

# Latest Budget Cuts

June 2008

Jane Johnson – No Longer the Leader of A.P.D.

In case you have not heard, once again the **Agency for People with Disabilities** is saying goodbye to their leader, Ms. Johnson. Ms. Johnson took the position on April 15, 2007, and lasted little more than 1 year and 1 month. Last year she was told by Senator Don Gaetz, "This agency can't resolve its cost problems with nips and tucks, and not even with minor or major surgery. I'm afraid it may need organ transplants and partial body transplants."

So far the cuts have been as follows:

1. Five services were cut out completely.
2. Support Coordinators were supposed to become state employees but at the last minute, their lobbying efforts resulted in them keeping their independence, but their rates were cut **16-58%**.
3. All children living in family homes now receive '**Limited**' Support Coordination. Group home provider's rates were restructured (political talk for "cut again") and many took steep cuts. Now there is a 4 tier system on the horizon that appears at this point, will throw the entire system into court. The Advocacy Center is currently in process of filing the court papers and documents for a class action. And still the budget is allegedly not under control. Maybe instead of cutting the budgets of people that are actually providing the services like group home providers, and day program providers, it is time to start cutting the bureaucracy both on the state and local level. Perhaps we need to decide if we can 'afford' support coordinators at any cost, whether state employee or private. In short it is time to put the money where the services are actually delivered, as we get "lean".

Our nation is now focused on electing a new President and this is a very important issue but please do not take your "eye" off the "ball" here in Florida. We need all our supporters to pay close attention to these budget cuts and make our Legislators aware of the way we feel about them.