



Personal Assistance Services

On January 11, 2011, the Joint Appropriation Subcommittee on Health and Human Services passed a motion that included a 2.22% funding reduction to Personal Assistance Services (PAS). This reduction would reduce the amount of time PAS consumers have available to them for meal preparation to 4 hours, or 1/3 of their total allotted time, per week. This equates to about 34 minutes per day or 11.5 minutes per meal.

During the 2003 legislative session, many services available under the personal assistance programs were reduced and have not ever been restored, much to the detriment of consumers' personal hygiene, health, and quality of life. Baths were limited to three per week. People were no longer allowed to bath daily unless they requested a physician's prescription. This is one example of the level of services currently available under the personal assistance programs, which force recipients to live in substandard conditions.

Cutting back on meal preparation hours is a remarkably dangerous proposition for consumers considering that even now, there is rarely enough time available to them to have an adequate, let alone nutritious, meal prepared for them at least once per day.

Reducing the time consumers have available to them to prepare meals could have a profound effect on their health, leading to the malnourishment of many individuals who already experience at least one, if not multiple, health related issues. This could lead to even greater occurrences of emergency room visits and/or extended hospital stays to treat accelerated and more extreme ailments related to their primary diagnoses as well and an increase in the number of secondary health related conditions caused by malnourishment and unhealthy eating. Both would lead to an increase in the overall cost of care rather than a decrease.

A further reduction in services could leave many individuals with no choice but to be forced into higher cost care settings to ensure their needs are met. Not only is this not ideal for or wanted by consumers but, it could ultimately cost the state more money in the long run than if consumers had adequate services available to them that would allow them to remain in a community setting.

This 2.22% funding reduction that was a part of the 5% reduction plan, should be reinstated to ensure all recipients of PAS services can continue to receive the current level of services that are now available so that they can continue to have access to nutritious meals and keep their health from deteriorating further.