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Groups fight against Illinois budget cuts to the disabled

By: [Brian Seay](#) | May 17, 2011



The state needs a new budget by June 1. Lawmakers are working to sort through three different approved budgets from the House, Senate and Governor Quinn. (WJBC file photo)

As lawmakers work to craft a budget, those benefiting from social services are speaking out on cuts.

“Do the right thing,” said Eric Guidish, a 41-year-old Navy veteran from Springfield who says he wouldn’t be where he is now without a community reintegration program that proposed state budgets would eliminate.

Guidish got into a car accident 13 years ago. He was paralyzed from the collar bone down. He spent 6 months in the hospital without knowing what to do next, but with the help of community reintegration support, he got on the right path.

“I didn’t work for like five years, but it took me that long to learn how to live with my disability and also getting the education and more training,” he said. “And then I landed a job, and then two years ago, I was finally able to save up a down payment, enough to convince the bank to give me a loan to purchase my own place.”

Guidish says the goal of independent living will be severely limited for people without the program he took advantage of. He wants to see others be able to benefit like he did.

Nick Quealy-Gainer of the Campaign for Real Choice – a group that fights for people with disabilities – says while millions of dollars are being cut from a variety of social service programs, a \$28 million increase to state-operated developmental centers has the state moving in the wrong direction.

“People want to live in the community,” he says. “They don’t want to live in institutions. The state needs to live up to its commitment to allow people to live in the community and keep people out of institutions, which they’re making that commitment on paper. The money isn’t there though.”

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