



Clients in CRISIS

Community-based group home workers ensure the safety, security and quality of life for IDD (Intellectually Developmentally Disabled) patients statewide. These clients are some of our most vulnerable Oregon citizens, but a funding cutback that began in 2010 has left these sensitive citizens in a crisis situation.

- **Group home wages must be increased.**

Oregon's indexed minimum wage law means that once again, the minimum wage has, by and large, "caught up" with what many private sector IDD group home workers earn. These are difficult jobs that require extensive training and heartfelt commitment to the clients, but the reality is, when workers can make the same money working in fast food restaurants or other entry-level jobs, there is an exodus from the group homes. It's a never-ending cycle: high turnover rates mean group homes must invest more money in training new workers, leaving no money for basic wages and benefits.

- **The governor's proposed budget is inadequate.**

The State of Oregon's contribution to group home providers was cut by 6 percent in 2010, and the industry has never recovered. Underfunded year-after-year, now combined with the increasing indexed minimum wage, employers simply cannot afford to retain good, trained employees. While we do not realistically expect to get the full money back that was cut in 2010, a flat budget this biennium is a recipe for disaster. There must be *some* funding increase.

- **There are hidden costs to underfunding.**

Many IDD group home workers have more than one job to simply pay the rent and feed their family. Overworked employees are less likely to provide the best care to clients. Workers often qualify for the Oregon Health Plan because they earn below the federal poverty line, even though they work full time. They take OHP because they can't afford the premium from their employer's insurance plan.

- **Training standards must be maintained.**

The training provided to Oregon's own state-operated community program — which includes many of the most difficult to care for clients from the old Fairview Training Center — should be the standard for private homes. At a minimum, "Fatal Four" training (aspiration, dehydration, constipation and seizures) must be standard — it was at one time, it is no longer. County-based investigators say deaths due to lack of training have increased since "Fatal Four" training has been discontinued.

We must be the voice and the protectors of these "hidden" Oregon citizens!

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