



Connecticut Department of Social Services

NEWS RELEASE

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Program Cuts Total \$107.6 Million, in Addition to Staffing Losses

**DSS OUTLINES PROGRAMMATIC CUTS;
FINDING NEW WAYS TO HELP CLIENTS SERVED IN
MIDDLETOWN, STAMFORD**

HARTFORD – State Social Services Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby today detailed the potential impact of budget-balancing measures on low-income residents served by his agency, including the closure of regional offices in Middletown and Stamford and \$107.6 million in additional program cuts over the next two years.

“The layoff notices and office closures we are planning are unfortunate, and we join Governor Malloy and union leadership in saying that we hope an agreement is ratified,” Commissioner Bremby said. “There is no doubt that these service reductions and layoffs will be felt by the clients we serve, but we are in the process of identifying ways our clients served by these offices and programs can most easily access their services.”

DSS staff layoffs and shuttered offices would mean wholesale changes for thousands of families, senior citizens, people with disabilities and other adults in 25 municipalities. At the same time, wide-ranging cuts in direct and contracted services – including child care, job transportation and Medicaid eligibility – would affect many more thousands statewide.

“The Department of Social Services has the biggest budget in state government, mainly because of the Medicaid health coverage program. We have no other choice but to do our part in balancing the overall budget under the current circumstances – and this means painful cutbacks,” said Commissioner Bremby.

DSS has issued layoff notices to 101 staff in its Middletown and Stamford offices, starting a process to close these offices in late August. Currently, the Middletown office serves over 41,600 residents in a 20-town area extending to the shoreline, while the Stamford office serves over 24,200 residents in five towns in lower Fairfield County.

“We have begun the logistical process of office closures,” Commissioner Bremby said. “As I have told DSS staff directly, this savings plan contains sharp cuts which we all find to be extremely difficult. They affect both our clients and our colleagues. If an agreement is not ratified, we will continue to do our best to carry out the next steps as thoughtfully and carefully as possible.”

The logistical planning includes deciding where clients in the 25 municipalities will now go for DSS services and how they can be encouraged to make better use of the U.S. mail and email for the application and annual renewal process for health coverage, food assistance and other programs.

Services available at DSS field offices range from HUSKY health coverage for children in low-income families and Medicaid for the Aged/Blind/Disabled to food assistance for eligible residents of all ages through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps). Other services include child support enforcement and three cash assistance programs for the poor: State Supplement for the Aged/Blind/Disabled, Temporary Family Assistance, and State-Administered General Assistance, a former municipal program transferred to state operation in the 1990s.

“The bottom line for people now served by the Middletown and Stamford offices will mean more difficulty in visiting DSS and getting in-person service for our programs,” Commissioner Bremby said. “Our services are already complex in terms of federal and state eligibility and verification rules. Our staff have been doing a herculean job with a record number of applications and cases statewide. If these layoffs go through, the burden on remaining staff will be even more difficult and there will be longer waits for the public.”

Statewide, DSS staffing cutbacks under the budget-balancing plan also included 43 trainee positions, 17 temporary worker retiree positions, 52 scheduled retirements, and ten other positions at central administration.

While DSS’s appropriated budget is the largest among state agencies at \$5.7 billion for fiscal 2012, Commissioner Bremby noted that nearly 81% goes to the Medicaid federal/state entitlement program alone. This meant that program cuts were largely identified in smaller, discretionary areas of the budget.

“Where possible, cuts are identified in administrative services funds, rather than direct services,” the Commissioner said. “We chose options to best preserve core, direct services and protect the most vulnerable populations. However, the targeted savings – either percentage cuts or eliminations – also affect many service organizations and programs that currently assist children, families, the homeless, people with acquired brain injury, families caring for people with Alzheimer’s Disease, and other citizens.”

Among the \$107.6 million in program cutbacks at DSS over the next two fiscal years are:

- \$30 million by seeking federal approval for a \$25,000 asset-eligibility test and family-income counting for eligibility in the Medicaid for Low-Income Adults program, resulting in fewer people served;
- \$17.8 million in reduced Medicaid fee schedules, including for durable medical equipment, physician services, and behavioral health services;
- \$5.3 million in 10% reductions to various non-entitlement programs, including Healthy Start, Alzheimer’s respite care, services to the elderly, human resources development, community services, and other services;
- \$3.5 million in Children’s Trust Fund programs (other than Nurturing Families Network and Help Me Grow program);
- \$3.2 million in reduced funding for statewide transportation to work programs;

- \$2.2 million by delaying implementation of the HIV/AIDS Medicaid waiver until fiscal 2013;
- \$1.2 million in removed Medicaid rate increase for LifeStar air ambulance;
- \$1.8 million in reduced funding for child care provider training and accreditation;
- \$1.6 million in eliminated funding for geriatric assessment, acquired brain injury advocacy, AIDS interfaith services, family support grants, child care for homeless shelters and other programs; and
- \$388,500 in eliminated administrative support for before- and after-school child care.

Across all programs and personnel levels, the budget-balancing plan for DSS represents \$48.3 million in reductions for fiscal 2012 and \$82.9 million for fiscal 2013. DSS is also working to develop measures to directly inform clients, contractors and other service providers about the budget-balancing plan, and how they would be affected, Commissioner Bremby said.

The budget-balancing plan also stands to affect clients and staff of a new, consolidated state agency called the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services. This agency was formed July 1 by merging the former DSS Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, the Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired, and portions of the Workers' Compensation Commission and Department of Motor Vehicles.

Program reductions of about \$2.5 million for fiscal 2012 and \$2.8 million for fiscal 2013 would impact the Employment Opportunities Program; Independent Living Centers; CT Radio Information Service; Special Training for the Deaf Blind; Supplementary Relief and Services; and other areas.

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