

HUMAN SERVICES

We must continue to provide a state safety net to protect our most vulnerable individuals. Washington's children, seniors and people with disabilities must be treated with professionalism, dignity and respect.



Significant progress was already made in the 2007–09 biennial budget to assure that vulnerable children and adults have access to services by high-quality providers. The budget provided increased reimbursement and supports to foster parents as well as improved wages for community services providers for the elderly, developmentally disabled and mentally ill. Families were strengthened through expanded resources for kinship caregivers who care for children and adult family members in need of assistance. Nearly 400 new residential placements were added for individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as increased employment and day services. In addition, the budget included improved protection for vulnerable children and adults through continued implementation of monthly visits of children in the state's care, improved quality assurance of adult family homes and better monitoring of supported living facilities.

Governor Gregoire proposes to make focused investments to continue our progress in child safety, make sure those who have served our country have access to a safety net and assure that citizens can be served in their communities. She also proposes to fill some of the gaps created by federal funding decreases to stabilize services to those most vulnerable and to respond to requirements of legal action.

Reductions in caseloads and/or savings in the average cost of services per client will help pay for the essential items identified in her budget.

Governor Gregoire's Budget for Human Services:

Brings on caseworkers sooner to protect children. The Governor's budget will accelerate the hiring of new staff added this biennium so face-to-face visits with children in the state's care are made every 30 days. Staff are expected to be hired by May 2008, instead of December 2008. *(\$800,000 GF-State, \$300,000 GF-Federal)*

Conducts safety assessments of at-risk-families. Front-end assessments of high-risk or complex child protective services cases will provide additional information on family safety and risk factors to identify cases that might otherwise slip through the cracks. Based on the success of the foster care assessment program, evidence-based assessment tools will help identify the appropriate intervention services to help high-risk families. *(\$500,000 GF-State, \$200,000 GF-Federal)*

Improves safety for vulnerable adults. When an elderly adult dies as a result of abuse or neglect, we need a systematic way of reviewing the case with community partners to learn the lessons that would help identify and prevent other such cases from occurring. Staff will be added in the Aging & Disability Services Administration to coordinate fatality review teams. *(\$82,000 GF-State, \$82,000 GF-Federal)*

Implements the Senior Falls Prevention Program. The Governor's Long-Term Care Task Force found that 30 percent of adults older than 65 years of age experience falls. These accidents can lead to injury, hospitalization, disability or nursing home admission. An affordable, senior-based exercise program and consumer information on fall prevention for seniors and their children will help reduce the risk of falls by older citizens. *(\$557,000 GF-State)*

Provides new staff to increase client and staff safety in state mental hospitals. The hiring of additional mental health technicians will be phased in through the end of the biennium to implement the first phase of a workload study. Assaults by clients on other clients or staff are expected to decrease, as are work-related injuries. *(\$2.1 million GF-State, \$478,000 GF-Federal)*

Provides stable community placements for children with developmental disabilities. Presently, short-term respite placements for children with developmental disabilities are limited. As a result, the number of children in institutional settings has increased. Funding will cover the increased institutional costs, accelerate the development of community placements and implement intensive in-home supports for up to 20 families whose children have significant behavioral issues. Funding will also provide additional support to school districts that provide for the education of children who live in institutions. *(\$3.8 million GF-State, \$3.6 million GF-Federal)*

Increases wages for nursing home workers. Nursing homes have difficulty recruiting and retaining workers in jobs such as nurse aides, dietary aides, laundry aides and housekeepers. A stable work force is needed in these important direct-care jobs. A rate increase will be provided to increase worker wages or benefits or to hire additional staff for those jobs, or other jobs that pay less than \$15 per hour to increase quality of care and patient safety. *(\$7.4 million GF-State, \$7.7 million GF-Federal)*

Provides respite for individuals taking care of family members. Thousands of individuals help care for family members in Washington state. The Governor's Long-Term Care Task Force recommends supporting long-term care in the least restrictive environment whenever possible. Funding will be provided for respite services and training for 500 more unpaid caregivers working with developmentally disabled adults and those in long-term care so they can remain with their families. *(\$1.1 million GF-State)*

Maintains access to community residential care for developmentally disabled adults and those in long-term care. Adult family homes, which care for high-need clients in a home-like setting, are a vital part of the state's care network. They help ensure that high-quality care is available for vulnerable citizens outside of nursing homes. A 4.8 percent rate increase effective July 1, 2008, (in lieu of the 2 percent increase currently in the budget) will give adult family homes a rate increase of 8 percent for the biennium, equaling the increases received by boarding homes. (*\$2.1 million GF-State, \$2.2 million GF-Federal*)

Continues the integrated crisis response and intensive case management pilot programs through the biennium. Insufficient information is available to evaluate the effectiveness of these pilot programs in reducing high use of other expensive services (such as hospital emergency rooms and jails). Funding will be provided to continue to serve individuals in these programs until the end of this biennium so that additional data can be made available for evaluation. (*\$4.8 million GF-State*)

Invests in payroll system for independent providers who serve individuals with developmental disabilities and elderly clients. As required by a collective bargaining agreement, the state must provide a more flexible system to pay independent providers. In addition, the system must be designed to meet the collective bargaining requirements to pay child-care workers. These funds will develop or purchase the system, based on the feasibility study that will be final in December 2007. (*\$3.5 million GF-State, \$2 million GF-Federal*)

Replaces Utter lost revenue/legislation. Governor Gregoire will propose legislation to clarify that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) may recover the cost of treatment for individuals placed in involuntary treatment. This legislation is the result of the Utter Decision and will allow DSHS to recover approximately \$5.6 million. If this legislation is not passed, new funding in this amount would be required. (*\$5.6 million GF-State*)