

MARC Presentation to HSB on February 26, 2004

Why MARC Believes Services for Center Based
High Needs Clients are at Risk

MARC pioneered community-based services for people with the highest needs. These people need support in mobility, personal care, feeding, clothing, health, safety and especially communication. The level of physical strength and stamina limit vocational achievement, and many high need individual plans emphasize self care, communication, participation, personal care, health and safety.

Our observation of County funding since 1990 (or even earlier) is that COLA's have not kept up with inflation. The effect of this underfunding has been most severe upon people with high needs served in center based programs.

MARC believes that during the 1980's and 1990's annual COLA's were artificially lower than inflation because some of the available money was diverted to serve new high school graduates and to clients who got job coaches, larger apartments, fewer roommates and other enhancements. During this time of program enhancements not everyone benefited.

Now come tight budgets and the time to cut everyone "equally". As far as MARC can tell, every provider got about a 4.2% cut, whether you were cut in the 1980's and 1990's or not. Hence, the high needs people got cut twice, but the people receiving enhanced services are simply reducing their enhancements during the current round of cuts.

So what's the big deal? Well the big deal is that the high needs people are the most vulnerable people in the system. MARC is losing money on high needs clients, and they are losing staff coverage. This is a dangerous trend that cannot continue.

MARC proposes that funding cuts first be restored to high needs clients, and that they be exempt from future cuts until a satisfactory staff to client ratio is reestablished. Their very health and safety depends upon it.

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