

## Kansans await social services

BY [THE ASSOCIATED PRESS](#)

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Thousands of Kansas residents are on waiting lists for services, a problem caused by deep cuts to the state budget, according to state social service agencies.

The problem was compounded when Gov. Mark Parkinson and the Legislature were forced last year to reduce Medicaid reimbursements to providers by 10 percent. Those reductions were eliminated in the 2011 budget, which began July 1.

A legislative committee heard comments from social service providers during a Statehouse meeting Monday.

"There are better ways to balance the budget than cutting social services that are essential to the health and well-being of Kansans with disabilities," said Shannon Jones, director of the Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas.

Legislators approved and Parkinson signed a 1-cent increase in the state sales tax rate to raise revenues and prevent additional cuts. The rate increased to 6.3 percent from 5.3 percent.

The Lawrence Journal-World reports that 2,444 Kansans with significant developmental disabilities are on a waiting list to receive home- and community-based services. Another 1,047 are receiving some services but are in line for additional services.

And 2,286 people with significant physical disabilities are on a waiting list.

"We are pushing the problem down on the family when you get right down to it," said Don Jordan, Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services secretary.

Jordan told the House-Senate Home and Community-Based Services Oversight Committee that the agency also has eliminated some services it previously provided, including dental care and temporary respite care.

Rep. Bob Bethell, an Alden Republican and chairman of the committee, said the elimination of dental care could lead to more serious problems.

"If we cut those, it seems to me we would be putting people into more expensive hospitalizations," Bethell said.

The Kansas Area Agencies on Aging Association said the budget cuts have forced about 400 low-income frail and elderly residents to wait for services. In addition, dental care, sleep cycle supports and assistive technology have all been eliminated in this program.

"There is simply no question that, given the magnitude of budget reductions, access to health care and in-home services in our state have been impaired, resulting in Kansas seniors receiving care in more expensive settings or not receiving care at all," according to the association.

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