



## Budget seen as failing disabled

Providers: Pritzker plan doesn't solve long-standing woes

By Jenny Whidden  
Chicago Tribune

Three years after a federal judge found Illinois had failed to meet the standards of a consent decree mandating sufficient services to residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Gov. J.B. Pritzker's proposed budget falls far short of a state-funded study's recommendation to address the problem.

The study's five-year spending plan includes a first year increase of \$329 million to the roughly \$1.1 billion allocated to community providers who work with people with disabilities such as Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism.

Those organizations say the money would go a long way toward addressing the major issues they face: staffing shortages, a lack of day programs such as job coaching and a waiting list of more than 5,000 adults for services including housing.

Pritzker's budget proposal calls for an increase of \$122 million. While in line with the funding hikes of recent years, providers say it is not enough to meet the demand for services in Illinois and continues to push the problem down the road.

Partial funding "doesn't change the dynamics we're dealing with," said Josh Evans, president and CEO of the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities. "It doesn't change the fact there's uncompensated care. It doesn't change the fact that the wage rate components are inadequate facing higher minimum wages. Nothing addresses that until we can fund all of the (five year plan's) recommendations adequately."

Released in December, the five-year spending plan is the result of a 2018 federal court ruling that found Illinois was not in compliance with a 2011 consent decree requiring the state to make community services more accessible to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman ruled the state had failed "to provide the resources of sufficient quality, scope, and variety."

Following the ruling, the Department of Human Services

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Jewish nationalist demonstrators look at a barrage of rockets fired Tuesday from the Gaza Strip toward central Israel, in the Israeli town of Ramla. HEIDI LEVINE/AP



A Palestinian woman cries as civilians evacuate a building targeted by Israeli bombardment in Gaza City on Tuesday. MAHMUD HAMS/GETTY-AFP

## Israel and Hamas exchange deadly fire

Over 2 dozen killed as rocket barrages, airstrikes escalate

By Fares Akram and Josef Federman  
Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — A confrontation between Israel and Hamas sparked by weeks of tensions in contested Jerusalem escalated Tuesday as Israel unleashed new airstrikes on Gaza while militants barraged Israel with hundreds of rockets.

The exchange killed a number of militants and civilians in Gaza and at least three people in Israel.

The barrage of rockets from the Gaza Strip and airstrikes into the territory continued almost nonstop throughout the day, in what appeared to be some of the most intense fighting between Israel and Hamas since their 2014 war. The fire was so relentless that Israel's Iron Dome rocket-defense system seemed to be overwhelmed. Columns of smoke rose from many places in Gaza.

By late Tuesday, the violence extended to Tel Aviv, which

came under fire from a barrage of rockets launched from the Gaza Strip. A 50-year-old woman was killed.

Hamas said it launched a total of 130 rockets, its most intense strike so far, in response to Israel's destruction of a high-rise building in Gaza earlier in the evening. The sound of the outgoing rockets could be heard in Gaza. As the rockets rose into the skies, loud speakers on

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## City sites all giving out shots to kids

No appointments now needed for youngsters 12 to 15

By Karen Ann Cullotta and Alice Yin  
Chicago Tribune

Chicago's city-operated COVID-19 vaccine sites will begin offering the Pfizer vaccine to kids 12 to 15 starting Thursday, Chicago public health officials said Tuesday while touting the two-dose shot as the strongest guarantee those children can safely celebrate the summer after a trying year of coronavirus-related closures.

The expansion of eligibility to younger kids was prompted by a recent Food and Drug Administration emergency use authorization in anticipation of full approval Wednesday from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady said Tuesday. The vaccines will be available at all city sites, which already offer the Pfizer shots and will accept walk-ins for those 12 and older starting Thursday.

Arwady said although the city in recent weeks has met a new challenge of having more vaccine supply than demand among residents, she hopes the new eligibility will spark heavy interest among parents of younger children — a critical demographic for achieving herd immunity, public health experts have said. It also will serve as a ticket for a fun summer for children, who have missed out on a typical year amid COVID-19 gathering limitations, Arwady said.

"I strongly encourage all

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Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. AP

## In Senate, collision on voting legislation

GOP mounted aggressive case against voting-access and election bill from Democrats. Nation & World, Page 12



Vice President Joe Biden and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel following an event celebrating the first domestic violence shelter built in Chicago in more than a decade in 2013. JOSE M. OSORIO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Is Rahm next Japan ambassador?

Ex-Chicago mayor reportedly Biden's pick for high-profile post

By Bill Ruthhart  
Chicago Tribune

President Joe Biden is expected to select former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel as his ambassador to Japan, according to multiple reports Tuesday.

The move would give Biden a deeply experienced government tactician and political veteran in a prominent foreign post, but the choice is also certain to receive

criticism from some in the Democratic Party's progressive wing who have been critical of Emanuel's eight-year tenure as mayor.

The Financial Times first reported the decision. Emanuel declined to comment.

It's unclear when Biden will make his first round of ambassador choices public. A White House official said the Biden administration is not commenting on any names for ambassador and stressed that no selections are final until they are announced by the president.

Emanuel would have to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. If his nomination were sent with several

other ambassadors, it could lessen the likelihood he would face individual scrutiny from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Emanuel has faced criticism on the left for his handling of the Laquan McDonald fatal police shooting and from Republicans for Chicago's status as a sanctuary city and its history of struggling to tamp down violent crime. However, he has deep relationships in Washington and Congress with an established track record as a top official in two White Houses.

The former mayor made little

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Tom Skilling's forecast High 63 Low 48

Chicago Weather Center: Forecast on the back of A+E

\$3.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere 173rd year No. 132 © Chicago Tribune



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## Budget

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began a two-year review of its funding system and gathered recommendations from providers before hiring Guidehouse, a Chicago-based management consulting firm, to turn those recommendations into a spending plan. The result was the recommended initial funding increase of \$329 million, followed by increases of approximately \$100 million in each of the next four years.

Providers, who say they have struggled despite seeing year-to-year funding increases as part of the state's effort to move toward compliance with the consent decree, have fully backed the multiyear strategy put forth in the Guidehouse study.

"This is such a unique opportunity," Mark McHugh, president and CEO of Chicagoland provider Envision Unlimited, said. "There's often the question, 'How much money do you need to solve a problem?' Well, this is it. It's in black and white, and it's right in front of us."

Providers doubled down on their call for full funding after Pritzker on Thursday said improved revenue forecasts indicate the state will have enough money to meet its education funding formula goal with a \$350 million school funding increase.

Citing building momentum in the General Assembly, where legislation urging the state to fully fund the Guidehouse study is receiving bipartisan support in both chambers, Evans said "it's time to step up."

DHS officials said they are making a "good faith commitment" to support community providers with the funding approved by the General Assembly. Since 2018, the department has invested nearly \$381 million into rates for community providers, most recently committing \$118.5 million in 2021 and \$128.5 million in 2020.

"There is no end to the need across the system, and COVID has created some significant challenges for us to be able to commit to a \$329 million price tag for the upcoming fiscal year," Allison Stark, director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities for the state Department of Human Services, said.

In a recent state Senate hearing, DHS Secretary Grace Hou said the department's budget is "strong, but not perfect."

Meanwhile, providers say they are in a state of crisis, and have been for a long time.

Because people with disabilities are eligible for Medicaid and most often don't have other income, providers rely on the state for the vast majority of their funding. The wages they pay their staff and the services they provide are dependent on the reimbursement rates they receive from the state.

In turn, the number of individuals providers can support is also limited by state funding. The result is a list of 7,400 adults who are waiting for access to community programs, which include group homes, job coaching and in-home support. The waiting list is expected to be reduced by about 1,600 in the coming fiscal year, leaving 5,800 adults seeking services, DHS spokeswoman Marisa Kollias said.

By that measure at least, Illinois is living up to the consent decree, which calls for reducing the waiting list



Gov. J.B. Pritzker said improved revenue forecasts indicate the state will have enough money to meet its education funding. **YOUNGRAE KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS**



State Sen. Mattie Hunter speaks during a press conference outside of Mercy Hospital in Chicago last year.

by at least 640 people each year through fiscal years 2021 through 2025. After 2025, no individual seeking services can wait more than five years.

While DHS is close to reaching the five-year time period, providers argue that's far from ideal.

"Five years is a long time for an individual and family to be waiting to access services," Evans said. "It's hard to describe the trauma that can be involved when you have a loved one that needs medical or behavioral services that you as a parent, brother or sister can't provide."

Those waiting for community living either stay with family, or if they have no other option, the state can set them up in private, state-funded immediate care facilities, which are structurally similar to retirement homes. Providers said these facilities create an "institutional setting" that is often less ideal than community living.

"What you don't want is a situation where someone — unless it's preferred — has to seek services in a nursing home level of care, when really all they need is more independence and could really live in a smaller group home without all the medical supports because they don't need them," Evans said.

Some people on the list don't need housing but do need services like job

coaching or day programs, and are waiting at home without those community connections. McHugh said the goal is to have a seamless transition between the services a person with disabilities receives through the education system and the adult system.

"Many studies have indicated that quality of life for a person with disability improves dramatically if they're integrated in the community, along with persons without disabilities," Evans said. "This is a quality-of-life issue."

It is commonplace for people on the list to wait years before getting placed. After the next fiscal year, the average wait time for adults will be five years, DHS officials said.

"Unless I can raise more money, I can't expand services. And yet there are thousands upon thousands of people on the waiting list for services, and I'm ready to expand," McHugh said. "This is our mission — to serve people."

McHugh said his organization hasn't expanded proposed services in years because of a lack of funding.

"The most scary part of all is really the staffing crisis," Jim Kales, president and CEO of Aspire, a provider that serves people in Illinois and Wisconsin, said, an assessment McHugh agreed with.

The direct support

professionals (DSPs) who work with those with disabilities are typically paid slightly above the minimum wage for jobs that require long hours of giving physical and mental care.

"When you're paying just a touch about the minimum wage ... it's just not enough to attract the best people to come into this field and really do right by people with disabilities," Kales said. "These are hard jobs."

In her 2018 decision, Coleman identified low wages for direct support professionals as a primary drive of limited services.

In a recent state House hearing, John Pingo, CEO of provider Goldie B. Floberg Center in Rockton, said the status of the staffing crisis recently drove him to close two group homes. He said the center currently has 29 staff vacancies, surpassing the agency's "crisis point" of 20 vacancies.

Burnout is widespread, Kales said. Aspire and its sister agencies experience an extremely high turnover rate of employees, with a statewide rate upward of 50% a year. The turnover inevitably affects people with disabilities, who often depend on settling into a routine with their DSP.

"If they're constantly having the person working with them changing every month or every two months, it creates dramatic turmoil in their life," Kales

said.

People with disabilities in Illinois tend to be placed in much larger settings compared with programs other states provide, according to Kales. Whereas group homes in Illinois largely err toward the maximum of eight people, Kales said homes in Wisconsin and elsewhere typically house one to four residents.

Kales said Aspire recently opened a new home in Brookfield, Illinois, where four men who had previously lived in eight-person homes moved in.

"I'm telling you, you could see such a difference," Kales said. "You could just tell it felt like their home as opposed to, unfortunately, larger homes that sometimes feel more institutional. That's the last thing we want for people."

To Kales, whose organization works in both Illinois and Wisconsin, the differences in funding — and consequently in individual experiences — are stark.

"It's hard doing this work in Illinois," he said. "The funding for community-based care — to be really included in the community, to work a job at the local Mariano's, to live in their own home or apartment — the funding for that kind of support in Illinois is about half of what it is in our neighboring states."

Additional funding, if possible, would have to come with the approval of the General Assembly. State Sen. Mattie Hunter, a Chicago Democrat who sponsored legislation urging "the State of Illinois to fully fund the Guidehouse final rate recommendations," said she will continue advocating for necessary funding, "even if it happens one recommended priority at a time."

"The Illinois I/DD (intellectually and developmentally disabled) community system needs increased investment because it has suffered from decades of fiscal neglect that significantly contributed to the state becoming subject to a federal consent decree in 2011," Hunter said in an email. "Sometimes, the state needs a little push even after an initiative like this is formed into law."

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## Man stabbed to death in dispute over kids playing

By Charles J. Johnson  
Chicago Tribune

A 55-year-old Englewood man stabbed to death the 32-year-old boyfriend of his grandchildren's mother Sunday morning in a dispute over the younger man's children playing too raucously early in the day, prosecutors said Tuesday.

Anthony Moody was arrested Sunday in the South Side neighborhood shortly after stabbing a 32-year-old in the neck in the 5600 block of South Peoria Avenue about 9:20 a.m., according to police. Moody fled shirtless and shoeless to a nearby gas station but was placed in custody soon after by responding officers, prosecutors said.

The man killed was identified as Robert Webster, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office. He was taken to the University of Chicago Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead at 9:48 a.m., according to the medical examiner's office.

According to prosecutors, Moody lived with Webster, who was dating a woman with whom Moody has "a father and daughter type of relationship" and who was the mother of two of Moody's grandchildren, who also lived at the apartment.

The morning before the attack, Webster was "tearing up the home" and was removed. He returned later that evening and Moody grabbed a knife, but Webster wasn't able to get in the home, prosecutors said in court Tuesday. Moody told the woman he would have killed Webster had he come inside, prosecutors said.

Eventually, the woman and Webster reconciled, and he returned to the home with his children early Sunday.

Moody was awakened by children who ran into his bedroom, prosecutors said. When he said it was "too early for all the noise," Webster responded he could play with his children as he liked and Moody could leave if he didn't like it, according to prosecutors.

At that point, as Webster tried to leave the bedroom, Moody jumped up and stabbed Webster in the neck, prosecutors said. The woman, who tried to intervene to stop the fight was sliced in the attack, according to prosecutors.

Moody then fled to a nearby gas station, where a witness recorded him on video saying he had been sucker-punched by Webster, at which point he stabbed him.

"She let him back in at 4 a.m. When she let him back in I didn't even know (Webster) was in there 'til he came in the room where my grandbaby sleeps and sucker-punched me, and he didn't know I had a ... knife in my ... hand, and then I got up and 'boom boom,'" prosecutors reported Moody said on camera.

Moody's defense attorney said Moody asked for the police to be called at the gas station, believing he acted in self-defense.

"There may some semblance of self-defense in here, possibly. That's for some jury or some judge to work out down the road," a Cook County judge said while setting bail at \$200,000.

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## Former teacher arrested after accusation of child grooming

By Clare Proctor  
Chicago Tribune

A former Joliet diocesan teacher charged with traveling to meet a child and grooming was arrested early Tuesday after being released from the hospital, police said in a news release.

Jeremy Hylka, 44, was released Tuesday morning from Silver Oaks Behavioral Hospital in New Lenox, police said. Hylka's attorney notified Joliet police

beforehand, and Hylka was arrested and booked "without incident," police said. He was released shortly after on \$10,000 cash bond.

Joliet police discovered a Snapchat video April 28 depicting possible "inappropriate contact" between an adult and a minor, Joliet police have said. A 19-year-old citizen, acting independently, posed as a 15-year-old and uploaded alleged correspondence between the two on social

media, according to police.

After police identified Hylka as the suspect, a Will County judge issued a warrant April 29 for his arrest, police said. Officers initially could not locate Hylka but later said he was admitted to a hospital while they were searching for him, police said.

Hylka had previously been put on a two-week leave in January, while the diocese investigated a TikTok video showing an

adult man lip-syncing as text scrolling behind him referenced an experience in high school when he was propositioned or groomed by an unnamed teacher, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet said in a statement May 4.

Three days later, the diocese said in a statement that Hylka also "did not fulfill employee requirements" while teaching at a Lockport Catholic school. He received a substitute

teaching license in January but was not enrolled in a teacher preparation program, a requirement to continue as a full-time teacher, diocese officials said in a statement. The St. Joseph Catholic School principal was placed on investigative leave while the diocese looks into the circumstances of Hylka's employment, officials said.

The diocese released a statement April 29 that Hylka was fired from his

jobs at St. Joseph Catholic School in Lockport and at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus, both in Joliet. He is also prohibited from working or volunteering for any diocesan school or parish.

Hylka is due in court next on June 24, Joliet police Sgt. Dwayne English said.

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