

ARCA 2011-12 Budget Response

January 21, 2010

Governor Brown has proposed the 2011-12 Budget on January 10 with the intent of having the legislative review process completed by March 1. With an abbreviated timeline, the Assembly and Senate have both held hearings to review the Governor's budget with the Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst's Office and scheduled subcommittee hearings to begin in early February.

ARCA has reviewed the proposal by the Governor and supporting documents from the Department of Developmental Services to outline our initial positions at this early stage in the process.

Without details on how specific savings will be achieved in some of the Governor's proposals, it is a challenge to target responding or communicating to members of the Legislature a message that moves beyond the basics.

ARCA is recommending a measured, phased response and outreach to the Legislature. This method could be used when contacting all legislators, but will be especially helpful with the incoming freshmen Assemblymembers.

We need to work with the assumption that almost every legislator, both incoming and returning has only a basic level understanding of developmental disabilities, who regional centers are, the people we serve and the level of need, care and intensity of services required for them to live in the community.

Over the next two to three weeks, we have an opportunity to use this window of time before the Assembly and Senate subcommittees begin meeting to engage legislators and their staff in general meet-and-greets.

This is not the most ideal time to ask them for anything specific yet because we are not yet sure about the details of the budget – we are unsure as to where and how the reductions will be achieved, through what means and the impact on the regional center Purchase-of-Service and Operations budgets.

We want to avoid making the first interaction one that involves going into great detail about the budget. Hopefully there will be a window of time for at least one face-to-face meeting to engage the legislator and/or their staff before the next time when we will be bringing them details and calling them to action.

Phase One: Introduction – January 24 – February 4

1. Please call your legislator's district office.
 - a. Ask for two things – the name of the DISTRICT scheduler and the person who would be best to speak to in the DISTRICT office on issues relating to people with developmental disabilities.
 - b. Speak to the scheduler about the process for setting up a meeting with the legislator. This may entail sending a "meeting request" in the form of an email or letter with the following information:
 - i. Your name
 - ii. Your address
 - iii. Your regional center and your affiliation (parent, regional center director, etc.)
 - iv. Purpose of the meeting (meet my representative and provide information about the regional center)
 - c. Ask in addition to that meeting with the legislator when would be a good time to stop by and speak to the designated DD staff member.
 - d. Make the appointment for as soon as possible.

Message for this week

We timed this out and it takes about seven minutes. Please feel free to use these are talking points – it isn't necessary to convey this message verbatim, but these are the basic areas that need to be covered.

The regional center system was developed about 40 years ago as an alternative to state hospitals to serve people with developmental disabilities. The state hospital institutions were later called developmental centers.

There are 21 non-profit regional centers around the state serving 240,000 people with developmental disabilities and their families. Developmental disabilities includes conditions such as autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mental retardation and similar conditions, like Down Syndrome that are either present at birth or occur before an 18th birthday.

People are referred to regional centers by physicians or schools.

The services are not one-size-fits all. The Lanterman Act requires individual program plans for each person served by the regional center. Regional center case managers/service coordinators work with the counties and other public service entities to connect people with services in their communities, like special education for school-age kids and in-home support services for adults. In addition to coordinating public services, regional centers also subcontract to community providers for services such as in-home therapies, transportation and day time programs.

The cuts to the developmental services budget are too deep.

The compound effect of these cuts from previous years is having a negative effect on people's access to safe quality life-sustaining services. The proposed cuts will disable regional centers' ability to hire service coordinators and other key staff to help people walking through the door. The cuts will also hamper the ability of our providers to hire and retain direct care staff who work with people every day. Both of these alone could jeopardize the health and safety of people with developmental disabilities.

(Insert personal experience and stories here.)

Phase Two: Legislative Budget Subcommittee hearings – February 3 – February 15

The Assembly has a Subcommittee #1 hearing scheduled for Thursday, February 3 and the Senate has a Subcommittee #3 hearing scheduled for Thursday, February 10.

It is ARCA's expectation that at the conclusion of these hearings we will have a better idea of the direction the Legislature will take with respect to the Governor's proposed budget.

At that time, we will revise our next level of approach and review that proposed action with the full ARCA Board of Directors on our scheduled calls on Tuesday, February 15 at which time board members will have an opportunity to help direct or redirect the plan.