Minnesota has become a year-round activity. When the Legislature is not in session, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is hiring consultants to propose administrative changes that could have far-reaching effects on programs for individuals with disabilities. Soon we may have to clone Steve Larson and all of our Arc advocates just to keep up!

Despite its length, the 2005 Legislative Session had positive results for the constituents of The Arc. (See article on pages 1, 4, and 5.)

The Arc of Minnesota can be proud of the work it has done this year on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families.

☆ EXCEPTIONS LANGUAGE APPROVED

One of our successes was approval of "exceptions language" for Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS) budgets. Before this session, DHS announced major changes to CDCS. DHS established a state-set budget for participants, resulting in funding cuts of 50% or more for some families. Most of the proposed cuts are due to take effect by the end of 2005. DHS also restricted the types of supports that could be purchased under CDCS. Many participants are considering returning to traditional licensed services to retain their current level of funding; this would mean leaving CDCS. Others have filed appeals challenging the reductions of their budgets that were based on DHS' budget methodology.

The Arc of Minnesota and the Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) worked successfully for language to allow people to remain on CDCS if they can show that their staffing costs would be the same or less under CDCS, using

their 2004 budget allocation. The federal government has to approve this exceptions language, and we don't expect approval until the end of 2005 or early 2006.

The ultimate effect of this language is not yet clear. The exceptions policy will not allow everyone to

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retain their previous CDCS budget and continue to use the option. For those who have CDCS budgets that are primarily used for staffing costs, however, the exceptions policy may help.

If the federal government approves the exceptions language, it will be in effect only until DHS implements a new budget methodology for CDCS. Throughout 2005, DHS has convened a working group that examined this methodology. Former Governmental Affairs Committee Chair Cindy Johnson, staff from MDLC, and I participated in this group. Our group recommended significant changes to the methodology, and DHS will hire an outside consultant to help

develop a new one. Advocates will continue to be part of the project's working group.

☆ OTHER CHANGES

We were able to secure other changes in CDCS this session:

- ✓ Students who graduated in 2004 will be able to use their daily costs from July 2004 through December 2004 in calculating their CDCS budgets. This will allow Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) costs to be fully considered in determining the budget allocation.
- ✓ CDCS will cover costs of memberships for adults to participate in physical activities that maintain or improve their health and functioning, along with coinciding transportation costs.
- ✓ DHS will have an independent evaluation done on CDCS, including recommendations on whether there should be changes to the list of items that are not allowed.

The Arc of Minnesota will continue to push for services that are consumer-friendly, that are consumer-directed, and that meet the needs of those with disabilities and their families. Thank for you your advocacy on CDCS and other issues this session! ■