



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

BUDGET CUTS: IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND CHILDREN

A forum was held by the Urban Institute on “Children and Federal-State Budget Trade-Offs” Presenters at the forum were representatives from a Governors’ office, a Secretary of a State of a Department of Public Welfare, a senior staff at the Urban Institute, a political scientist, and a State budget director. The forum discussed the status of State budgets and the portion for children and families and how governors and budget officials align priorities, expenditures and revenues, and weigh federal contributions to solving state problems. Most public resources for kids and families come from state and local coffers.

Summary

State capitals need to balance budgets and as a result may slice education, health, and social service spending. Controversies abound with what to cut, how much, whether to raise taxes, and whether children’s programs are investments in the future or overpriced and unaffordable. Funding sources for States come from both the federal government and the States. Spending by funding sources measured by percentages reveals that 35% of State revenues are from Federal sources, 38% from general revenues and 27% from other State funds. State spending for Medicaid and Education consume 63% of the States general revenues.

Polls have been taken to determine popular support for line items in State budgets. Of twelve budget line items, two were designed to raise revenues and the others were designed to cut spending. Five line items had public health implications. These measures involved cutting Medicaid, schools, transportation, parks and lay offs of police and firefighters. Over 75% of people did not want cuts in programs that had implications for the public’s health and safety. The only proposals with public support were freezing wages of public employees, and reduction of state pension systems.

Disability Prevention Issues

Public health functions associated with potential diminished health that can lead to disability are cuts in access to health care (i.e. cuts in Medicaid), education (school health functions), and protection of the health and safety as a result of lay offs of police and firefighters. Other budget cuts that include subtle public health functions are those of, transportation, safe neighborhoods and parks that provide opportunities for healthful physical activity.

Activity

The implications of State budgets that prioritize resources for public health are studied.

Principle

The public’s domestic health and safety should be uncompromised in budget formulations.