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Mid-Year and FY16 Budget Reductions Freeze Waiver Slots, Cut Families Helping Families and More

People with developmental disabilities and their families did not escape the budget cuts that were announced in late February as part of both mid-year reductions and the Governor's Executive Budget for next fiscal year. Louisiana faces a budget deficit of \$104 million in the current fiscal year (FY) and this deficit increases to \$1.6 billion for FY16 (year beginning July 1, 2015). To decrease the deficit, Governor Jindal included some revenue raising activities such as scaling back on tax credits and increasing the cigarette tax in his FY16 Executive Budget. For details on these proposals and other cuts in the proposed budget, read The Advocate's [article](#).

Below is a summary of how individuals with developmental disabilities and their families will be impacted by the mid-year cuts and the cuts included in the Governor's FY16 Executive Budget as presented to the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget. This summary does not detail all of the reductions made in the FY16 Executive Budget; the full budget and supporting documents can be viewed on the Division of Administration's website [here](#).

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

- *Waivers* - During the 2014 Legislative Session, the Council and LaCAN members successfully advocated for funding to add 200 New Opportunities Waiver (NOW) slots and to fill 1,000 existing but vacant NOW, Children's Choice, and Supports Waiver slots. Funding was also appropriated to fill approximately 1,000 aging and adult-onset waiver slots. The Department of Health and Hospitals was in the process of filling all of these slots. Unfortunately, 772 waiver slots for people with developmental disabilities (155 NOW, 204 Children's Choice, and 413 Supports) and 272 Community Choices Waiver slots were frozen as a part of the Governor's Mid-Year Deficit Reduction Plan. This "freeze" stops the filling of slots and prevents any additional individuals and families on the waiting list from receiving waiver services. (Any outstanding waiver offers will be honored.) The only exception will be for people in emergency situations, children aging out of Children's Choice, and individuals transitioning out of a state facility.

Waiver slots were also frozen in the Governor's FY2016 budget.

- *Individual and Family Support* – The Council and LaCAN members also successfully advocated for \$1.1 million in funding for the Individual and Family Support Program in Capital Area Human Services District (CAHSD), Acadiana Area Human Services Authority (AAHSA) and Florida Parishes Human Services Authority (FPHSA) because they receive a disproportionate share of the funding compared to other regions and the population they serve. This additional funding has been cut in the Governor's FY16 budget.



- *Families Helping Families* – The Council and LaCAN members successfully advocated for \$170,000 in funding to be restored to nine Families Helping Families Centers across the state. (This funding had been cut from the centers over the last several years.) The \$170,000 was eliminated in the Governor’s FY16 budget.

OTHER CUTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOSPITALS (DHH)

The Regional Human Services Districts/Authorities provide many vital services to their communities. This includes receiving and processing applications for supports and services and assisting individuals in accessing these services. The budgets of the districts/authorities have been repeatedly reduced and this year and next are no different. The districts/authorities took a combined mid-year cut of \$5.88 million and the Governor’s FY16 Budget includes \$6.8 million in cuts (including the mid-year reduction). In addition, the DHH Program Offices (Developmental Disabilities, Behavioral Health, and Public Health) are being reduced by \$12 million in the FY16 budget. This is not a complete list of DHH reductions. [Click here](#) for the Executive Budget documents that provide details of all DHH and other state agency cuts and budget proposals.

EDUCATION

The Department of Education’s operating budget is being reduced considerably in the Governor’s FY16 budget; however, how this will affect students with disabilities is unknown at this time. The budget proposal includes the elimination of 46 filled field positions and 45 filled administrative positions. Professional services and special projects are being reduced by a total of \$8.7 million. Again, how these cuts will impact students with disabilities is not yet known.

With the exception of the growth in the number of students attending schools, the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) was not increased. For six of the last eight years, funding for the MFP has basically been frozen.

Legislators will have the opportunity to make changes to the Governor’s Budget Proposal during the 2015 Legislative Session which begins on April 13th. Individuals with disabilities and their families are encouraged to join the Council’s grassroots advocacy networks [LaCAN](#) and [LaTEACH](#) to receive updates on issues being decided during session and on opportunities to participate in advocacy activities. Legislators need to hear how these cuts will affect their constituents with disabilities and their families.