



# Utah Providers

## SPEAK UP

*“The Legislature should not wait to restore funding for critical Medicaid services like physical & occupational therapy, or speech & hearing therapy,” says Utah provider*

## **Critical Medicaid Services Still Need To Be Restored**

Mark Anderson is President of Mountain Land Rehabilitation, one of Utah’s largest rehabilitation service companies. Mark understands the importance of access to rehabilitation care after an injury, illness or surgery.

*“Currently, Medicaid will pay for an adult client to have shoulder surgery, but not for the physical therapy after the surgery that allows the patient to regain their motion and strength. Good health care is a sequence of interventions. Removing physical therapy from a patient who has had shoulder surgery is like paying to landscape your yard but then never watering or mowing it,” says Mark. “When you make an investment, you need to follow through to ensure the end result is successful.”*



Despite its name, optional services are not optional. They are integral to good health. And providing these critical services is cost-effective, not cost-prohibitive.

Physical therapy improves flexibility, strength and mobility, while decreasing pain. Occupational therapy allows patients to regain basic functions needed for dressing, bathing and eating. And, speech therapy helps clients relearn the ability to talk and how to safely swallow. These services improve health and allow Medicaid enrollees to return to work, leave nursing homes, or avoid more costly medical procedures—all ultimately saving state dollars.

*“It is unwise policy to consider physical, occupational and speech therapy services as ‘optional.’ Time is running out to restore these critical services,” concludes Mark.*

## **A Policy Solution: Restore Critical Medicaid Services**

During the 2008 Special Session, the Legislature cut ‘optional’ services (outpatient physical and occupational therapy, and audiology) for adults on Medicaid. While the immediate savings to the state general fund was modest (\$174,209), the cost for the patients who lost these services is very high. Example after example shows how health and productivity are increased when patients have access to critical care—improving the quality of life of beneficiaries and, in the long run, saving the state money by improving the long-term health and basic functionality of recipients.

**The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the economic recovery package) provides sufficient resources to restore these critical services.** For every dollar the state invests in Medicaid, including optional services, the Federal Government will now match \$4! As the Legislature finalizes budget priorities, it should:

- Restore the services using the enhanced Federal match. These restorations are worthwhile even on a temporary basis because of lasting benefits to beneficiaries’ health.
- Avoid offsetting the stimulus with reductions elsewhere in the Medicaid program.
- Consider the full economic impact of Medicaid. Investing in Medicaid will help to jump-start Utah’s economy, as this money would be spent immediately and support thousands of Utah jobs. Medicaid provides the best return for our investment of state dollars.