



## **Basic needs group talks state budget; advocates public action**

*Basic Needs Network-sponsored meeting set for Thursday at Dunn's Corners church.*

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WESTERLY - The community's Basic Needs Network hopes to educate area residents about the potential negative impact the state's record budget deficit could have on seniors, people with disability-ties, families and children. In order to close the near \$530 million budget short-fall, Gov. Donald Carcieri has proposed millions in cuts programs that "help Rhode Islanders meet their basic needs."

A BNN-sponsored budget workshop is slated for Thursday, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Dunn's Corners Community Church on Post Road to explain the pro-posed cuts. BNN says Carcieri's pro-poses to slash tens of mil-lions of dollars to close the budget gap. Those program cuts include ones for kids including Head Start, child care assistance, and child welfare services as well as programming for seniors including state social security payments. Additionally, the state-run RIte Care/RIte Share health insurance program - funded in large part by federal Medicaid dollars - may also face funding cuts.

The BNN has partnered with One Rhode Island, a coalition of advocacy, faith, social service and policy organizations as well as Rhode Island's Children's Policy Coalition to present the workshop.

Among the topics slated are an explanation of the budget process, the impact of proposed cuts and suggestions on what citizens can do to "influence the state budget." The workshop is designed to educate not just concerned citizens and clients of service agencies facing cuts, but program and agency staffs, boards and directors attend.

The Basic Needs Network, a consortium of some 30 area and state social service groups, churches and agencies, mostly private or quasi-public, was founded more than a decade ago. BNN meets monthly and acts as a social service clearinghouse, net-working group, and opportunity for human services advocates to brainstorm about solutions and opportunities to share data and make referrals.

Heidi Collins, Director of Public Education at the Poverty Institute, said the workshop, the seventh held to date statewide, is designed to provide community awareness on the budget process. "We're holding these regional crisis budget work-shops to (create) a community awareness of the process - the expenditure and revenue side," Collins said. "This is a way to discuss the budget breakdown at the local level and to help (people) to have a voice in the process."

To register for the BNN budget workshop contact Collins at (401) 456-2751 or via email at [hcollins@ric.edu](mailto:hcollins@ric.edu).