



## Medicaid Enrollees

# SPEAK UP

## *Deep Medicaid budget cuts have severe impacts for Josh Rhees...*

### **Josh Rhees**

Josh has cerebral palsy and he uses a wheelchair. However, thanks to the Medicaid waiver programs, he is able to live and work in the community and function normally. But the proposed Medicaid budget cuts would take away his independence and force him to live in a nursing home.



### ***Proposed Medicaid Budget Cuts Have Life-Changing Consequences***

Josh Rhees has had a severe case of cerebral palsy since birth. To get around he uses a wheel chair. He has no motor skills and therefore needs help with the activities of daily living. However, Josh is able to live a normal life because of the Medicaid waiver programs that encourage people with disabilities to work and live independently. Josh is married and just recently celebrated his son's first birthday! But proposed budget cuts could change his entire life.

If the Legislature cuts the Medicaid Choices Waiver, as proposed, Josh would lose the home health care that helps him to get out of bed in the morning, shower and dress. The physical disabilities waiver, also on the chopping block, provides him with transportation to and from work. He depends on these programs and other essential Medicaid services to live a normal, productive, and fulfilling life. Without these critical waiver services, Josh will be forced to quit his job and consider entering a nursing home and being separated from his family. It costs the state about \$300 a month for home-based care. A nursing home costs \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month. It is a lose-lose situation for everybody.

### ***A Policy Solution: Prioritize Medicaid in the economic downturn***

The Utah Legislature should take great care as they look to shave dollars from Utah's Medicaid Program. Medicaid delivers quality, medically necessary coverage at the right price for all payers—including the taxpayer. It is also a powerful economic driver for our state. Before making cuts, the Legislature should:

- Maximize cost containment measured within Medicaid, such as strengthening the Preferred Drug List or converting Medicaid managed care contracts to a full risk capitated basis.
- Take concrete steps to maximize federal funding and fiscal relief. To qualify for the \$175 to \$315 million in federal stimulus money, Utah must maintain our current investment in Medicaid. By cutting programs like the waivers, Utah loses millions of federal dollars that could keep our program whole *and* stimulate the economy.
- Consider new revenue sources, such as the tobacco tax, rainy day fund or bonding.

All cuts are not equal. Health and human services should be held harmless in the economic downturn.