



Agency Legislative Proposal - 2014 Session

Document Name (e.g. OPM1015Budget.doc; OTG1015Policy.doc):

DORS 2014 Legislative proposal #1

(If submitting an electronically, please label with date, agency, and title of proposal – 092611_SDE_TechRevisions)

State Agency:

Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

Liaison: **Andrew Norton**

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Lead agency division requesting this proposal:

Bureau of Rehabilitative Services (BRS)

Agency Analyst/Drafter of Proposal:

Andrew Norton / Joyce Armstrong

Title of Proposal –

An Act Concerning Benefits Counseling Services in the Department of Rehabilitation Services

Statutory Reference

Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 17b-607

Proposal Summary

This proposal would allow the department to charge fees for the Benefits Counseling services the agency has provided for several years because federal financial support – the major funding source for the program - has been discontinued.

The proposal would also allow the department to accept private financial support for the Benefits Counseling program and for Assistive Technology services. The department already may charge fees for Assistive Technology services; the legislature gave the agency that authority in the 2013 session (See P.A. 13-234, Sec. 108) so there is recent precedent for this new request.

Please attach a copy of fully drafted bill (required for review)

PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

• Reason for Proposal

Please consider the following, if applicable:

- (1) Have there been changes in federal/state/local laws and regulations that make this legislation necessary?*
- (2) Has this proposal or something similar been implemented in other states? If yes, what is the outcome(s)?*
- (3) Have certain constituencies called for this action?*
- (4) What would happen if this was not enacted in law this session?*

The federal government has financially supported these services through the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and also through a Social Security Administration pilot. Both of these revenue sources have been discontinued.



- **Origin of Proposal** **New Proposal** **Resubmission**

If this is a resubmission, please share:

- (1) What was the reason this proposal did not pass, or if applicable, was not included in the Administration's package?
- (2) Have there been negotiations/discussions during or after the previous legislative session to improve this proposal?
- (3) Who were the major stakeholders/advocates/legislators involved in the previous work on this legislation?
- (4) What was the last action taken during the past legislative session?

This proposal has not been submitted before.

PROPOSAL IMPACT

- **Agencies Affected** (please list for each affected agency)

Agency Name: **None**

Agency Contact (name, title, phone):

Date Contacted:

Approve of Proposal YES NO Talks Ongoing

Summary of Affected Agency's Comments

Will there need to be further negotiation? YES NO

- **Fiscal Impact** (please include the proposal section that causes the fiscal impact and the anticipated impact)

Municipal (please include any municipal mandate that can be found within legislation)

None. No change here alters the revenues or expenditures of any municipality.

State

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) may receive increased payments for services ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 in total. As this is a new undertaking, exact estimate are not possible.

Federal

None. No change here will change any payments by the state to the federal government or by the federal government to the state.

Additional notes on fiscal impact

- **Policy and Programmatic Impacts** (Please specify the proposal section associated with the impact)



Benefits Counseling is an important service for people with disabilities. The agency provides needed and helpful education to a challenged population about the range of services available to improve their lives, develop careers and maintain their independence in the community. Many agencies and institutions refer Connecticut residents with disabilities to DORS underscoring the value of these services. Approximately 500 people are served each year. The cessation of federal funds will restrict our efforts or perhaps jeopardize the program altogether. Creating additional sources of revenue is crucial.

The Benefits Counseling Program and the Assistive Technology program (which was already empowered to charge fees during the last session) both see the possibility of further diversifying and strengthening their funding stream through outreach to private foundations and charities. This statutory change would allow them to accept this type of support as well.

Insert fully drafted bill here

AN ACT CONCERNING BENEFITS COUNSELING SERVICES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 17b-607, of the general statutes, as amended by Public Act 13-234, Section 108, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof:

(a) The Commissioner of Social Rehabilitation Services is authorized to establish and administer a fund to be known as the Assistive Technology Revolving Fund. Said fund shall be used by said commissioner to make loans to persons with disabilities, senior citizens or the family members of persons with disabilities or senior citizens for the purchase of assistive technology and adaptive equipment and services. Each such loan shall be made for a term of not more than five ten years. Any loans made under this section after July 1, 2013, shall bear interest at a rate to be determined in accordance with subsection (t) of section 3-20 fixed rate not to exceed six per cent. Said commissioner is authorized to expend any funds necessary for the reasonable direct expenses relating to the administration of said fund. Said commissioner shall adopt regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, to implement the purposes of this section.

(b) The State Bond Commission shall have power from time to time to authorize the issuance of bonds of the state in one or more series in accordance with section 3-20 and in a principal amount necessary to carry out the purposes of this section, but not in excess of an aggregate amount of one million dollars. All of said bonds shall be payable



at such place or places as may be determined by the Treasurer pursuant to section 3-19 and shall bear such date or dates, mature at such time or times, not exceeding five years from their respective dates, bear interest at such rate or different or varying rates and payable at such time or times, be in such denominations, be in such form with or without interest coupons attached, carry such registration and transfer privileges, be payable in such medium of payment and be subject to such terms of redemption with or without premium as, irrespective of the provisions of said section 3-20, may be provided by the authorization of the State Bond Commission or fixed in accordance therewith. The proceeds of the sale of such bonds shall be deposited in the Assistive Technology Revolving Fund created by this section. Such bonds shall be general obligations of the state and the full faith and credit of the state of Connecticut are pledged for the payment of the principal of and interest on such bonds as the same become due. Accordingly, and as part of the contract of the state with the holders of such bonds, appropriation of all amounts necessary for punctual payment of such principal and interest is hereby made and the Treasurer shall pay such principal and interest as the same become due. Net earnings on investments or reinvestments of proceeds, accrued interest and premiums on the issuance of such bonds, after payment therefrom of expenses incurred by the Treasurer or State Bond Commission in connection with their issuance, shall be deposited in the General Fund of the state.

(c) The Connecticut Tech Act Project, within the Department of Rehabilitation Services and as authorized by 29 USC 3001, may provide assistive technology evaluation and training services upon the request of any person or any public or private entity, to the extent persons who provide assistive technology services are available. The project may charge a fee to any person or entity receiving such assistive technology evaluation and training services to reimburse the department for its costs. The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services shall establish fees at reasonable rates that will cover the department's direct and indirect costs. [The department may accept gifts, donations or other financial and material support from any private person, entity or institution in behalf of assistive technology services.](#)

(d) [The department may provide benefits counseling services upon the request of any person or any public or private entity and may charge a fee to any person or entity receiving such services to reimburse the department for its costs. The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services shall establish fees at reasonable rates that will cover the department's direct and indirect costs. The department may accept gifts, donations or other financial and material support from any private person, entity or institution in behalf of benefits counseling services.](#)