



SERVICES FACING MORE BUDGET CUTS

The next Oregon Legislative Session begins in February and legislators are again facing some tough budgetary decisions. Once again, brokerage budgets are on the list of proposed cuts:

Reduce brokerage administrative budgets by an additional 4% and reduce brokerage personal agent (targeted case management) budgets by an additional 8%

Brokerages are very concerned about these cuts as we already sustained significant decreases to our budgets in this past legislative session. If implemented, they could force brokerages to layoff staff or increase the caseload size of personal agents. This will mean our staff will be spread thin and have less time to assist our customers. If these cuts continue, brokerages could be at risk of going out of business altogether. The cut is proposed to go into effect on April 1st.

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the **DearLegislator** PROJECT

Between now and the end of January, Independence Northwest will provide space and assistance to those who want help writing to their legislators. Stop by our office and we will help you:

- Determine who your legislators are
- Write a personalized letter to your legislators, including a photo of you.
- Mail the letter for you and give you a copy

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Customers, family members and providers can call, email or write to your local legislators and let them know that you benefit from brokerage services and do not want them to be cut. Here's a sample letter:

Dear Legislator,

I live in your district and am a customer of Independence Northwest, a support service brokerage in Portland. The services I receive from the brokerage help me live a healthy, safe and independent life in the community. I oppose any cuts to support service brokerages. Thank you for protecting my services.

Sincerely,
Your name
Your address

BUDGET CUTS -WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

- Go to the Oregon DD Coalition website www.oregonddcoalition.org for information about this legislative session, fact sheets, and advocacy information.
- Take a *Partners in Policymaking* class , an advocacy training program for adults with disabilities and their families offered by The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities. For more information, visit: <http://ocdd.org/index.php/ocdd/trainings/130>
- Check out the website for Independence Northwest's Dear Legislator Project to view stories brokerage customers sent to legislators this past session: www.dearlegislator.org
- Read the full list of proposed cuts this legislative session here: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lfo/budget/home.htm>

IT'S TAX SEASON AGAIN!

Q. Where can I go to get help filing my taxes?

A. The Internal Revenue Service has a program called the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program. The VITA Program offers free tax help to low- to moderate-income (generally, \$50,000 and below) people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Certified volunteers sponsored by various organizations receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country.

VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. Most locations also offer free electronic filing. To locate the nearest VITA site, call 1-800-906-9887.

-excerpt taken from www.irs.gov

Independence Northwest's Inclement Weather Policy

Winter's here and that means occasional snow and cold weather in Portland. Independence Northwest follows the Portland Public School closure policy during inclement weather. If PPS closes school for the day due to bad weather, INW's office will also be closed.

Upcoming Holiday Closures:

Monday, February 20th- President's Day

Monday, May 28th- Memorial Day



INW customer David Richardson

OREGON SUPPORT SERVICES BROKERAGES CELEBRATE 10 YEARS

This past November, the thirteen support service brokerages hosted a celebration in Salem to reflect on the past decade and celebrate the work we've done. In attendance were Oregon State Representatives Michael Dembrow and Sara Gelser as well as many of the initial players who were on the front lines of building the support service system back in 2000.

The evening started with a dinner followed by a drum performance by Kodiak



Stormbringer and Waylon Meanus . Opening remarks were offered by Full Access Brokerage Executive Director Margaret Theisen. SDRI founding director Randy Fulgham's speech about the challenges of early development efforts provided those present with a reminder of how far support services has come in ten years and Diann Drummond, mother of plaintiff Molly Drummond, brought a personal perspective by offering recollections of the birth of the Staley lawsuit. The evening was rounded out with Charlotte Duncan presenting remembrances and gratitude to self-advocates Judy Cunio and Rosella Samuelson.

More info: www.oregonsupportservices.org

Homecare Commission Offers Free Classes for Brokerage Providers



The Oregon Home Care Commission offers **free** training and classes for

brokerage providers. Ask your Personal Agent for a copy of the monthly newsletter or check out their offerings online at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/spd/adv/hcc/training.shtml>

Need Resources? Call 211 Info



211 Info is a resource referral service for Portland and Southwest Washington. They have operators who can assist you in finding information and resources for things like emergency housing, food, clothing, child resources, medical and many others. The calls are confidential and operators are trained to ask specific questions to make sure you are getting the information you need. It's easy: just call 2-1-1 on your phone and let them know what you're looking for. Or search for resources online at www.211info.org. Phone hours are Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6pm.

