

A community message from the Alta California Regional Center Executive Director

Our regional center community is facing a very difficult situation. I am sure you know that our state has been in financial turmoil for years. This year, it seems we have reached the tipping point. California's revenues have fallen far short of meeting the state's commitments. There is simply not enough money coming into our state treasury to support all of the programs and services that we Californians have come to rely upon.

The failure of the propositions in May's statewide special election showed that many Californians are unwilling to pay more in taxes in order to increase revenues. Last month, the state ran out of cash to pay bills for state employees and contractors like Alta California Regional Center. Fortunately, we were able to obtain a line of credit from our bank and we paid our service providers on time. Now, the Legislature and the Governor have made the difficult choice to require deep, painful budget reductions to many vital programs and services, including more than \$334,000,000 to regional centers. These budget revisions were signed by Governor Schwarzenegger on July 28, 2009 and took effect immediately. The new cuts follow hundreds of millions of dollars in other reductions that our service system has endured over the past few years.

We have posted a summary of the proposed changes to the Lanterman Act on our website, www.altaregional.org. You can also see the entire revised Lanterman Act on the Department of Developmental Services' website at www.dds.ca.gov. If you review these changes, you will see that our regional center is now prohibited from purchasing services in a number of categories, and that certain services are "suspended" until the DDS develops and implements a new **individual consumer budget model**. The full implementation of this new model is likely many months and perhaps even years away.

Even though the legislature and Governor have made these big cuts to our budget, they have also expressed a commitment to preserve what is left of the entitlement to services for Californians who are eligible under the Lanterman Act. California remains the **only** state in the entire nation that has an entitlement to services. The ability of our regional center system to achieve the savings required by the budget cuts will improve the chance that the entitlement can be sustained into the future. Failing to achieve the required savings will most certainly put the entitlement at great risk.

Many of the new reductions will affect services that are already authorized in Individual Program Plans and Individualized Family Service Plans. If one or more of your services is affected, your service coordinator will soon contact you either by phone or through the US Mail. This communication will let you know how the new Lanterman Act changes will directly impact your services. The law does provide for the possibility of granting an exemption to some specific service reductions based on "extraordinary circumstances".

I know that you are most likely troubled by all of the discouraging news regarding the state budget and regional center services. I really do share your concern, but I assure you that Alta California Regional Center remains unwavering in its commitment to serve our more than 17,000 consumers, as well as their families and dedicated service providers. Together, we will get through this difficult time. Don't forget that you can receive updated information by joining our email list. Details are on the home page of our website at www.altaregional.org

Respectfully,



Phil Bonnet