

Impact of cuts to be targeted

by Tom Busselburg
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OGDEN— The impact of potential cuts being considered by the Legislature will be highlighted in a press conference Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 9 a.m. at the State Capitol in Salt Lake City.

Tri County Independent Living Center, which serves Davis, Morgan and Weber Counties, is among groups participating in the event, sponsored by the Utah Health Policy Project.

Josh Rhees, who has cerebral palsy, participates in Tri County programs and will be among speakers at the press conference.

As reported in last week's Clipper, budget cuts being considered could substantially reduce services, particularly for disabled and senior citizens. For example, the Meals-on-Wheels program could experience a severe cutback, it was reported.

"The State Legislature is looking to end Medicaid Waiver and senior programs that assist people in living independently in the community," said Andy Curry, Tri-County executive director.

"Without such services seniors and people with disabilities will be forced from their homes and placed into institutionalized nursing homes," he said.

That action could impact about 1,100 people, and would increase costs substantially over home health care and other options, he said.

"People with disabilities would have to sell their homes and all of their possessions, leave their families, quit working and drop out of school," Curry said.

Heather Quintana, a North Davis resident, is among those whose life would change dramatically if such budget cuts were effected, he said.

She currently works part-time and is attending Weber State University, pursuing a degree in Social Work. Quintana was in an auto accident in 1988, and sustained a spinal cord injury, leaving her a quadriplegic.

She uses the Physical Disability Medicaid Waiver to assist her in performing daily life routines that most people take for granted.

"Without the waiver services I would be left at home, stranded in bed," Quintana says. "I would have to sell my home and quit my job and be forced into a nursing home. It would make going to college pointless, because what am I going to do with a Social Work degree if I'm stuck in a nursing home?"

"I have a 12 month-old baby and my wife can't physically do my attendant services for me so what am I supposed to do? Quit my job and leave my wife and kids and go into a nursing home?" Rhees asked.

“Eliminating the Medicaid Waivers, Nursing Home Alternatives, Meals-on-Wheels and other such programs forces people into costly nursing homes directly and by pure attrition,” Curry said.

To locate Davis County legislators, visit the Web at www.le.state.ut.us/maps/amap.html or call the county clerk/auditor’s office at 451-3324, or call Tri-County Independent Living at 1-801-612-3215.