

2009 Human Services Budget

Substance Abuse Services

Each year, the demand for drug and alcohol services far exceeds the funding for these services. Addiction is the root cause of much of the violence in our communities. The toll of untreated addiction is witnessed by increased use of hospital emergency rooms and in placements in children and youth programs and prisons. Treatment for addiction is highly effective and cost beneficial when provided in a timely fashion, at the appropriate level of care and for an adequate length of time.

Underage alcohol use costs \$8 billion per year, including violent crime and fatal crashes (*Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 1999*). Efforts to reduce underage drinking save lives and reduce future public expenditures.

Medicaid patients who received addiction treatment experienced a 30 percent decrease in their overall medical costs, according to a new study from researchers at Kaiser Permanente. The study found that patients who received treatment saw their Medicaid costs fall from an average of \$5,402 per year to an average of \$3,627 per year.

Single County Authorities work diligently to allocate scarce resources to the neediest residents of the commonwealth. The commonwealth budget cuts enacted during the last quarter of the 2008 calendar year had a devastating impact on the service delivery system; forcing county programs to severely limit services.

In the past five budgets, treatment funds have been reduced by 20 percent. Projected increased demand caused by current economic conditions will compound the impact of the budget cuts. Unless additional funding is made available, citizens who need services will be seen in emergency rooms, and local prison populations, crime and domestic violence.

Steps must be taken to prevent private insurers from cost-shifting to publicly-funded programs.

Without additional funding, much of the progress that has been made to establish local treatment courts and diversion programs, will be lost.

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