

**Beverly A. H. Buscemi, Ph.D.**

*State Director*

**David A. Goodell**

*Associate State Director*

*Operations*

**Susan Kreh Beck**

*Associate State Director*

*Policy*

**Thomas P. Waring**

*Associate State Director*

*Administration*



3440 Harden Street Ext (29203)  
PO Box 4706, Columbia, South Carolina 29240  
803/898-9600  
Toll Free: 888/DSN-INFO  
Website: [www.ddsn.sc.gov](http://www.ddsn.sc.gov)

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Service Providers, Families and Advocates

**FROM:** Beverly A. H. Buscemi, Ph.D.   
State Director

**RE:** DDSN FY 2017-2018 Budget Update

**DATE:** March 22, 2017

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Last week the SC House of Representatives passed its budget for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. The House version of the budget is very good for the DDSN service delivery system. It is the same as the Ways and Means Committee as it appropriates \$9,000,000 in new recurring state funds to the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs to address workforce needs.

DDSN stakeholders – consumers, families, service providers, DDSN Commission and department staff – all agreed addressing workforce issues is the greatest need within our DDSN service delivery system at this time. The generous appropriations of recent years to reduce waiting lists have helped thousands of people. However, direct care staffing is at a crisis level and we must be competitive in the job market. New or expanded services cannot be provided without a strong workforce. The potential of this new funding is a very important first step in a multi-year effort to increase the hiring wage for Direct Support Professionals to the \$12.00 to \$13.00 per hour range. A new appropriation of \$9 million supports moving toward that goal by increasing the hiring wage to \$11.00 per hour. This represents an 8.8 percent increase from the current \$10.11 per hour.

Funding in the House budget regarding an employee pay raise and benefits is also the same that was recommended by the Ways and Means Committee. There is funding to cover the increased cost of health insurance. There would be no increase in deductible and/or co-pays. No across the board pay increase was recommended.

The DDSN Commission and staff greatly appreciate the leadership and hard work that is required during the budget process. Services for individuals with disabilities and their families remain a very high priority. Please take time to thank your legislator in the House of Representatives and others for

### **DISTRICT I**

P.O. Box 239  
Clinton, SC 29325-5328  
Phone: (864) 938-3497

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Summerville, SC 29485  
Phone: 843/832-5576

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their outstanding support of DDSN and services provided across the state. Thank you for your work and advocacy on behalf of all individuals and families touched by the DDSN service system all over the state.

At this time the Senate Finance Committee is working on its budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. They intend to complete their budget plan by March 31<sup>st</sup>. That plan would then be debated by the full Senate beginning April 4, 2017. We will keep you informed during these next important steps of the state budget process.

cc: DDSN Commission