

Mental health cutbacks possible

Services for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled adult residents of Clackamas County could be drastically reduced if the Oregon legislature adopts budget cuts proposed by the Mental Health Division.

Vocational and social skills training could be eliminated for more than 20 percent of those currently served by the Clackamas Challenge Center's work activity center.

Nearly 90 percent of those who rely on transportation services or subsidies would lose that needed level of support.

"Our major concern is the disproportionate affect these cuts will have on Clackamas County's disabled citizens," said Ken Fosheim, executive director of the Clackamas Challenge Center.

"Similar services in other counties are being affected by less than five or 10 percent.

"No one wants to see a reduction in services, but we can expect them to be made equally if they are absolutely necessary."

The major recommendation affecting the disabled of Clackamas County is one that would terminate services for those 60 years of age or older or who live in nursing homes.

According to Fosheim, "This decision is being made without consideration for whether or not an individual needs these services for his mental and emotional stability.

"The Mental Health Division is making an indiscriminant determination to terminate services solely on the basis of someone's age or place of residence."

Almost all who attend the Clackamas Challenge Center use the Tri-Met bus system or rely on door-to-door transportation services provided by the Clackamas County Community Action Agency.

The Challenge Center's contract with the Clackamas County Mental Health Program currently provides for the funding of those services, but that funding will be eliminated if the legislature agrees with the proposed budget reduction of the Mental Health Division.

This would directly affect 45 of the 48 who receive services from the Challenge Center's work activity center.

"We'll simply have to look at terminating services for those without adequate transportation services," said Fosheim.

"But many of those who require transportation desperately need rehabilitation services we are able to provide."

These cuts proposed by the Mental Health Division could occur if the Oregon legislature agrees to budget reductions between 10 and 15 percent.

Additional cuts to community service providers for disabled persons can also occur through the elimination of cost-of-living increases included in the 1981-83 biennial budget.



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