

Community Forum Meeting Minutes

October 3, 2017

Welcome & Overview: Carol Burton, President/CEO United Way of Yellowstone County

Moderator: Kristin Lundgren, Director of Impact, United Way of Yellowstone County

Purpose of Forum: to raise awareness about the local impact of proposed state budget cuts and to foster conversation about potential solutions.

Panel: Health

Barbara Schneeman - RiverStone Health, Vice President, Communication & Public Affairs

- Estimate more than 8300 of its patients would be adversely impacted if some of the proposed cuts are implemented.

The fiscal impact of the proposed cuts directly to RiverStone Health is estimated to be more than \$2 million with a loss between 14 and 20 FTEs. The direct impacts to RiverStone Health will be felt in the following programs/services:

- Elimination of Kids First child foster health public nurse partnership contract which ensures federally mandated outcomes for children in foster care are met.
- Reduction in operational support to counties for communicable disease outbreaks.
- Reduction in medical insurance assistance for people with HIV.
- Reduction in vaccines for uninsured/underinsured adults.
- Elimination of Targeted Case Management for children and youth with special needs.
- Elimination of Medicaid Health Improvement Plan.
- Elimination of Medicaid optional hospice service.
- Elimination of Kids First child foster health public nurse partnership contract resulting in 4.6 FTES in the program being eliminated.
- Reduction of \$65,900 operational support to counties for communicable disease outbreaks.
- Reduction in medical insurance assistance for people with HIV.
- Reduction in vaccines for uninsured/underinsured adults.
- Elimination of Targeted Case Management for children and youth with special needs.
- Elimination of Medicaid Health Improvement Plan.
- Elimination of Medicaid optional hospice service.

Dr. Michael Temporal - Billings Clinic, Family Physician and Director of Population Health

The proposed budget cuts would negatively affect the care Billings Clinic provides in numerous ways. These are direct and indirect effects that illustrate the phrase, “a penny saved but a pound foolish.”

Highlighted are four such proposed cuts that would affect Billings Clinic’s patients and the care we provide:

- **Community Mental Health Resources:** This includes cuts to Targeted Case Management for children and adults with mental illness, the Community Crisis Center, and other important support resources for keeping people with mental health conditions out of Montana State Hospital, jail, or other institutional settings. Billings Clinic and other Yellowstone County agencies provide vital mental health services for Eastern Montana. With these cuts to state resources, patients would have less of the support that keeps them and others safe in the community, which in turn

could lead to more street drug use, violent or dangerous behavior, and additional strain on the justice system.

- **Direct Medicaid Assistance:** Cuts to Medicaid have the potential to have a double-whammy effect of losing matching funds from the federal government that have expanded both preventive services and primary care. With staff cuts to state agencies, the wait times for giving appropriate care, restrictions in testing or medications, and delays in care will result in a return to sicker patients seeking care in emergency rooms rather than office settings, putting more strain on resources.
- **Early Childhood Intervention and Outreach:** Early childhood interventions, such as autism spectrum screening and in-home developmental evaluation, if cut, would delay diagnosis, deprive children of access to support services, and take away the kind of comprehensive team care to conditions that can affect coping skills and success later in life. Likewise, cuts to targeted case management of youth would impact local and statewide efforts to improve adolescent mental health/suicide awareness and street drug exposure.
- **Case Management services:** Cuts to CPC+, the Medicaid Health Improvement Program (HIP) and other case management would result in increased Emergency Room visits and admissions. Just like Family Support Specialists for our children, our CPC+ program provides case management to the most complex patients, recognizing that health is affected more by social situations and the presence or lack of support than any medications that can be prescribed. Matching the community resources to the patient's needs can make the difference between appropriate care and inappropriate hospitalization. Similarly, the Medicaid Health Improvement Plan makes a critical difference in the lives of the Montanans at the highest risk. Every avoidable ER visit or hospitalization saves thousands of dollars.

Dr. Jeff Zavala - St Vincent Healthcare- Chief Medical Officer of Medical Group and Provider Services in the Montana Region of SCL Health which includes St. Vincent Healthcare, St. James Healthcare in Butte and Holy Rosary Healthcare in Miles City.

- The cuts will have an effect on those who are already at risk.
- We already struggle with the social determinants of healthcare.
- The program that will be affected the most are case management and community health work.
- This will continue the poor outcomes for social determinants.

Panel: Behavioral Health- Chemical Dependency and Mental Health

Barbara Mettler - Executive Director of South Central Montana Regional Mental Health Center

- Currently serve 11 counties and 60 percent of the budget is Medicaid and are a safety net provider for people with Mental Health Issues.
- There has already been a 37% hit to targeted case management. 230 individuals are impacted by case management closures to date. This does not account for future cuts.
- 165 employees down to 100.
- Jail and emergency rooms will be impacted if the MH center has to close. 2500 people will be turned loose without services.

Mike Chavers - Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch, Chief Executive Officer

- Targeted case management -300 youth and families served daily. This will go away if services are cut.

- 45-50 families receive home support and that will be cut.
- 35 positions will be eliminated. \$1.2 million in salary reduction which will affect the community.
- Currently send kids with extensive issues out of state for residential services because the resources aren't here.

Panel: Corrections

Rich St John - Billings Police Chief

- All over the services lost to the represented organizations will invariably fall on local LE to handle. Agencies in the justice community are inextricably linked and will feel a ripple effect depending what gets added or taken away.
- LE main role is to enforce local, state, and federal law. However, the BPD is getting pushed into doing social work because there are no programs to support mental health, addiction, or youth in need of services.

Jan Begger - Alternatives, Inc., Chief Operating Officer

- 5.6 million dollars was cut that was appropriated for the purpose of reducing the number of state offenders held in local jails from 400 to 250. Jail overcrowding is a serious problem in Yellowstone County and this will exacerbate the problem. Approximately \$800,000 of these funds would have been use each year to create low cost jail alternatives in Billings.
- Mental Health, nursing and chemical dependency for the clients in Alpha House and Passages are reduced severely during a time when methamphetamine and opioid use is at epidemic proportions.
- Basic service cuts in pre-release, the sanction center, and inpatient CD programs will eliminate 40 bed spaces. Each of these bed spaces turns over several times per year and the cost of services is far lower than in prisons. The financial loss is hundreds of thousands of dollars, but the main impact is on public safety. Will these offenders go without treatment or will existing public services whose funding is also being cut be able to pick up the difference? Many of our local treatment providers already have long waiting lists.
- Much of the past year was spent on Justice Reinvestment planning which resulted in funding of pretrial programs, a paid Board of Pardons, alternatives to prison, and sentencing reforms under HB133, HB63 and 64. The purpose was to reduce the cost of corrections by \$70,000,000 over the next 10 years. Cuts threaten this plan and the grant monies that have been awarded to assist with implementation.
- The \$40,000,000 cut from the Department of Corrections is problematic primarily because it results in cost shifting rather than savings. For instance, if you "save" money appropriated to reduce jail populations you must spend it on jail bed spaces instead. The cuts will trickle down to Billings and Yellowstone County in the form of increased demand for jail beds, treatment services, and law enforcement.

Panel: Vulnerable Populations

David Munson (Early Childhood) - Director, Early Childhood Intervention

- Part C early intervention services infants and toddlers who have delays and disabilities. The focus is to teach the primary caregiver how to teach the child to prevent further expensive services later in life. The goal is to build confidence, confidence, and capacity with the primary caregiver and to work ourselves out of a job.
- Approximately 2/3 of the children in early intervention do not go into special education preschool. Special education costs are about \$7900 per student per year from age 3 to 19. Part C

early intervention is done on average for about 1/2 of one year's cost of special education and changes trajectory for life.

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- The best practice for Infants and toddlers with disabilities is to hit them hard and early, which results in cost savings down the road.
- 67 percent of the kids they work with, when they turn 3 don't go into special education preschool. You can pay pennies now or pay a lot later.
- Montana will be the first state in the union to cut early childhood intervention leaving most vulnerable infants and toddlers on their own. Even Puerto Rico and Guam offer Part C early intervention services. Montana would be like a Third World country with regard to early intervention.
- 10 FTE will lose their jobs and they will close their doors.

Amy Fladmo (Kids in foster care, families affected by addiction and victims of sexual crimes) -

Executive Director, The Center for Children and Families

- Elimination of Second Chance Home where mothers and their children are able to remain together in a safe and stable home while receiving the necessary interventions to be successful on their own, avoiding foster care. The longer a child spends in foster care, the poorer their physical, emotional, academic outcomes are. Second Chance Home reduces the amount of time a family is separated and child is in foster care. It helps a child achieve permanency more quickly.
 - 8 families and 20 children will be impacted. SCH has served 29 families and 59 children since May of 2016.
 - 8 staff members will be cut.
 - Financial implications for local government and tax payers: higher costs in foster care and subsequent lifetime costs. Looking at the average amount of time a child is in foster care coupled with an average daily rate paid, Second Chance Home saves the community almost \$16,000 per child. This includes savings on parenting times. **Donors:** \$100k donated by community members.
- Elimination of targeted case management for adults with Substance Abuse Disorders.
 - The mothers in the treatment program often present with a whole host of issues impacting their ability to maintain sobriety including being homeless, jobless, without the basic necessities to live.
 - 30 mothers and 10 fathers will be impacted.
 - 2 staff members will be cut.
 - Financial implications for local government and tax payers: Increased cost to taxpayers in the form of costs related to homelessness, recidivism in substance use disorder, child welfare and corrections systems. It will overwhelm a plethora of systems that already can't keep up with the demand.
- Elimination of Forensic Interviewing. The CAC conducts trauma-informed forensic interviews by trained staff in a neutral setting for children who have been sexually abused. The CAC allows for a child to only have to relive the trauma of telling their story 1 time, and often results in a higher and quicker rate on convictions of offenders.
 - On average the CAC conducts 215 forensic interviews and over half of these are under the contract with CPS. Since 2012, this number has increased approximately 15-25% each year.

Tom Schlotterback (SENIORS) - St. Johns, VP of Mission Advancement

- St. John's Lutheran Ministries is home to many aging senior adults. Some residents can afford to pay for housing with private funds. Other residents have exhausted their financial resources and rely on Medicaid funding to pay for a portion of their housing cost. Approximately 45% of residents housed within St. John's skilled nursing care are sustained in part by Medicaid funds from Federal and State resources.
- St. Johns receives approximately \$180 per day for each Medicaid resident it serves and must absorb remaining actual costs. The gap between what St. John's receives in Medicaid funding to house a resident and actual cost is approximately \$75 per day. This financial gap has been increasing at a rapid rate.
- In 2006, the annual financial gap totaled \$700,000. In 2016, the annual financial gap totaled \$2.1 million. In 2017, St. John's is on pace for a Medicaid financial gap to total \$2.4 million. These losses are unsustainable.
- For the first time in 54 years of serving aging senior adults, St. John's is beginning to decline new applicants for housing who have exhausted their resources. Reduced Medicaid funding creates a negative impact on St. John's capacity to serve a growing senior adult population within Yellowstone County and beyond.

Denise Armstrong (SENIORS) - Big Sky Senior Services, Executive Director

Big Sky Senior Services

- Currently helps 265 low income and vulnerable clients and is the only in home care provider that offers a sliding fee based on income-80% of clients served qualify for reduction.
- Costs an average of \$205 dollars per month or \$2500 per year to help a senior live independent and free from abuse.
- Cuts will result in 700 fewer hours of in home and personal care for seniors.
- The waiting list for services will increase, which may cause people to readmit to hospitals and nursing homes.
- Many 80 year old and older seniors don't have family and may become lonely and isolated leading to a decline in their health.
- Reduction in services to our most vulnerable senior citizens will result in an increase in emergency responders responding to calls on falls, self-neglect and other medical conditions.
- Increase in hospital readmissions of seniors who live alone or have no one to help them when they return home.
- Increase in need for Medicaid nursing home beds as most seniors don't have the ability to pay.
- 20 employees will be affected.

Adult Resource Alliance

- Cuts will result in 1357 fewer meals at area meal sites, 674 fewer meals delivered through Meals on Wheels and 213 fewer medical rides for doctor appointments, grocery shopping etc.

Group Comments/Questions

- There was a general sense with the group that the public really isn't aware of the cuts and/or the implications. It was suggested there be a media blast.

- There was little to no interaction between Helena and local providers regarding what the cuts should be until the proposed cuts came out. Since then, Director of DPHHS, Sheila Hogan has been doing earnest outreach for ideas.
- Service providers agreed, in general, that there are ways to improve efficiencies, cut down waste and duplication. Many have been doing this over the past years internally, as cuts have been made. However, a systemic look has not been done, which includes efficiencies at the state level as well as local.
- There is overall a real lack of communication between local service providers and Helena with regard to systemic improvements. This lack of communication also exists inter-agency and inner-agency in Helena.
- There is not an overall vision at the state level for what we want to do with behavioral health – no plan across departments.
- Revenue could be part of the answer but it is not sufficient. An overall vision is needed, along with a systemic reform. Accomplishing this is critical if we want to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations.
- Our community will lose the expertise of qualified professionals in our community if jobs/services are cut. When revenue rebounds, rebuilding specialized services will not happen overnight, due to the brain drain from the fields during instable times. STEP has already lost half of their senior staff as the staff see the writing on the wall and seek reliable employment elsewhere.

Solutions: See Summary below

Closing: Patrice Elliott, Board Chair, United Way of Yellowstone County

Solutions Summary

October 3, 2017 Forum: Local Impact of Proposed Budget Cuts

Over 70 Billings community members came together to discuss proposed Montana budget cuts. A panel of representatives from local agencies shared potential consequences of cuts. Afterwards, the group explored potential solutions and strategies. Participants were given 2 votes to cast for their top choices.

The strongest overall theme that emerged from the event was a need to **increase efficiency**. These strategies received over 50 votes in the following areas.

Increase Collaboration: Included collaboration between non-profit groups as well as non-profits and local and state government. Suggestions included creating ongoing communication channels.

Reduce Duplication: Included increasing efficiency by reducing duplication of services, efforts, and resources. Specific examples included co-location of agencies, shared resources, shared systems, and merging of agencies or state departments.

System Changes: The need to change how the system works included strategies to develop and implement long-term cost saving strategies, reduce waste, and explore new methods such as performance based contracting and strategies to fund firefighting.

Below are results of the solutions generated by the group.

Budget Cuts		
Ideas Generated	Votes	Comments
Reduce Rainy Day Fund Required Amount.	7	The required funding amount could be temporarily lowered to save several millions.
Maintain Current Proposed Cuts.		
Develop Less Painful Cuts.		
Common Application for Assistance.		Reduce duplication of effort by creating a common, shared application for all assistance programs.
Identify Waste and Increase Efficiency.	5	
Merge Childcare Licensing & Childcare Standards Divisions.		
Reduce Government Departments.	8	Reduce duplication and increase efficiency by merging and combining departments that could share resources and costs.
Salary Cuts for all Shared Equally.		Includes all government officials taking an equal pay cut.

Increase Revenue		
Ideas Generated	Votes	Comments
Tobacco Tax.	23	May be a temporary increase – Revenue could be used to develop and implement long term cost saving strategies.
Raise Taxes on the Wealthy.	5	Could include a tax rate increase for persons making \$500,000 or more annually.
Local Options Sales Tax.	5	For Billings specifically.
Propose changes as “Temporary.”	1	Seen as a way to gain bipartisan support and adjust to future revenue changes.
Implement participant fees for social services.		Include a sliding scale.
Wine Tax.	3	
Tourism Tax.	7	Increase taxes on tourist related services.
Pop Tax.	2	
Luxury tax on second homes.	7	Would generate revenue from out of state people purchasing vacation homes.
Other		
Ideas Generated	Votes	Comments
More conversations outside of crisis.	2	Increase communication between state government and non-profits.
Reduce duplication of services.	24	
Managed care.		
Peer support services.	1	Can be conducted at a much lower cost.
Create a behavioral health services delivery plan.	1	May be a way to increase efficiency.
Management Services Agreement.		
Business & Social program work together more.		
Increase collaboration.	5	
Telehealth to rural communities.	1	
Universal child assessment.		May reduce duplication of services.
Co-Location of agencies	2	
Data integration.	1	May reduce duplication and increase efficiency if all programs had the same data system rather than paying for separate systems.
Review how we fund firefighting.	3	
Performance based contracting.	1	Payment would be tied to performance and outcomes. May increase efficiency.
Use city funds to develop and implement community cost savings strategies.		
Increase communication between the city and non-profits.		
Address drug use.	2	
Increase community awareness and education of proposed cuts.	2	