

#military

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

## **MEDICAID AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TALKING POINTS**

This Administration is working to protect Medicaid and Medicare and the people served by these programs, including people with disabilities.

We are engaged in a serious national debate about how to balance the Federal budget. We must balance the budget, but in a way that reflects the values that we have always held dear in this country. The President's plan for a balanced budget calls for reasonable reforms in Medicaid and Medicare, while keeping our guarantee to those who need these programs, including Americans with disabilities.

One positive development is that there is now renewed hope that we may be able to enact insurance reforms this year, including prohibiting insurance companies from denying coverage due to preexisting conditions. This reform is critical for people with disabilities.

### **Why Medicaid is So Important to People with Disabilities**

Medicaid is the primary insurer of children and adults with disabilities. It provides health and rehabilitation services for 6 million individuals with disabilities. Often Medicaid is the only form of health care coverage that people with disabilities can obtain. Without Medicaid, medical costs for a child or adult with a disability can easily impoverish a middle class family.

People with disabilities of all ages, and their families, most often prefer to receive services and supports at home and in the community, so that they can participate more fully in family and community life. Over the past 15 years, as institutionalization has become less common and people with disabilities have increasingly become part of their communities, the Medicaid program has adapted to this change.

Medicaid provides health coverage for approximately 734,000 adults with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities (MR/DD). Medicaid services enable many people with MR/DD to live in their homes and communities, to take care of themselves and their homes, get around in their communities, and work.

### **Medicaid and Children with Disabilities**

Cuts in Medicaid would be particularly devastating to children with disabilities. There are approximately one million children with disabilities on Medicaid. These families cannot access the private insurance market for all their child's needs, or often even at all.

Medicaid allows many children with disabilities to get services at home or in the community. These services have grown rapidly over the past 15 years. Prior to that time, an institution was too often the only option for a middle-class family with a child with a disability.

In addition to the services that Medicaid provides children with disabilities in hospitals and doctors' offices, Medicaid also pays for equipment like wheelchairs and communication devices; therapy, including teaching parents to perform needed therapies at home; respite care for parents who need an occasional break in caring for a disabled child; and home modifications needed to allow a child to live at home.

### Republican Budget Proposals

Under the Republicans' proposal to block grant and reduce Medicaid funds, states would be forced to reduce Medicaid eligibility and benefits for disabled individuals.

- o Families of children with severe disabilities might be forced to impoverish themselves paying for their children's medical care. Without these services, some parents may have to give up their jobs to stay home to care for their children or, worse yet, seek institutional placements for their children.
- o Adults with MR/DD who live independently in community settings with Medicaid supports might be forced to enter state institutions or return to the homes of their aging parents, who would have to provide care formerly covered by Medicaid.

Faced with the Republican budget cuts, home and community-based programs will find it especially hard to compete with hospitals and nursing homes for scarce Medicaid dollars at the state level.

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Tues 2/6 Ability Magazine  
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E X E C U T I V E   O F F I C E   O F   T H E   P R E S I D E N T

02-Feb-1996 11:38am

TO:           CN=Sally J. Aman/O=OVP  
TO:           CN=Araceli Ruano/O=OVP  
  
FROM:          CN=Skila S. Harris/O=OVP  
  
CC:           WHITE\_W  
  
SUBJECT:      Info for "Ability" Interview

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I asked Marca Bristo, Chairperson of the National Council On Disability, for her suggestions on what MEG should cover in her interview. Here are her ideas.

- It is important to underscore this Administration's commitment to "empowerment - inclusion - independence" for Americans with disabilities.
- The Administration's support of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act\*\* (IDEA) has been very important to the disability community. Continuing support of these is essential to the community.
- Budget cuts are especially threatening to the disability community... of the great concern are the possible changes in Medicaid. If all funding goes to the states in block grants there is fear that those with disabilities will lose out to populations with more political clout.
- This Administration has a track record of empowerment --- it has appointed more people with disabilities than any other Administration. (Bill will provide the numbers on this and other relevant data.)

Less mainstream, Marka said MEG could talk about the misinformation that is prevalent about the ADA and the overall lack of understanding of the abilities of people with disabilities. The stereotypical views of people with disabilities can only be overcome by education and positive personal experiences.

\*\*I think this is the right title...someone should check to make sure this is the correct name.