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## COMMUNICATIONS

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As a result of the \$1.6 billion hole left in the budget due to a lack of a ratified agreement, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) in addition to other state agencies has had to make decisions to meet its \$84 million dollars in savings over the next two years. These savings come as a result of employee layoffs, the elimination of vacant positions and service cuts.

The extent of the cuts touches every facet of DDS services and has resulted in 446 staff being laid off and the elimination of 232 vacant positions, mostly created by retirements. In total, DDS workforce is being reduced by 678 positions.

“My goal from day one on the job has been to put “People and Families First” and this has not changed. My commitment to families makes these cuts all the more difficult. As we move forward I will continue to prioritize all possible resources to meet their need,” said Commissioner Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D. “In the days and months that follow, I am confident we will manage through very difficult challenges. We will continue to have conversations with everyone we support and make system changes to create better and more efficient supports.”

Under the DDS reduction plan, the following changes will occur:

- DDS is closing 18 residential sites this year. These include a mix of Community Living Arrangements, Regional Center units and Southbury Training School units. Six will close this summer and staff will be laid off by the end of August. The remaining 12 will close during this fiscal year and staff will be redeployed to save overtime.
- DDS is closing its 10 respite centers that serve 1,100 families by Labor Day.
- Services offered by the Individual and Family Support Teams to 120 families will be terminated by the end of August.
- The Early Connections program serving 300 infants and toddlers and their families that is part of the larger Birth to Three System administered by DDS, will no longer be operated by the department. Instead, families will be able to choose for their child, one of the other 43 programs offered by contracted agencies that make up the Birth to Three System. The Birth to Three System will continue to serve 5000 infants and toddlers and their families each month. The System serves families from every town in the state and from all income levels.
- Staff being laid off include: day program instructors, clinicians, clerical, maintenance, fire fighters, food service inspectors, custodians, lawyers, quality management inspectors, and managers.
- Money is also being saved by delaying the start of support services for high school graduates who receive adult employment services from DDS. The delay will average 4 months.

- The department will also delay placing individuals with intellectual disability in group homes.
- The Autism Services division is being cut by \$50,000.

These necessary reductions, albeit unfortunate are being made to help close the \$1.6 billion deficit. While there is some hope that these actions may be averted, it is the department's responsibility to take the steps necessary to meet its budgetary responsibilities.

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