



Federal Disability Funding

FACT SHEET

2014 DISABILITY POLICY SEMINAR
— APRIL 7-9, 2014 —

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Background

People with disabilities, their families, and advocates remain extremely concerned about the outlook for federally-funded programs. While entitlement programs (such as Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income) have so far largely been protected from deficit reduction efforts, there are growing calls to cut eligibility and benefits for these essential programs. The discretionary programs that people with disabilities rely on to live in the community (employment, education, housing, and more), many of which received small increases above their FY 2013 levels, continue to face real threats to be cut further.

Key Message to Congress

Congress must preserve Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, SSI, and other vital programs for people with disabilities.

The Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) was enacted on December 26, 2013 and is a blueprint for spending and revenue for 2014 and 2015. The BBA eases the across-the-board spending cuts (sequestration) for discretionary programs that began in 2013. It also paved the way for the enactment of a regular 2014 appropriations bill for programs within the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation on January 17. The 2014 appropriations provided an average 2.6% increase over the sequestered amounts. This fiscal relief was not evenly spread, with some programs receiving increases and others continuing at lower levels. Overall, most disability-related programs partially recovered the cuts they received in 2013, bringing them just under their 2012 funding levels.

On March 4, 2014, the Obama Administration released its budget request for FY 2015. However, since the BBA set overall spending levels for the next two years, the President's budget will not likely impact the overall budget this year. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair of the Senate Budget Committee, recently confirmed that she will let the top-line spending levels agreed to in the BBA stand instead of working toward a new Senate budget resolution this year.

Key Issues

Congress remains very divided on the fundamental issue of the role and size of the federal government. This is reflected in the divergent positions on the two key issues of entitlement programs (Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and SSI) and revenue (personal, corporate, and social insurance tax).

Further deficit reduction could have a tremendous impact on the future of federal programs that are critical to the health and well-being of people with disabilities. Some proposals threaten to destroy the social insurance, safety net, and other vital programs that have taken decades to create.

Plans to cut entitlement programs and to further cut discretionary programs are harmful for people with disabilities. Several important disability programs, including the Councils on Developmental Disabilities, University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and Protection and Advocacy Systems, lost significant funding due to the sequester which they did not recover in 2014. Many other disability programs have been level-funded since FY 2010 which, when accounting for inflation, results in substantial reductions. Consequently, disability programs have not been able to keep up with service demands.

Recommendations

- Congress should raise sufficient revenues to reduce the deficit and finance the federal government's role in providing essential supports, services, and benefits for people with disabilities and their families.
- Congress should oppose cuts and structural changes to Medicaid and Medicare and eligibility and benefit cuts to Social Security and SSI.
- Congress should restore funding for critical discretionary disability programs.

Relevant Committees

House and Senate Budget Committees

House and Senate Appropriations Committees

House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

For more information, please contact The Arc at (202) 783-2229, United Cerebral Palsy at (202) 776-0406, Association of University Centers on Disabilities at (301) 588-8252, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at (202) 387-1968, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities at (202) 506-5813, or Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered at SABEnation@gmail.com

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