

March 4, 2009

TO: Executive Committee

FROM: Kay Metzger

SUBJECT: Senior & Disabled Services Budget Issue: Closure of Oregon Project Independence Intakes

On Friday, February 27th, the Area Agency On Aging (AAA) Directors of Oregon met with the State Department of Human Services, Seniors and People with Disabilities (SPD) Management staff to discuss the funding issue for the Oregon Project Independence (OPI) program.

The issue at hand is this: OPI is funded solely through revenue from the Senior Property Tax Deferral Trust Fund. Due to the housing market crisis, the estimated balance in the Trust Fund has drastically declined. SPD anticipates approximately \$2 million will be available for next biennium, which is not sufficient to run the program. The statewide allocation for OPI this biennium (2007-09) was \$12.6 million, so a cut down to \$2 million represents an 85% reduction. Our hope is that the State Legislature will approve money from another funding stream to keep the program alive.

Since the future of OPI is very precarious, the AAA Directors agreed it was prudent to close intakes for the program now. Therefore, Lane Council of Governments, Senior & Disabled Services is moving forward with that action, as of March 3rd. The attached memo is an announcement to our community partners.

Internally, I have directed our screening staff to deliver the following message to people requesting OPI services, "Due to limited resources the OPI program may not be available after July 1st. Therefore intakes for this program are currently closed." Additionally, our staff will offer referrals to other programs that are still open for intakes such as the Older Americans Act programs or Medicaid as appropriate.

We have approximately six intake appointments for OPI services that were scheduled prior to March 3rd. Our staff will be contacting these applicants prior to

their appointment to inform them the services may be temporary. Knowing that, if they still wish to pursue OPI assistance the intake will be completed. We will also inform them of other options, such as Medicaid.

S&DS also is currently serving about 160 clients through the OPI program. Until further notice they will continue receiving service, as it is premature to close existing clients. If the Legislature approves additional funding for next biennium we may not have to terminate services to existing clients, so we are waiting until we have more information to pursue this course of action. The S&DS Management Team will be reviewing strategies for working with OPI clients in the event the program must be closed.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Kay Metzger
Director
Senior & Disabled Services, Lane Council of Governments
(541)682-4432
kmetzger@lcog.org