

Supported employment challenges in upcoming legislative session

Governor Christine Gregoire will be releasing her proposed budget in mid December. It is expected that the removal of "State Only" employment opportunities mentioned in the below article may be reflected in her budget. There is data currently being collected at

the state level that would support transferring people who are receiving services under "State Only" funding over to the waiver system. People who are on a waiver not only receive funding from Washington state, but those funds are also matched with federal

funding through the waiver.

There will be more information about this issue available in January's issue of *DDD* along with the contact information for our legislators so you may contact them to voice your concerns about this important issue. *Tresa Stuber*

There are 6,000 adults with developmental disabilities in our state who have jobs. Of these 6,000 adults, 2,200 are funded by state-only dollars. Washington state currently invests more than \$7 million per year in employment services for these 2,200 adults with developmental disabilities. These individuals earned over \$19 Million in wages in 2007. The state spends over \$3.5 Million on additional supports and services for these individuals to live in their communities. With the state budget deficit, there is concern that these valuable, existing services may be cut.

Save money AND assure that individuals receive these essential services:

Placing this group of 2,200 individuals on the Basic Home and Community Based services waiver will allow the state to capture a 50.94% federal match in 2009.

Individuals and their families would receive additional necessary services, like family support and respite, to assure that they can remain in their communities.

AND



The overall savings the state captures with this strategy is **approximately \$4 Million.**

Without this strategy...

Service could be cut for more than 2,200 adults with developmental disabilities:

Many of the 6,000 people with developmental disabilities who are working in Washington have their needed support services protected by the (Medicaid Home and Community Based) Waiver. The 2,200 workers with state-only (non-waiver) funding, are vulnerable to service cuts, and therefore at risk of job loss.

People with disabilities in Supported

Employment are proud, taxpaying, benefits-earning, productive and contributing members of our state's workforce. A great many of these workers have been part of the workforce, with the help of state-funded support, for over 10 years.

Most of these 2,200 workers will be at risk of losing their jobs within a year without the needed support services.

Money already invested in developing these jobs, training the employee and their co-workers, and the years of subsequent support provided will be lost.

Many of these people own or rent their own homes and apartments, and a loss of income could place their housing situations in jeopardy.

While employers are committed, they can't do this on their own:

The Washington employment service system that leads the nation in effectiveness faces decimation. A system of support, along with its network of employers, which took over 25 years to build, could be undermined this legislative session.

The organizations that developed these Supported Employment services face significant funding cuts (some as much as 50%-75%). This could result in a critical loss of trained, experienced and committed personnel that would take years to rebuild.

Commitments made to employers... *that support would be available for the tenure of these workers' employment*, would be broken if critical funding is cut. The commitment of partnership and goodwill built with the employer community over many years is at risk.

David Schlesinger, Eastside Employment Services; Cesilee Coulson and Susan Harrell, W.I.S.E. November 2008 Representing Partnership 2020