

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis

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FILED
Court Administrator

July 1, 2011

JUL 05 2011

By JF Deputy



Honorable Kathleen Blatz
Minnesota Judicial Center, Room 230
25 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1500

Dear Chief Justice Blatz (Ret.):

On behalf of Jewish Family & Children's Service of Minneapolis (JFCS), I respectfully ask that you recommend to Ramsey County Chief Judge Kathleen Gearin that JFCS and other Employment Services Providers (ESP) under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program be considered critical services, which under the Supremacy Clause of the United States Constitution must be funded during a state government shutdown.

JFCS, which has provided the people of Minnesota with a full range of human services for over one hundred years, is a contracted vendor of ESP services with Hennepin County. Under our contract with Hennepin County, JFCS provides vocational services to approximately 240 TANF recipients per month and we receive approximately \$40,000 per month to ensure that these individuals meet the requirements of the TANF "welfare to work" program by seeking employment and/or engaging in other qualified activities. It is our understanding that the cash assistance which our clients receive, as well as the funding that we receive as a TANF provider of ESP services largely come from the federal government and that in exchange for our participation in the TANF program, the federal government imposes numerous contractual obligations on Minnesota, Hennepin County, our clients and ESP providers.

Given Chief Judge Gearin's June 29, 2011 Order ("Order") in which the Court specifically included the TANF program within the set of services that Minnesota is obligated under the Supremacy Clause to fund during a state government shutdown, we were surprised to receive word from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) on June 30, 2011 that "funding for the [TANF/MFIP] Consolidated Fund [which funds the ESP program] has not been deemed critical." ("The State of Minnesota has entered into agreements with the United States government to participate in a variety of programs, including . . . the Temporary Assistance to needy Families Program . . . Under these agreements, continued participation in those programs is required once a State has agreed to participate." Order at

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JFCS is committed to the inclusion of all people.



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paragraph 5, page 15). While JFCS appreciates that DHS is of the position that individual TANF recipients should continue to receive their cash assistance during a state government shutdown, the vocational services provided by JFCS and other ESP providers cannot be severed from the "welfare to work" requirements of the TANF program and Minnesota's obligations to the federal government as a State participant. Accordingly, this is why we believe the Court in making "some minimal changes in the document submitted by the Governor," specifically crossed out the line under Human Services under Activities Recommended to Continue: "Related vendor/provider payments will not continue" and initialed that change. MFIP is among the programs listed and clearly referenced by "related." Order, paragraph 28, page 9 and Exhibit a, page 3.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to be heard on this important matter to JFCS and our TANF clients and we stand ready to answer any questions that the Court may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judy Halper", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Judy Halper
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Jason Pleggenkuhle, Assistant Attorney General
Dan Pollack, Office of Governor Mark Dayton
Ethan Roberts, Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas
Deborah Schlick, Affirmative Options Coalition
Mike Opat, Chair, Hennepin County Commissioners