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Issue Brief – Nursing Recruitment & Retention
Utah State Developmental Center

Nursing Recruitment and Retention

The Utah State Developmental Center (USDC) is requesting funding to recruit and retain Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). The USDC is requesting an appropriation for FY 2007 of \$168,100 with \$47,600 from General Funds and \$120,500 from federal Medicaid funds.

Objective

The goal of the USDC is to provide 24-hour residential and active treatment services which include the following: medical; dental; physical; occupational therapy; speech therapy, recreational; psychological; social work; and day training. The Developmental Center is required by the federal government to provide quality medical care in a timely manner. Failure to meet those guidelines could result in loss of federal funds.

Discussion and Analysis

The residents at the USDC have multiple medical diagnoses which often require drug intervention. More than half of the population has a dual diagnoses of mental illness and mental retardation. In addition, more than half have epilepsy. The residents require round the clock nursing care.

The request for additional funding is because USDC has experienced a difficult time recruiting and retaining nurses. Some of the causes are a nursing shortage, nurses reaching the age of retirement, high turnover rates, and the compensation package.

Nursing Shortage

Nationally there is a nursing shortage with Utah being no exception. Currently there are 11 unfilled nursing positions at the Developmental Center. In FY 2005, there were over 450 open nursing positions in Utah. In addition, the Developmental Center must compete with the local health care industry for nursing services.

Nurses in the Field Approaching Retirement Age

One of the factors affecting the nursing shortage is retirement. The average age of nurses nationally is 43. Most nurses retire at 50 because of the physical demands of the work or “burnout.” It is projected that the USDC will lose up to 25 percent of their RN III’s, 28 percent of their RN II’s, and 33 percent of their LPN’s within 3 years to retirement.

High Turnover Rate

USDC has experienced a high turnover rate because of the working conditions, i.e. difficult patients, shift work, overtime, and low pay. The turnover rate for FY 2002 was 19 percent, 15 percent for FY 2003, 35 percent for FY 2004 and 23 percent for FY 2005. The reasons nurses left USDC are 52 percent for other employment, 20 percent because

of retirement, 12 percent had medical or personal reasons, and 16 percent went for other reasons: promotion, quit, fired, died or moved.

We at MRAU are asking that you call the following Senators and Representatives, requesting that they provide funding for the nurses needed at the Utah State Developmental Center. These are the Legislators on the committee making the decision, and it is critical that they know how important this funding is. Thank you so much for your help in this important matter.

Senator / Representative	E-mail address	Phone Numbers
Sen. Lyle Hillyard, Co-Chair	lhillyard@utahsenate.org	Office (435) 752-2610 Home (435) 753-0043
Rep. Ron Bigelow, Co-Chair	ronbigelow@utah.gov	Home: 801-968-4188
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Rep. David Clark, Vice Chair	dclark@utah.gov	Home: 435-628-5108 Work: 435-628-4479
Rep. Jeff Alexander	jalexander@utah.gov	Home: 801-375-1092 Work: 801-224-8666
Rep. Ralph Becker	rbecker@utah.gov	Home: 801-364-1656 Work: 801-355-8816
Rep. Creg Curtis	gcurtis@utah.gov	Home: 801-943-3091 Work: 801-538-1930
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Sen. Mike Dmitrich	mdmitrich@utahsenate.org	Office (801) 538-1406 Home (435) 637-0426
Sen. Dan Eastman	deastman@utahsenate.org	Home (801) 295-5133 Fax (801) 296-6460
Sen. Beverly Ann Evans	bevevans@ubtanet.com	Office (435) 722-2294 Home (435) 454-3719 Fax (435) 454-3072
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Rep. Brad King	brad.king@ceu.edu	Home: 435-637-7955 Work: 435-613-5246
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Rep. Rosalind McGee	rozmcgee@xmission.com	Home: 801-583-6039
Rep. Stephen Urguhart	surquhart@utah.gov	Home: 435-673-4424 Work: 435-628-7777
Sen. John Valentine	jvalentine@utahsenate.org	Office (801) 373-6345 Home (801) 224-1693 Fax (801) 377-4991