

Governor's FY2018 Recommended Budget
Home & Community Based Providers
Advocacy Call to Action and Resources

Legislators have major influence over services and supports for our elderly and people with disabilities, through funding and policy decisions. The job of legislators is to respond to the needs of their constituents – that means you! It is important that legislators know that someone is paying attention to the issue of reduced funding and services for the elderly and disabled. Therefore, it is important that strong voices are heard.

It is important to know that most legislators will only pay attention to an issue if they are hearing about it from their constituents. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that our Missouri legislators hear from you today.

The Governor's recommended budget cuts will have a devastating impact on Home and Community Based providers. The most significant of the cuts is the requirement that the elderly and disabled must meet a higher point count on the assessment tool. By increasing the number from 21 to 27 those scoring under 27 will no longer be eligible for In-Home or Consumer Directed Services.

Our concern is that increasing the point count will not save the state money but only shift the need to higher cost services (*example: will see an increase in Emergency Room visits, hospital stays and hospital readmissions*).

The Governor's budget further cuts the home and community based programs with a 3% reduction in all provider rates and a reduction of service caps in the CDS program. Not only does this equate to a drastic reduction in services for many elderly and disabled citizens, it could have potential impacts on your business.

Please join us in our advocacy efforts by contacting your legislators today. Also, please have your staff, your clients/consumers and their families contact respective legislators to voice their concerns on how these cuts will impact them.

We have provided the following resources to help in your advocacy efforts:

- Quick Guide for Communicating with Elected Officials (*attached separately*)
- Sample Client/Consumer Telephone Script
- Sample Provider Telephone Script
- Sample Employee Telephone Script
- Sample email/letter (*can be tailored for client/consumer; provider agency; staff; family*)
- Face-to-Face meeting and video tips
- Sample Media Release Form
- Talking Points

Sample Client/Consumer Telephone Script

Caller: Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent of (Representative _____ /Senator _____), and I am calling to voice my concern over the Governor's recent proposed budget cuts to the elderly and disabled.

I currently receive _____ (In-Home or Consumer Directed Services) and my score is # _____. I need assistance with: _____

- (bathing, toileting, personal hygiene, preparing meals, dressing, mobility, housekeeping, medication set-ups, nail care, etc.)

Then, in your own words, tell your story of how you will be affected if you lost your services. Tell them the struggles you face daily and how your current services help you remain in your home and independent.

(If you do not get to speak directly with your Representative or Senator, some individuals may want to let them know you plan to follow up on this issue). For example:

Caller: I am interested in the Representative's/Senator's position on these cuts and would like to hear back about it. My phone number is _____

• **Tips when phoning your legislators:**

- * Introduce yourself
- * Think about what you want to say (have list of talking points)
- * Refer to issue you are calling about
- * Don't ramble in your conversation
- * Don't forget to ask for their position on the issue

Sample Provider Telephone Script

Caller: Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent of (Representative _____ /Senator _____). I also (am a business owner or/ work as a provider of home and community based services) and I am calling to voice my concern over the Governor's recent proposed budget cuts to the elderly and disabled and cuts to home and community based providers.

Then, in your own words, tell your story of how you, your business, your staff and your clients/consumers will be affected by these cuts. Give them the data on how many of your consumers/clients will be losing service, what that means for those individuals and the consequences. Explain also how the reduction of services, both with the point count and cost cap reduction (*if CDS*) along with the 3% rate cut will affect your business (*will you have to close?, will you have to lay off staff?, etc.*)

Remind them that home and community based services is the most efficient, cost effective care for our most vulnerable populations. Data shows that on average, one **months'** worth of HCBS costs less than 1 **day** in the hospital. (*average cost per day/per person in hospital = \$2,000; average cost per month/per person of HCBS - \$1,139*). By keeping these people out of the hospital, we are saving the Medicaid program and taxpayers money. Without these services, hospitals will see increased Emergency Room visits and hospital stays.

With over 26% of the current HCBS recipients (16,000 of the 60,000) loosing services I encourage you to look at the effect this could have on your constituents, their families, the businesses in our community, including the one I work for and our staff.

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Sample Employee Telephone Script

Caller: Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent of (Representative _____ /Senator _____), and I am calling to voice my concern over the Governor's recent proposed budget cuts to the elderly and disabled.

I currently am employed by _____ (company name) and I provide in-home care for many of your constituents.

(Pick one or two clients/consumers that you care for and explain) I am concerned that if _____ (*just say either first name only or Ms. A or Mr. B – do not disclose identifying information*) don't receive the care I provide they more than likely will end up in a hospital or worse. (Give a little information on what services you provide and how these services help them remain independent in their home.)

(If you do not get to speak directly with your Representative or Senator, some individuals may want to let them know you plan to follow up on this issue). For example:

Caller: I am interested in the Representative's/Senator's position on these cuts and would like to hear back about it. My phone number is _____

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Sample Family Telephone Script

Caller: Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent of (Representative _____ /Senator _____), and I am calling to voice my concern over the Governor's recent proposed budget cuts to the elderly and disabled.

My _____ (mother, father, son, daughter, etc.) currently receives home care services from _____ (Home Care provider company name). I am deeply concerned for the well-being and safety of my _____ if they were to lose their services.

Then, in your own words, tell your story of how your loved one will be affected by these cuts. Tell them the struggles they face daily and how their current services help them remain in their home and independent.

(If you do not get to speak directly with your Representative or Senator, some individuals may want to let them know you plan to follow up on this issue). For example:

Caller: I am interested in the Representative's/Senator's position on these cuts and would like to hear back about it. My phone number is _____

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Sample Letter or Email

(Month, Day, Year)

The Honorable (First Name) (Last Name)
House of Representatives (or MO State Senate)
201 West Capitol Avenue
Room _____
Jefferson City MO 65101

Dear (Representative/Senator) (Last Name):

My name is _____ and I am a (home and community based services: provider, client/consumer, family member, community member) who resides in your district.

I am writing to voice my concern over the Governor's recent proposed budget cuts to the elderly and disabled.

(Include data and/or a personal story here. Tell your representative or senator why the issue is important to you and how it affects you, your family member, your community, etc.)

Please do not allow these cuts to take place and jeopardize the health and lives of so many of our elderly and disabled. I am very interested in hearing your position on these cuts and would like to hear back about it. My address/email is: _____ (insert mailing address or email address).

Sincerely,

SIGN YOUR NAME

- **Tips when writing your letter:**

- * Identify who you are
- * Address letter appropriately
- * Keep it SSS (Short, Sweet, Simple)
- * Make it personal
- * Be courteous
- * Tell the truth
- * Send on time
- * Keep it neat

Face-to-Face Meetings/Videos

Meeting with your legislators face-to-face is the most effective way to get your message across. The best way to meet with your legislator is when they are in their home district office. Inviting them on a home visit is also a very effective way to help them understand and see first hand how important the services you provide are and how you are helping the elderly and disabled remain at home.

Bringing your clients/consumers to visit with their legislators is also very effective. You as the provider should determine which of your clients/consumers would make the best advocates. If possible, bring them to the Capitol to meet one-on-one with their legislators or ask them to testify by telling their story at a committee hearing (budget and/or appropriations).

Senate Hearing Schedule: <http://www.senate.mo.gov/hearingsschedule/hrings.htm>

House Hearing Schedule: <http://www.house.mo.gov/HearingDisplay/>

There are some consumers/clients that have very compelling stories to tell however, they are unable to make a trip to Jefferson City. Videos that are emailed directly to their legislators and/or played in a committee hearing can still have the same affect as a personal visit. It is a great way to bring the personal stories to the forefront.

Videos do not need to be elaborate by any means. Filming on a cell phone and uploading the video to YouTube or Facebook will work. **PLEASE NOTE:** If you do choose to film any clients/consumers make sure they complete a release form. (*Sample form provided*)

- **Tips for meeting with your legislators:**

- * Know your issue
- * Express your views in a respectful manner
- * Be cognizant of the fact that you have limited time to meet
- * Leave behind informational fact sheets that summarize your points
- * Be prepared to answer questions. If you are unsure, tell them you will get back to them
- * Don't forget to give them your contact information

Governor's Proposed Budget Cuts Talking Points & Examples

Governor Greiten's proposed budget that requires the elderly and disabled to meet a higher point count on the assessment tool will have significant human, financial and social consequences to the State of MO.

Talking Points:

- This change in policy will result in the elimination of home and community based services to over 16,000 elderly and disabled citizens or, 26% of the caseload.
- Increasing the point count from 21 to 27 will not save the state money but only shift the need to higher cost services (*example: will see an increase in Emergency Room visits, hospital stays and hospital readmissions*)
- Data shows that on average, one **months'** worth of HCBS costs less than 1 **day** in the hospital. (*average cost per **day**/per person in hospital = \$2,000; average cost per **month**/per person of HCBS - \$1,139*).
- Communicate the value and cost-effectiveness of home and community based services. It is the most cost effective option for Missouri seniors and disabled. (*FY17 estimate annual cost: HCBS = \$12,482; Nursing Home = \$38,772*)
- Discuss significant services these individuals will lose (*see examples on back or use specific client/consumer stories. Clarify the need for service (not just house cleaning)*)
- It's not all about the money - Seniors have worked all their lives and deserve the right to live and receive care in the least restrictive setting
- Unnecessary ER visits and Hospital readmissions is a nationwide epidemic. HCBS providers are sought out by hospitals to help alleviate this costly issue.
- Most have no family support. Who will help them?

The Governors budget further cuts the home and community based programs with a 3% reduction in provider rates. This will have a devastating effect on providers and their employees.

Current Medicaid reimbursement rates do not cover the actual cost of providing care to people in their homes. Providers are already stretched and hardly able to hire quality staff. Agencies are struggling to pay livable wages, not to mention taxes, workers' compensation and liability insurance, health insurance and benefits and training. These cuts will result in providers having to make tough choices including laying off staff or closing. Providers already have a staffing crisis and cannot afford to pay overtime, resulting in reduced services available to our most vulnerable citizens.

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Talking Points:

By taking back the 3% received last year puts providers in an additional financial crisis. Providers used that increase to:

- increase direct caregiver wages;
- help to offset the unfunded EVV (telephony) mandate implemented in 2015;
- assist in paying travel time and overtime due to the repeal of the companionship exemption
- cover normal inflationary costs (business insurance, workers comp, etc)

The Governor also proposes capping services delivered through the CDS program. This equates to a drastic reduction in services for many disabled citizens, very likely resulting in that person not being able to live independently.

Example results of loss of services:

- Medication Assistance
 - Example – complex medication needs – many elderly and disabled require multiple medications. Many need assistance in taking meds properly, even some require a lock box and need assistance taking as ordered by physician. Without this service, many will either not take meds appropriately, not take at all, or apt to overdose resulting in ER visits and hospitalizations or death.
- Activities of Daily Living
 - Example - bathing – without assistance many elderly and disabled are a fall risk. A fall getting into the bath could result in a broken hip costing the Medicaid program an enormous expense (*surgery, hospital stay, rehab in the nursing home, decline in health resulting in meeting the 27 points and remaining in nursing home care*).
- Nutrition
 - Example – nutrition is a key component in staying healthy. HCBS provides assistance with shopping, cooking and feeding. Without these services, many are not able to get to the grocery store, cook a nutritious meal or even remember to eat. Decline in health will be rapid and result in ER visits, hospital admissions and/or end up in nursing home sooner

Hospitalization

- Seniors ultimately cut from services will still need care to live independently. Ineligible for home and community based services or skilled facility based care people will be admitted to hospital care. Hospital dischargers will find themselves unable to place these people with services and therefore unable to discharge them from care. This creates unnecessary and significantly more costly care than where the person is allowed to remain on services in their own home, where they wanted to remain in the first place.