



NYSACRA LEGISLATIVE POSITION PAPER

January 26, 2010

On January 1st, the New York State Association of Community & Residential Agencies (NYSACRA) and its 200 member agencies mark the beginning of hope, transformation and economic recovery for the thousands of individuals with developmental disabilities we serve and the 65,000 direct support professionals we employ.

NYSACRA's voluntary not-for-profit agency members have a long and proud history in helping to transform the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families. This transformation has seen the end of institutionalization, impressive increases in life expectancy and greater overall economic productivity and inclusion in the community. Simply put, people with developmental disabilities are living more and more like you and me, contributing to the local economy and paying taxes.

NYSACRA understands the challenges of the current economic climate. Our not-for-profit member agencies are struggling with the same challenges that are impacting all organizations and businesses throughout New York State and have been impacted by past funding cuts/actions, rising costs due to inflation and huge increases in the cost of health care for employees. With all this said, we stand out as the most cost effective providers of services to persons with developmental disabilities, many who are quite vulnerable.

New York's Budget/Legislation Positions

1. Medicaid Trend Factor: We applaud the Executive for including the trend to be used for workforce recruitment and retention efforts as well as to offset the increased costs due to inflation. The trend makes funding available to provide the necessary enhancements to salary and wages, thereby supporting a workforce that has struggled greatly even before this current fiscal crisis.

Action required: NYSACRA members wholeheartedly support the trend factor and the necessary attention to the direct support workforce and we ask the State Legislature to support the trend.

2. Health Care Adjustment: 2010-11 Executive Budget recommends a new phase of the Health Care Adjustment initiative. NYSACRA thanks Governor Paterson for the proposed Health Care Adjustment in the OMRDD budget. This welcome program to recognize that a healthy and stable workforce can improve the quality of services to people with developmental disabilities.

Action required: NYSACRA recommends the State Legislature support this important initiative.



3. Supervised Residential IRA: NYSACRA has been a leader in encouraging the development of individualized services for people with developmental disabilities that desire them. We need to continue to move in this direction as we also operate in the most efficient and cost effective way in these economically challenging times. NYSACRA opposes this (3) three percent reduction in supervised residential IRA programs given the serious impact that such a reduction will have on people served, many who are aging. Supervised IRAs are the backbone of our system and have sustained significant negative impact through changes in the maintenance preservation program, food stamps, and liability for services.

Action required: NYSACRA opposes the proposed recommendation in the Executive budget to cut the supervised residential IRA.

4. Workforce: Our goals are to efficiently and effectively provide essential, person centered, community supports and services to people with developmental disabilities delivered through a qualified, direct support workforce.

When there is a trend, funding is available to provide the necessary enhancements to salary and wages, thereby supporting a workforce that has struggled greatly even before this current fiscal crisis. As an association dedicated to advocating for persons with developmental disabilities and the organizations that support them, NYSACRA has witnessed the fruits borne by the work of direct support professionals, particularly when they receive excellent training, have a voice in the lives of the people they support, and earn the salary they deserve. We are keenly aware that challenges threaten the vitality of the direct support workforce: often, direct support workers are neither viewed nor compensated as the professionals they are. If left unchecked and allowed to erode, these challenges will place a system of supports and services in crisis, jeopardizing the quality of life for thousands of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Action required: NYSACRA urges Legislators to support and to truly become the champion of the Direct Support Professional. Support the trend and Health Care Adjustment.

5. Medicaid Service Coordination: There has been discussion for a long time about the best way to provide service coordination to people with developmental disabilities. We have not yet achieved the best and NYSACRA and our members would like to participate in the redesign and efficiency discussions that take place related to this service.

Action required: NYSACRA and our members will participate in the redesign of the MSC program.



6. Other Areas

Clinical Practitioner Licensure: NYSACRA supports the Governor’s recommendation to extend the statutory exemption provision related to the practice of social work and mental health practitioners. Since inception, social workers and mental health practitioners who practice in settings operated or licensed by OMRDD (OMH and OASAS) have been exempt from social worker and mental health practitioner licensing requirements. The four year exemption as proposed in the 2010-11 Executive Budget acknowledges the challenges that provider agencies would face if the exemption were to expire including the need for increased resources to replace existing staff, time spent to locate, hire and train new staff and at higher salaries.

Action Required: Support the Governor’s recommendation to extend the exemption.

This is essentially a question of a meaningful life or a life with little meaning, if people with developmental disabilities are not provided the supports they need. These are necessary services in their lives, not optional ones.

In the past several years, not-for-profit agencies have partnered with OMRDD in transforming the system and also in creating efficiencies where it is possible. We understand that resources are strained and are grateful for the trends included in the Executive budget.

NYSACRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Tom McAlvanah, President
Steve Klein, First Vice President
Louis Cavaliere, Secretary
Fredda Rosen, Treasurer

At-Large

Jason Chapin
Marcia Ergort
James Lawler
Lee Rambeau
Matthew Sturiale
Jim Wilson

Vice Presidents

Desiree Loucks Baer, Capital
Paul Lowry, Long Island
Christopher Fortune, Mid Hudson
Evelyn Alvarez, New York City
Patrick Waite, Northern
Helen Trowbridge Hanes, Western

Immediate Past President

Robert Budd

Executive Director

Ann M. Hardiman



**New York State
Association of Community
& Residential Agencies**

240 Washington Avenue Ext.
Suite 501, Albany NY 12203
P (518) 449-7551/ F (518) 449-1509
nysacra@nysacra.org
www.nysacra.org