



## **DD Comprehensive Care: Comments on Policy Option Package #102 for 26M in GF**

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Department of Human Services

We were very pleased to see the DHS Policy Option Package #102, which included \$26 million in General Fund for Comprehensive Rates for people with developmental disabilities who need twenty-four hour lifetime care.

That is a significant first step in beginning to address a system that has been long ignored and under funded.

Even though the recommendation falls short of the full solution needed by the system (ORA Recommendation of \$60M General Fund), it certainly provides us a strong base upon which we will continue our work for inclusion in the Governor's Budget, with ultimate funding by the 2007-09 Legislature.

Our concern is that, while the amount in the Budget Package could help avert some of the crises in the short term, the specter of rampant employee turnover and the inability to even attract applicants for our jobs remains a problem--A huge problem that will only be partially remedied and the inevitable, full-blown crisis will only be postponed.

As you know, DD Comprehensive Care is completely dependent upon DHS funding.

- The DD Comprehensive System does not allow for provider taxes or cost shifting to private payers, as all our consumers are DHS clients.
- DD Comprehensive Services provides lifetime care for over 3000 Oregonians. As individuals age, their physical, mental and social support needs increase faster than their chronological peers; people with severe disabilities age more rapidly and with more complications than people who do not have developmental disabilities.
- Fairview closed in 1999; the Legislature saw that community providers became the core of Oregon's mandated services for people with Developmental Disabilities. The Legislature also recognized that caring for these people would require paraprofessional skills and promised to maintain wages significantly above minimum wage to attract and retain competent employees. Community providers have kept their commitment to serve these individuals, but the state has not kept its promise to fund us at a competitive rate.
- Direct service jobs are demanding and complex, requiring judgment and skills far beyond entry-level positions. Competition for qualified workers in Oregon is increasing as the economy improves, making it imperative that community organizations can offer competitive wages and benefits into the future.

The DD Comprehensive System has made significant financial contributions toward its own survival through cost cutting, benefit reductions, grant seeking, and fundraising. If this system were to fail the state would be forced to continue to provide services for these 3000 individuals. At the rate of pay currently paid to state workers, the wage differential alone would be \$200,000,000 a biennium.