

**January 6, 2010**  
**Monthly Advocates' Meeting**  
**Minutes**

Follow-up Items:

- Is E-query available in Spanish?
  - It is agreed upon that Spanish is being offered.
- We won't be meeting again until after the General Session.

General Assistance:

1. No New Applications Effective Jan. 1, 2010 – rulemaking for changes

- Susan- We looked into rule making in terms of taking new applications. As it is, GA will pay as funding allows, it's first come first serve. As of now there is no funding. There is a rule in place for 3 months that is pending Legislative decision. There was an emergency rule enacted in July to prevent people already on the program from being effected. It was determined that it doesn't take anything away from people who have not applied yet to no longer take applications. We are hoping the Session makes a good decision.
- Who will be coming from rehab?

GA legislative strategy meeting will be held January 19th from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at Utah State History building, 300 South Rio Grande Street (450 West) (West Meeting Room - 1st Floor)

2. Legislative Audit Recommendations:

-Helen - DWS wants to do what's best for GA. Clients are receiving benefits but not employment counseling. SOAR came out of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. We can no longer afford the intervention piece of GA. With the current fiscal year, we started with \$5.5 million. However, \$2.2 million is one-time funding. Only \$1.7 million is left at this point.

-Karen- How much of the spending goes to short term disability services? Very little, around 20%

-Melissa- There is a Legislative meeting January 19th. It's going to be all the agencies putting together a streamlined attach to try and save GA. There are 30 other states that offer a variation of the SOAR program. 9 have these programs at the county level. So don't let people try to claim that be are the last state to retain this program; it's just not true.

-Karen- Other states give medical with their GA.

-Helen- We're still seeing case loads continue to go up. Costs have gone down, but not at a rate that is helpful for us. This year GA has already spent \$3.4 million. The spending so far this year has already exceeded the projected base budget for next year.

-Karen- Is there a way to keep track of the number of people who are denied benefits now that GA is no longer accepting new applicants?

-Helen- We can track some of this. Word had gotten out that GA is no longer taking new applicant, which means fewer people are spending the time to apply. When someone does apply we can track the letters we send out telling them they have been rejected. This is all we are able to track, the denial letters. It is limited but there.

-Melissa- Can we prove that prior to the beginning of January, there was an increase in applications? Maybe show that there was a genuine need for this program? Another issue is that fact that \$2 million is not enough to maintain a revolving program. The revolving funding is set to cover only benefits. This means that the already decreased budget will be further diminished if it is split between funding for benefits and administration cost. It leaves no coverage for case management, SOAR, or administration. Only benefits will be covered.

-Helen- Who do we serve? The legislature forgets it's all the same client base.

-Kris- Would it be possible to raise awareness with ADA, that our clients are being discriminated against?

-Karen- Its not discrimination but more of an entitlement issue.

-Kris- The program's safety net is first come; first serve.

-Helen- Recently there was a change to qualifications where recipients could earn less than \$500 to now when they can't work at all. We may have to decide whether SOAR is really worth the \$2 million it will need to continue. Soon we may have to choose SOAR over different programs; we need to know policy wise if this is where we are headed.

-Melissa- We need a policy decision about GA. What does this policy need to be? The legislature is requesting an additional 1%, plus the 4% cut already in place for a total cut of 5%. Will GA survive these cuts?

-Sheila- It's closer to an 8% total cut.

-DWS- In all actuality, the cut is closer to 9%. DWS wants to do what is best for GA. We're looking to make a proposal that would allow GA to last.

-Melissa- Can you make a 4% cut without touching GA?

DWS- We are currently exploring various options, but we're not sure if the Legislature will allow these options to be implemented.

-Melissa- In looking at the sub-appropriations count, we need Hinkins and Dunnigan. If we get them on board, it will give us 6 out of 10 committee members.

-Sheila- If we are able to maintain the current base budget as well as the revolving fund total, it would put us close to the current \$5 million budget of this year. With that amount the program may work. It may be enough funding to reach those who need the services. 1,200 clients could get service. Maybe it would be best to eliminate various aspects from different programs. We could then present the combined options of cuts to the Legislative Session. To do this though, we would need a strong leader for the committee.

-What about taking GA to a different committee, maybe housing?

-Another committee might be more sympathetic.

-There are no other agencies geared towards this specific population GA serves. Maybe we should look to housing.

## Legislative Audit (Melissa)

### I. DWS Budgeting in Separate Line Items

-Melissa- The Legislature has requested DWS' budget is reported as separate line-items. DWS has acknowledged that the reports have varied in format as well as information content.

-DWS got together with some of the auditors at budget review. There are concerns about accountability overlap. They want to be able to have reporting that is robust enough to be reliable and verifiable in which we demonstrate accountability for our spending the money they have given us. They are looking for a breakdown of the cost in regards to the program, and not by the current structure of organizational unit. They may be willing to look at reliable organizational structure if it is valid and accurate. They are just looking for DWS to be accountable.

-Melissa-The constant back and forth about a definition of administrative cost versus what is a case management cost needs a hard and fast distinction.

- We need to specify what is an indirect versus direct cost of service.

- Are you referring to Legislative auditors or fiscal analyses?

- We are referring to both. The request for the report structure has transferred from single line item to transparency. It is understood that line item formatting is not the solution. We are looking at ways to get them the information that they need. They were concerned about the monetary discrepancies of the report, and simply did not initially understand that the money had gone to increased caseload. We need to just work on better communication.

TANF-MOE partnership:

-Karen- The \$16 million in question wasn't there, it had been used.

-DWS- They now understand the money had been redirected towards case loads.

-Karen- So they won't come back and tell us to slash the budget by \$16 million thinking that MOE will be able to help.

-Ali- There is value in a sub-committee understanding how the programs work. It's a matter of looking to a solution of not just convenience, but one that is also trying to long-term problem solve. The reporting in the paper about our unused office space was misleading.

-Sheila- MOE can try to collaborate.

-Ali- This is a component of a potential solution. It has value.

-DWS- In speaking of TANF and MOE, the question is who owns that money?

-Ali- Is there a Branch power prerogative to change directions midstream?

-DWS- It could be that the Legislatures have been told this is not a real cut. It's just a one-time solution

-Melissa- We're all serving the same clients. You have taken the cuts in increased caseloads.

### 2. Consolidation of facilities

-DWS -- There are several recommendations to consolidate. We do offload every chance we can. The issue is being misrepresented. There are certain costs that go along with terminating a lease.

-Dave- We're utilizing telecommunicating. We are just waiting for the current leases to expire. The buildings are under-staffed or vacant because of ESD consolidation and having more people work out of their homes. This has been very big cost-savings. Just have to wait for the leases to end.

### 3. Medicaid

-DWS- There is no way of measuring how much we are over or short for the Medicaid expenditures. In the future, we will have precise amount of what was given to Medicaid. This is not being viewed as a priority. We are looking to see if Medicaid might have a better place in a different program.

-Shelia- It is my understanding that they should continue to look at additional costs. Everyone is in agreement that we need more time to examine this program.

-Ali- There is a difference between an in-depth review by the Legislatures and an audit. The in depth review was asked to be a line item report. In the audit, we are looking for new options. We are looking to change and assess our process of reporting. There is good-standing communication between us and the auditors. We are on better footing than print news would lead the public to believe.

### Budget Cuts

#### I. Governor Herbert requested all departments come up with a 3% budget COLA cut.

-DWS- The cut is equivalent to a 3% cut of personnel COLA spending. We will meet this with existing state funds from money left over from last year or through other cuts.

-Sheila- The funds will come out of travel budgets etc.

-DWS- The Legislature is asking for a one-time 4% cut for FY10.

-Melissa- What is the plan for the 4% cut?

-Danny- We would expect it to be similar. 3% COLA is just over \$900,000. The Legislature is looking for 4%. It's a \$2.6 million cut across the board. We can count on funding from the governor. We're looking at a difference of \$1.7 million.

-Melissa- It would be nice to have the projected effects of these changes on customer service as a result of the various cuts. Then we could show how the program delivery is impacted by cuts.

-Sheila- eRep would be disrupted after we just put in all this money.

-DWS- eRep people were at the meeting and said how much had gone into it.

-Sheila- The Health Committee has been reviewing fiscal recommendations from former years. Are these recommendations similar to previous years?

-DWS- We're not sure

### Unemployment Insurance and Social Security Offset

-Melissa- Social Security will be offset to 0%. It was supposed to be ready to be implemented July 1st. Bill Starks said we may have run into a problem with benefits set to be reduced by \$3. The Senate was able to get a new bill in December that would continue the additional \$25 in weekly benefits. The problem is that if we take the money for expanded benefits, we cannot decrease benefit amounts. This conflicts with the existing plan of a \$3 reduction in July. The solution is to just postpone the new change until August rather than implementing it in July. We have a unanimous committee vote to go to a 0% offset.

-Ali- The Feds could still change it all.

-Melissa- If that happens, look to get a 0% offset as soon as possible.

-Does the bill from December continue with the \$25 benefit?

-Melissa- It is set to be revisited in February.

- Can it be implemented in July then?

-We're trying to find out which benefits are tied into which programs may have a few month extensions on them.

-Melissa- There is pressure from other states and agencies to keep the program the same.

-Ali- The Employment Advisory Council meets this Thursday. It will be an open box car about TWR benefit. We are looking to verify that we are in line with the stipulations set by the Feds before it is passed here.

-Melissa- The benefits of \$25 are extended. The implementation date must be postponed so it does not conflict with the previous agreement.

-Ali- EAC meets tomorrow at 11:30, at our North Building. We are in Conference Room 211 DWS. The meeting will be about an extended benefit trigger.