





# Questions for Candidates for This Fall's Elections


 5,000 Minnesotans with disabilities wait for services to help them live more productively and independently in their communities. What steps would you take to reduce the number of people waiting?

→ **Our Position:** We support a steady reduction in the number of people waiting for services that let people with developmental disabilities work, play, and live independently in the community. We support a 10% reduction in 2009 in the number of people waiting, and 10% reductions in each of the following years until the number of people waiting is reduced to zero.

We realize that funding is tight and that economic conditions are difficult. Funds for current services can be redirected so they are used more efficiently. We also realize that reducing the number of people waiting may take more resources, and we therefore support efforts to increase revenues as an essential strategy to invest in our citizens with disabilities.

 Medicaid (or Medical Assistance/MA for candidates for state and county offices) is the lifeline for many people with the most significant disabilities, yet it is under constant attack. How would you ensure that any changes to Medicaid/MA do not jeopardize vital services to people with disabilities?


→ **Our Position:** We oppose any changes in Medicaid/MA and cuts in funding done solely for the purpose of reducing state spending or balancing the budget. Any changes proposed to Medicaid must be done with an eye towards improving services so that people with developmental disabilities can live more independently and be greater participants in their communities.

 How will you close any future federal (or state) budget shortfalls without harming those programs that support those with disabilities?


→ **Our Position:** We believe that budgets should not be balanced on the backs of persons with developmental disabilities. Persons with developmental disabilities have made enough sacrifices when we faced previous deficits. Any cuts in state funding should not be done in a way that harms disability supports.

We support efforts to make the best use of every state dollar. To meet the needs of our citizens, we also need adequate resources, so we also support proposals to increase revenues if needed to ensure that disability supports are sufficiently funded.

People with developmental disabilities are often pitted against other Minnesotans who need support and are struggling to be included, contributing members of society. We oppose measures that would take from one group in need in order to provide for others in need.

 Some parents in Minnesota above the poverty line pay a fee for the services their children with disabilities receive. These fees are burdensome and excessive for many families. Would you support measures at the state level to reduce those fees?

→ ***Our Position:*** We believe that, despite a reduction in parental fees in 2005, these fees are still too high for too many Minnesota families. Fees should be reduced so that families are paying no more in real dollars than they were paying in 2003, when elected officials approved dramatic jumps in those fees. The state should also comply with legislation passed in 2007 that would allow families to use flexible spending accounts through their employers to pay their parental fee.

 Dramatic increases in the number of elderly baby boomers and persons with disabilities in the future mean increased demand on resources available through Medicaid/MA. What reforms would you make so that Medicaid/MA dollars are spent as wisely and efficiently as possible?

→ ***Our Position:*** About a decade ago, Minnesota started giving families an alternative to traditional services so they could have more control over the dollars they received for those services. This alternative gave families the flexibility to buy services and hire staff that best met the needs of their loved one with disabilities. State officials unfortunately reversed this policy, and some families were forced to go back to services that ended up costing the state more money. Minnesota should again give more families more flexibility, and these funds will again be spent more efficiently and effectively.

Minnesota should also build on innovative legislation passed in 2007 and 2008. A 2007 reform would benefit people with disabilities who use personal care attendants. Funds would be used more flexibly so people could meet more of their unmet needs ó for example, to pay for technology that would help them become more independent. A 2008 reform would give people with disabilities additional money for their housing costs so they could find housing in the community and live more independently. Both reforms could save money if people would no longer have to wait for services that might cost the state more.

At the federal level, we support proposals in Congress to create a new system of long-term services insurance. People would pay for this insurance through payroll deductions, and they could use this insurance to pay for help with daily activities should they become disabled. This system would take some pressure off Medicaid as it tries to meet the needs of people who are elderly, poor, or have disabilities.

***Questionnaire compiled by:*** *The Arc of Minnesota (www.TheArcOfMinnesota.org)*  
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