

Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association

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RCPA Responds to Governor's Proposed Budget

HARRISBURG (Feb. 4, 2020) --- The Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA), the Commonwealth's largest and most diverse health and human services trade association, responded to the proposed 2020–21 General Fund budget unveiled today by Gov. Tom Wolf during a joint session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

"RCPA thanks the Governor for his commitment to health and human service programs that our residents need --- from mental health and intellectual disabilities to workforce and other issues," RCPA President and CEO Richard S. Edley, PhD, said. "But what we really need more than anything is for state government to take a holistic approach to health and human services by increasing funding and working to reduce regulations and unfunded mandates. Without this holistic approach, health and human services will continue to deteriorate and fewer services will be provided to the most vulnerable residents of Pennsylvania."

RCPA's members provide mental health, drug and alcohol, intellectual and developmental disabilities, children's, brain injury, medical rehabilitation, and physical disabilities and aging services, through all settings and levels of care in every community across the Commonwealth.

Edley serves as part of the Council on Reform, established as part of the governor's July executive order to protect vulnerable populations. Several of the council's recommendations were included in an announcement last month as the governor previewed his budget.

Among them was a plan to invest \$1.2 million to expand comprehensive training for direct care workers. There is a widely recognized workforce shortage for direct care professionals within many health and human services fields. As important as that initiative is, Edley said he remains hopeful that other council recommendations will emerge as priorities to help families in need and their providers of care.

Wages are another major issue for providers facing workforce and funding challenges. In his budget, the governor renewed efforts to increase the state's minimum wage immediately to \$12 per hour and then to \$15 per hour by 2025, and to continue his pursuit to change overtime eligibility rules, with the Independent Regulatory Review Commission having just approved.

RCPA and its members support increasing staff wages. However, it should also be noted that for years the state has not adequately increased Medicaid reimbursement rates to community providers who care for the most vulnerable individuals throughout the state. Because of the low reimbursement rates, providers are already struggling to fill positions and retain qualified individuals. Unilaterally raising wages without a corresponding provider rate increase to cover these wages only addresses one side of the equation and puts even more challenges on providers.

"Today is the just beginning of a long process, and we look forward to working with the governor and lawmakers to ensure the final 2020–21 budget truly addresses the challenges that providers face and does everything it can to ensure the continuation and delivery of vital services to residents and families in need."

About the Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA):

With well over 350 members, the majority of who serve over 1 million Pennsylvanians annually, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA) is among the largest and most diverse state health and human services trade associations in the nation. RCPA provider members offer mental health, drug and alcohol, intellectual and developmental disabilities, children's, brain injury, medical rehabilitation, and physical disabilities and aging services, through all settings and levels of care. Visit www.PaProviders.org for more information.