Dear Friends of ACT,

Sometimes you take two steps forward, then one step back. That may be what’s happening with funding for providers like ACT.

About a year ago we were celebrating an unprecedented funding increase resulting from action taken by the Missouri legislature. ACT and other agencies like us received a cost of living adjustment (COLA) and increased revenues as a result of “rebasing” providers’ rates. It came at a very important, perhaps critical, time.

Rebasing sets a new base level for the compensation percentage to providers. And as I’ve said here before, the job’s not done. We still need to cover more ground to meet the recommended standard.

But what a difference a year makes. It looks like the other shoe might drop.

In his first budget, newly elected Missouri Governor Eric Greitens has proposed to end State-funded care for more than 20,000 Missouri residents by requiring people to display more severe disabilities to qualify for in-home care or nursing home services.

That would save over $50 million in State revenues, as well as more Federal dollars. The Governor’s budget also proposes a 3% rate cut to service providers like ACT.

As we’re being reminded by events playing out at the Federal level, the chief executive does not set the budget. The legislature does.

To add yet another metaphor to this discussion, the ball is now in the Missouri legislature’s court. Members of the House Budget Committee have offered budget bill substitutes, including a move that would reduce the proposed rate cut from 3% to 1.5%. Another proposal would add $5 million in new funding for Developmental Disabilities (DD) Provider Rate Rebasing.

These are bills. Not laws. Once the Budget Committee is done, the bills go on to other committees, the full House, and then the Senate.

In other words, we have a long way to go. But appropriations are important, usually a top priority for the General Assembly.

And that’s just Missouri. Even though Friday’s expected vote on the American Health Care Act (AHCA) of 2017 didn’t happen, change may still come at the Federal level, too.

As I’m sure you know, the replacement bill was pulled because Congress could not get the votes to pass it. For now, the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) stands. Medicaid remains unchanged at this time.

We are close to the day-to-day action. We see what’s being done under Medicaid. I’m not blind to the problems. Medicaid needs reform; but not on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens.

ACT has experienced much-needed change in recent years. Rebasing and COLA have helped a lot. We’ve been able to take two major steps by adjusting the pay of all ACT employees and aligning other salaries to be closer to comparable salaries nationwide.

But more adjustments in how we compensate staff are needed and, in fact, planned. But we can’t forge ahead without stability. Plans are on hold until we know whether we really will take one step back.

I’ll watch closely as final actions are taken and report back to you as we are able to advance the cause of better providing services needed by people with disabilities.

Until next month,

Mark

In This Issue

ACT Career Services, Nominated for APSE Award
Myles Hinkel, Passionate About Inclusion and Independence
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Day Program Offers New Service and New Support
A CT has been nominated for APSE’s Best Practices Award. The Association for Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE) is an organization dedicated to inclusive hiring practices (see www.apse.org).

Every year at its annual conference, APSE recognizes an agency for outstanding accomplishments in promoting state-of-the-art practices in Employment First.

This year, the best from across the nation will gather in Portland, June 20-22, for the announcement.

ACT has made many changes during the last several years in response to a Federal Medicaid waiver redefinition.

With little time to make the mandatory adjustments, ACS focused on individuals served in the program and ACT’s mission.

Now, all services are provided in the community and have the goal of preparing and connecting individuals with disabilities to high quality employment and opportunities to excel.

Mahon thanked ACS staff after receiving the exciting news. She wrote, “although the winner of this award will not be announced until June, being nominated for a National Award is a great reflection of the value and quality of the work we are doing each and every day at ACT. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to ACT’s mission and all of the individuals we are privileged to work with. I am extremely grateful to work with each of you and consider us a dedicated group of professionals.”

LIGHT IT UP BLUE

On April 2nd local organizations will once again partner to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day. This family friendly event will be held at Faurot Field from 1p-3pm.

DOl OVERTIME RULE BLOCKED, COMMUNITY LIVING CONTINUES WITH SHIFT IN MANAGEMENT

Last year the Department of Labor (DOL) rolled out new pay requirements for how businesses must pay salaried full-time employees.

ACT’s Community Living (CL) program responded accordingly. Ten Supervisors were promoted to Managers, and two Managers were promoted to Assistant Program Directors.

Even though the Labor regulation was halted, CL decided the changes they made were a step in the right direction.

“We felt it was a positive move. So regardless of the DOL, we wanted to stick with our decision,” CL Director Don Lafferty says.

To ensure long-term success, the program is focusing on recruiting more direct care staff and providing proper support to employees.

Newly promoted Manager Vicki Schulte adds, “I was very pleased to see ACT take a very proactive role in complying with the new DOL rule. This is what I like about ACT. Mark and his administrative team are always trying to stay a step ahead and be leaders in the professional community.

“I am very thankful. Things are going well for me in this new position,” newly promoted Manager Mark Pickett adds.

Myles Hinkel, passionate about inclusion and independence

Congratulations ACS and good luck!

Myles Hinkel has served on the ACT Board of Directors since August, 2015.

Hinkel, a University of Louisville graduate, has served on numerous boards and committees of local non-profits whose missions included changing lives for the better.

That is what drew him to serve at ACT.

“I’m all about inclusion and independence,” Hinkel states. “As the father of a child with special needs, I know how critical it is that organizations like ACT continue to provide services that allow people with all abilities to become the most productive citizens they can be.”

Though some might say it’s the snacks that are served, Hinkel says it’s the satisfaction of helping others and the collective expertise of fellow board members that keep him engaged in boards.

As Director of Development at the Missouri United Methodist Foundation, Hinkel brings fundraising and community engagement expertise to the ACT boardroom.

He is also well connected to many people in his hometown (Columbia), and he has a good feel for what’s going on in the City.
DAY PROGRAM OFFERS NEW SERVICE AND NEW SUPPORT

Imagine for a moment that you can’t leave your home for fear that a medical complication might arise while you are out.

This is a reality for many local people with disabilities. It limits their participation in the community.

Now, thanks to a new service funded by the State called Medical Exceptional, the Day Program will be able to give more specialized medical care to individuals who need it.

The funding allows day habilitation programs to “provide enhanced services as prescribed to meet medical needs which require the following: services from a Certified Nursing Assistance (CNA), services from a licensed practical nurse or registered nurse… or for help with mobility needs.”

This service is intended to promote individuals’ ability to access community-based services and integrate into the community to the fullest extent possible.

ACT’s Day Program can now have a CNA or RN available at all times in-house. He or she will accompany each group that leaves the building with an individual who needs additional medical attention.

The result: more people with disabilities will connect with the community. More barriers to inclusion and participation are removed.

There are currently two individuals who attend the Day Program whose participation was limited. Now they benefit from this service.

Day Program Director Craig Valone says, “Several more people are in the approval process as we continue to transition to a more effective model of medical care at the Day Program that will allow even more individuals to be an active part of the local community.”

The day program will be hiring even more nurses!

We are excited about this opportunity to expand our services and the horizons of people we support.

You can now donate to ACT by shopping at Gerbes, Schnucks, and AmazonSmile and JustGive.org!

At Gerbes and Schnucks, simply apply for their community/rewards program, pick ACT as your designated charity, and shop away!

When shopping at AmazonSmile, create an account, pick ACT as your charity, and again, shop away!

JustGive makes donating to charitable organizations easy. Go to their website and search Alternative Community Training to donate.

You can even pick to give one time, monthly, or to put on a registry.

Thank you for...
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