

APD LOOKS TO CUT ANOTHER \$55 MILLION FROM BUDGET

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TALLAHASSEE, Sept. 2, 2011..After already making a series of spending cuts, the state Agency for Persons with Disabilities is looking to slice another \$55 million this year, a new report says.

The APD report, sent Thursday to Gov. Rick Scott and legislative leaders, does not lay out a specific plan for cutting costs. Instead, it offers a menu of options that includes trimming provider rates and changing or limiting services provided to people with disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy and Down syndrome.

APD said it will have a better sense of the need for additional cuts as it looks at month-by-month expenses.

"Ultimately, the future of services to individuals with developmental disabilities is at stake," the report says.

Lawmakers have grappled for years with budget deficits at APD, which serves about 30,000 people through its main programs, known as "waivers." During the spring session, the Legislature earmarked \$810 million for those programs --- \$120 million less than they had been projected to cost.

In the budget, lawmakers required a 4 percent cut in provider payment rates and also froze services unless disabled recipients are in crisis situations. Those moves, coupled with other program changes APD made this summer, cut about \$65 million from the projected deficit.

But that still leaves another \$55 million before APD meets its budget target.

The report includes the possibility of further rate cuts for at least some providers. But it also lists potentially far-reaching options that could affect services and spur controversy.

As an example, the report says APD could save \$9.7 million a year by restructuring adult-day services that involve 11,955 people. One of the possible changes would be to start a new service that would place less emphasis on training programs for older recipients whose families need day care.

While the report says such restructuring could reduce costs and continue protecting the health and safety of recipients, it also notes opposition to the changes.

"Adult day training is one of the original community-based services for individuals, and some stakeholders are concerned about deviating from its traditional emphasis on training, fearing that is a step backwards in serving individuals with disabilities," the report says.

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