



## About the Proposed Mental Health Budget Cuts

### How cuts should be prioritized:

1. **Protect kids** – Protecting kids has repeatedly been touted as key to the decision making criteria for the recommended cuts. However, **one-third** of those served through the public mental health system are children. By reducing community mental health services, there will be about 4700 children without mental health services and a greater reliance on the Utah State Hospital. This is the most expensive, (and often least effective intervention) and children are not able to stay in their homes and communities to get treatment.
2. **Avoid cost shifting** – Along with the shift toward institutionalized care, by cutting mental health services, there will be over 14,000 people who will be without mental health treatment and services. These people don't disappear: they will end up on the streets, in the emergency departments, in the jails, and in the prison (not necessarily because they are violent, but they just need to be kept "safe" somewhere.) Aside from the fact that being afflicted with a mental illness will be essentially make someone a criminal, the cost to the State to just "house" the mentally ill (not even treat) will be exponentially higher. The whole point of mental health treatment is to intervene early to help individuals with mental illness live full and productive lives in the community. Paying more in a recession for services that do not even lead to better outcomes and a return on investment will not contribute to the State's long-term economic recovery.

3. **Protect funding with a Medicaid match** - It simply does not make sense to cut funding streams that brings in additional monies to the State. These federal funds not only help keep services intact, but also keep many Utah citizens (many skilled workers) employed. Incidentally, the federal government is expected to increase the matching rate (FMAP) to states, which will essentially bring significant additional federal dollars to states for every one dollar of state Medicaid spending.
4. **Protecting infrastructure** - The cuts to the mental health system are so extreme, the infrastructure of the whole system will take years to repair. We don't want to damage a system beyond repair that has taken years to create. To do so would be a waste of the investment of public dollars that have been used to build this system.

#### **What cuts should be made?**

1. **Focus on trimming fat first** - There is always "fat" that can be cut in our bureaucracies. There should be administrative cuts across the board before looking to cutting services.
2. **Time to focus on efficiencies** - There should be an effort to reduce parallel services and redundancies across all services. Now is the time to address those issues first before cutting life-saving services.
3. **Proportionate cuts** - If Human Services must be cut, there should be at least relatively proportionate cuts across the board. Why decimate some divisions to protect others? Clearly *all* of Human Services divisions have been created to fulfill critical needs for our State's most vulnerable citizens. Frankly, people with mental illness can be found in Aging, DCFS, Juvenile Justice, and DSPD (and everywhere else!) Mental illness is often root cause for many of the difficult issues people face. If we can treat the mental illness, we can often prevent people from becoming entangled in other more costly systems and keep families intact.