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## **The Arc of New Jersey's Budget Request for the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Children and Families for Fiscal Year 2015**

### **Background**

The Arc of New Jersey is grateful to Governor Christie for the new state and federal funding in the Fiscal Year 2015 Budget that will expand supports and services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Funding included in the proposed budget will go a long way toward supporting more than 1,200 individuals with I/DD in the community. As currently outlined, monies would be used to assist individuals exiting developmental centers, those in need of services from the Community Waiting List, students aging out of their educational entitlement program and people facing unpredictable emergencies. We are also very pleased with the announced closure dates for North Jersey and Woodbridge Developmental Centers in 2014. We support these closures, and we look forward to the facilities' residents living integrated lives among families and neighbors in the community. We are thankful that money currently being used to maintain these two centers is being reinvested into community supports and services. In addition, the proposed Budget also includes new money for mobile response, out-of-home treatment and intensive in-home behavior intervention for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities now being served at the Department of Children and Families (DCF). We realize that this funding is the result of years of advocacy from both branches and so we thank the Governor and all the members of the Legislature for their dedication to this population.

### **Issue**

The FY15 Budget addresses many of the needs facing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. This funding is vital to keeping and expanding services through the next fiscal year. Supports and services are what keep our constituents in the community with their families. This money is critical; it provides the assistance this population needs to participate in life and engage with peers. In addition, community provider agencies and the staff who care for this most vulnerable population have not seen an increase in the last six years, but costs continue to rise. These organizations require a 3% cost of care increase to cover growing expenses.

### **Position**

The Arc of New Jersey urges all proposed funding in the FY15 Budget, as it relates to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, be maintained. Whether it is children living at home in need of behavioral help, those on the brink of adulthood leaving the education system, or adults living with aging caregivers who suddenly require immediate assistance, the FY15 Budget addresses an individual's needs throughout the lifespan. The funding currently allotted will keep and support more than 1,200 people in the community. The services available via this Budget are crucial to our constituents and the families who care for them. We ask all parties involved in the budget negotiations to leave intact all monies that will improve the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Finally, The Arc of New Jersey asks for a 3% true cost of care increase, to address growing expenses for community providers and staff salaries which have not gone up in six years, though cost of living continues to grow. We must also bring attention to the lack of affordable housing for individuals with special needs in New Jersey. We endorse the Supportive Housing Association's request for additional housing vouchers, capital dollars for construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing and additional supportive housing services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.