

Updated May 27, 2010

WHAT'S IN THE FY 2011 BUDGET FOR INTERIM DISABILITY ASSISTANCE?

The District's Interim Disability Assistance (IDA) program provides temporary cash benefits to adults with disabilities who have applied for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and are awaiting an eligibility determination. The benefits paid to IDA recipients are reimbursed by the federal government when an applicant ultimately is determined to be eligible for SSI. SSI approval can take anywhere from several months to several years.

The FY 2011 approved budget includes a \$6 million cut to IDA. This will likely require the city to cap the number of individuals served by the program at 1,800 per month – a reduction of nearly half — and to continue a waiting list that was established in June 2009. These changes threaten the long-term viability of the program.

Summary of Mayor's Proposed Funding Level

The Mayor's proposed FY 2011 operating budget request for the Interim Disability Administration — a program within the Department of Human Services (DHS) — totaled \$3.4 million (Figure 1). This represents a \$7 million decrease over the FY 2010 approved amount, a cut of 67 percent when adjusted for inflation.

The IDA program is supported in part by reimbursements received from the federal government when an IDA recipient is found eligible for federal SSI benefits. DC receives reimbursement for about 40 percent of IDA recipients, slightly higher than the average of 35 percent in similar programs in other jurisdictions. In recent years, the program also has had a small amount of funds carried over from prior years. In 2008, the Council eliminated IDA's remaining \$2.5 million carryover as part of its efforts to address a mid-year budget shortfall.

As a result of the 2008 cut, the IDA program could no longer serve all eligible residents and established a waiting list for benefits starting in June 2009. Since then, the IDA caseload has declined from a high of 2,916 recipients in June 2009 to 1,530 recipients in February 2010 (the most recent month for which data are available). About 900 individuals were on the waiting list in February.

KEY FINDINGS

MAYOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL

- Cuts local funding for IDA by \$2.8 million in FY 2010 and \$7 million in FY 2011.
- Caps enrollment at 1,500 individuals per month and maintains a waiting list for eligible individuals.
- Re-opens program beginning May 1, 2010.

COUNCIL MARK-UP, MAY 13

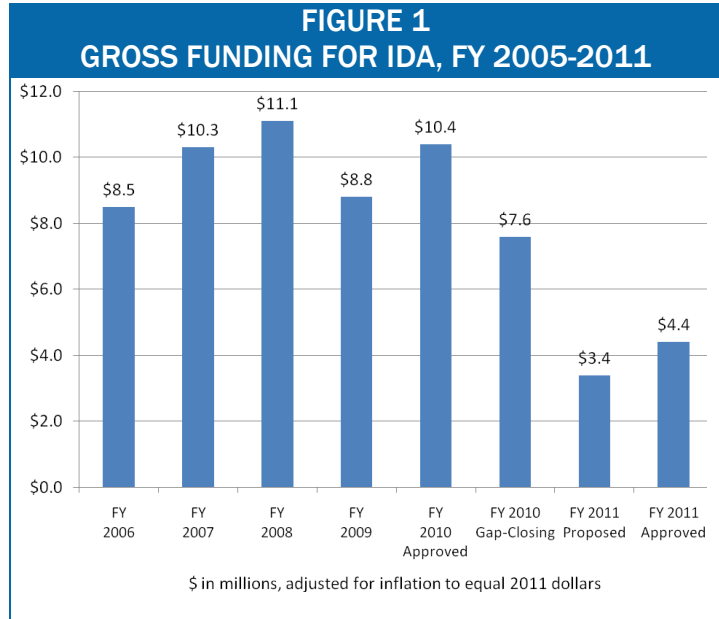
- No changes were made to the FY 2011 proposed budget for IDA.

FINAL BUDGET VOTE, MAY 26

- The Council restored \$1 million to the IDA budget, which will allow an additional 300 individuals to receive benefits.

In the FY 2010 budget, an additional \$2 million in local funding was approved for IDA to clear the waitlist. However, the Mayor proposed to use these funds to address the most recent budget gap instead of using them to eliminate the waiting list.

The Mayor's proposed FY 2011 budget would cap enrollment in IDA at 1,500 recipients per month and to continue operating a waiting list. Since February, the IDA caseload has fallen to approximately 1,100 individuals. Beginning May 1, 2010, the IDA program will re-open and allow approximately 400 residents who are currently on the waiting list to receive benefits, up to the 1,500 enrollment cap. After May, the administration projects that about 50 to 150 individuals will be able to move off of the waiting list each month as current IDA recipients start receiving federal benefits.



Operating a waiting list for a program that is designed to support individuals while they are waiting for federal benefits to be approved defeats the purpose of IDA and likely will discourage individuals from applying for assistance. IDA receives about 40 percent of its revenue through reimbursements from the federal government when an individual becomes eligible for SSI. However, this level of reimbursement likely will decrease under the new policy. With a waiting list in place, individuals with cases that can be approved relatively quickly by the federal government will move from the waiting list to SSI without ever receiving IDA, leaving those who are least likely to be approved for SSI and least likely to receive reimbursement for their IDA benefits on the waitlist and in the IDA program.

Council Committee Mark-Up

The Committee on Human Services voted on the proposed FY 2011 IDA budget on May 13. The committee did not make any changes to the IDA budget, but recommended that the Council increase the program's budget by \$4 million. A funding source was not identified for the \$4 million.

Final Vote

The Committee of the Whole voted on the entire FY 2011 budget request on May 26, 2010. The committee added \$1 million to the IDA budget, which will allow an additional 300 individuals to receive benefits in FY 2011.

Stimulus

IDA did not receive stimulus funding in FY 2010 and will not receive stimulus funds in FY 2011.

Performance Measures

The budget for each government agency includes a number of performance measures tied to specific agency objectives. In addition, each agency develops a performance plan each year, and it completes a “performance accountability report” at the end of the year.

The performance measures are intended to provide an indication of how well agencies are using funds to meet their goals. Unfortunately, the quality of performance measures in the District’s budget is uneven. In many cases, performance measures are unclear or cover aspects of an agency’s functions that do not seem tied to the agency’s core functions.¹

There are no performance measures for IDA in the proposed FY 2011 budget. A description of changes to IDA funding is included in the DHS budget narrative and a new line item has been created for IDA in the DHS budget to help the public track the program’s funding changes going forward.

¹ The issues related to DC’s performance measurement are discussed further in a DCFPI 2009 report, [*Ten Ways to Improve the Transparency of the DC Budget*](#).