

Compromise restores Medicaid funds

By David Ress/staff • dress@newsleader.com • March 1, 2011

Legislators reversed a proposal to cut Medicaid funding for children's mental health services and agreed to keep funding expanded community support services for people with intellectual disabilities.

The weekend budget compromise also funded a \$30 million trust fund to help disabled Virginians living in state institutions get community care.

The move came after a blistering U.S. Department of Justice report last month about the civil rights of institution residents and the poor care many received over the years. The federal findings put the state at risk of a costly civil rights lawsuit.

The budget compromise, which now goes to Gov. Robert F. McDonnell, would:

- Fund 425 additional "waivers" so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can use their Medicaid benefits to pay for supports, such as the in-home services that help with cooking, budgeting and other daily activities.
- Increase rates paid to providers of community support services by 4 percent, in the hope of ending a continuing slide in the number of firms providing services.
- Increase staff at state training centers.
- Add \$5 million to expand crisis services for people who have both mental illness and intellectual disabilities.
- Expand the amount of respite care available to families of people with disabilities.
- Add \$12.5 million to the funds the state pays for Comprehensive Services Act services for the most troubled children in foster care, special education and the juvenile court system;
- Set up a \$3.1 million pilot program meant to find ways to better control skyrocketing Medicaid spending on two children's mental health services now mostly offered by private providers.