



# GIVE ME A VOICE

Lutheran Day on the Hill 2010

Main Discussion Point

[www.lsiowa.org/advocacy.asp](http://www.lsiowa.org/advocacy.asp)

## Additional Cuts to Provider Rates Would Be Catastrophic

**Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) strongly opposes any additional cuts to human services provider rates in state fiscal year (SFY) 2011. The 5% cut implemented in SFY 2010 has already created hardships for community human service nonprofits and any additional cuts would be a catastrophic blow to nonprofits like LSI and to Iowa's most vulnerable children, families and individuals who rely on services the state and LSI provide.**

- The most recent cut to provider rates has forced LSI and other nonprofits to do the same amount of work with fewer financial resources. The state cannot expect nonprofits to continue to do what they are doing at current budget levels, let alone with additional cuts.
- Programs for children and families have been underfunded for many years. The Consumer Price Index – Urban adjusted rate has outpaced the across the board rate increases for providers by 12.16% over the last decade.<sup>1</sup>
- Additional cuts in provider rates would force LSI to cut entire programs leaving children and families with nowhere to turn for services. The most recent provider rate cut is a severe blow to nonprofits and any additional cuts would be catastrophic to LSI's ability to continue providing services currently in place that work to prevent abuse and neglect, create safety and permanency for children, strengthen at-risk families and support independence for people with disabilities.
- ALL Iowa's children, families and individuals deserve the highest quality services that provide positive, life changing outcomes and should be served with dignity and respect. Attempting to maintain all current services if additional cuts are implemented would undoubtedly impact the quality of programming. LSI cannot and will not sacrifice the integrity and effectiveness of services for Iowa's most vulnerable populations.
- This decrease in people served would come at a time when rising unemployment and chronic poverty are creating an even greater need for services like those provided by LSI. Services provided by LSI assist in reducing poverty by empowering people to become self-sufficient. Helping create self-sufficient citizens stimulates our communities' economies and lowers the need for other government assistance programs.

<sup>1</sup> *The Child and Welfare Provider Growth Options Committee Final Report submitted to the Iowa Legislature on February 6, 2009 from December 1998 to December 2007.*



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## Advocacy Discussion Outline

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Nervous about speaking with your legislator? Are you thinking, “I’m no expert.” Well, this can actually be an advantage. If you can tell your story in a brief and compelling way, that may prove critical. Someone who speaks from the heart is often far more compelling than even the most polished “expert.”

Below is a simple outline to help you organize your conversation.

### **Who you are**

State your name and where you live.

### **Who you are connected to**

You are here as part of a group from Lutheran Services in Iowa.

LSI impacts the lives of tens of thousands of Iowans annually through residential treatment, services to families, home health care, early childhood programs, adoption/foster care services, refugee resettlement, services for people with disabilities and disaster response initiatives.

### **Why you came**

I’m here because...

Use your discussion points included in your Lutheran Day on the Hill packet. Be brief and to the point. **If you have a personal story to share related to your points, share it!** Personal stories grab the attention of your audience.

### **What you want the Senator/Representative to do**

Let your legislator know specifically what you want them to do.

### **Leave some information behind**

Leave behind the information LSI has provided in your Lutheran Day on the Hill packet. This very short statement gives your legislator a reference to remember the conversation by. If you would like your legislator to contact you, leave your name and contact information on the back of this paper.





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## Top Ten Reasons to Advocate

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### **1. Individuals can make a difference.**

An individual can share his or her story. An individual may also see a need for change and invite others to join in to make a difference on an issue.

### **2. People working together can make a difference.**

It has been said there are two kinds of power: organized money and organized people. People speaking out together can make social change happen. Lutheran social ministry organizations from all over the country are engaged in public policy advocacy.

### **3. People can change laws.**

Many think ordinary citizens can't make a difference, but elected officials do listen to their constituents. Sometimes a small concerted effort is all that is needed. In other cases, such as the broad social movement of civil rights, women's suffrage and social security, complex changes can take decades and are not always easy to achieve. But, through the active involvement of committed people, change can be accomplished.

### **4. Advocacy and lobbying are democratic traditions.**

The act of telling policymakers how to write and change laws is at the very heart of the United States of America's democratic system. Advocacy and lobbying have helped keep this democracy evolving over more than two centuries.

### **5. Advocacy helps find real solutions.**

People need housing, food, health care, and safe and nurturing environments in which to thrive. Health and human service organizations help people to meet these needs and are often able to identify new solutions to real problems.

### **6. Advocacy is easy.**

Many people think advocacy is a mysterious rite that takes years to master. It isn't. Anyone can learn how to advocate - whom to call and what to say - in minutes. Advocacy is easier and more effective when many committed people work together. One person doesn't have to do everything or know everything.



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### **7. Policymakers need the grassroots expertise.**

Fewer are closer to the real issues of people than nonprofits and community groups. They see problems and opportunities first-hand. They know the needs and they know how to meet the needs. They see what works and what doesn't. They make problems real to policymakers. Because they are close to the issue, social ministry organizations are uniquely positioned to have insight into solutions. Their passion and perspectives need to be heard. Every professional advocate knows that personal stories are powerful tools for change. Policymakers learn from individuals' and communities' stories.

### **8. Advocacy helps people.**

Some people become concerned that advocacy detracts from the organization's mission, but quite the opposite is true. Everything that goes into an advocacy strategy from the research and strategic planning to the phone calls and visits will help fulfill the organization's goals. Advocates may not personally provide a direct service, but through the advocacy work, others are enabled to do so. Reaching out to clients, clients' families, donors, volunteers, members of staff and the broader community helps to educate people about the organization in general.

### **9. The views of local nonprofit organizations are important.**

Increasingly, the federal government has been allowing state and local governments to decide how to spend federal money. This change gives nonprofits even more responsibility to tell state and local policymakers what is needed and what will work. Advocacy at the various levels of government can have an immediate and concrete impact on people in need, because more decisions are being made locally.

### **10. Advocacy advances one's cause and builds public trust.**

Building public trust is essential to nonprofit organizations. Advocacy helps organizations gain that trust by increasing the organization's visibility. Just as raising funds and recruiting volunteers are important to achieving an organization's mission, so is advocacy. Advocacy affords an organization the opportunity to advance a cause by thinking about relationships with local, state and federal government.

*Taken from Lutheran Services in America's Public Policy Advocacy Toolkit*

