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Dec. 5, 2024

To: Intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) community, Tribal partners, and ODDS staff

From: Dana Hittle, Interim Director, Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS)

Subject: Our services and the Governor's Recommended Budget

Hello,

On Tuesday, Governor Tina Kotek released the [Governor's Recommended Budget \(GRB\)](#). This is her budget proposal for the 2025-27 biennium. It includes recommendations for the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS).

The GRB's proposed budget for ODDS is \$6.37 billion in total funds. This includes:

- 17% increase from the current Legislatively Approved Budget to support our increased caseload and cost per case.

- Funding and additional positions to improve licensing and auditing of I/DD providers to ensure safety and regulatory compliance.
- Positions to meet Medicaid's new access rule requirements.
- Funding to strengthen our equity work, Tribal Navigator program, and government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon.

These proposed investments would help ODDS better realize our goals of improving service equity, reaching underserved individuals and communities, and ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals who receive our services and the workforce that supports them.

The GRB also proposes partial reductions to the Stabilization and Crisis Unit's (SACU) operating budget that would begin in July 2026. ODHS leadership and ODDS staff are hearing how distressing this news is.

Please continue to read this message for more about what these proposed reductions mean.

What do the proposed reductions mean for SACU?

The goal of SACU is to serve individuals with I/DD who are in crisis and stabilize them. SACU's services are meant to be short term and support individuals to return to life in their communities.

SACU has struggled to meet this goal, especially for adults. It's become a long-term residence for many, even after individuals aren't in crisis. At the same time, SACU's costs have increased by a lot.

ODHS leadership and the Governor see the budgeting process as an opportunity to refocus SACU back to its original purpose: a short-term crisis stabilization program that better supports individuals and the staff who do such important work every day.

The Governor is clear that her intent is not to close SACU. She is asking the Legislature, the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), and the I/DD community to consider the mission and structure of SACU. This includes making a plan that:

- Refocuses SACU into a short-term stabilization unit.
- Evaluates how many homes SACU needs to meet that purpose.
- Strengthens and improves person-centered services provided by SACU and community-based providers to ensure individuals exiting SACU can safely live and thrive in their communities.

The questions we must consider together are: How can we better support individuals in crisis to stabilize and return to their communities? How can we provide these supports to individuals in communities across the state? How can we develop and ensure access to necessary services to safely support individuals in their communities when they aren't in crisis anymore?

Please note: The final budget is not decided. The Legislature will make the final budget decisions in June 2025.

What's changing now in SACU?

We have heard that people are distressed by this news about SACU. We understand the possibility of change can be scary. We will support SACU's

staff and the individuals they support throughout this process. Our mission is still the safety, health and well-being of all at SACU.

We've also heard rumors in the community that SACU is closing all of its homes now. This is not true. Here are the facts:

- **Nothing is changing now. Individuals served by SACU will continue to receive the same services.**
- SACU is still dedicated to keeping individuals healthy, safe, happy and well-supported.
- Two SACU homes are closing on Jan. 31, 2025. These homes are Eliot 2 in Portland and Weirich in Lebanon. No other homes are closing at this time. ODDS made this decision before the GRB. The individuals served in these homes have already moved into nearby SACU homes. The staff from the homes that are closing are working in other SACU homes.

What are the next steps in the budget process?

In January, the Oregon Legislature meets for the "Long Session." The Legislature will debate the GRB and decide what the state's programs will do. In June, the Legislature will pass the state's budget for the next two years.

With regards to ODDS, the budgeting process will include conversations about ODDS and its services. We will begin work on a proposal to refocus SACU into a short-term stabilization program that helps individuals transition back into their communities. Our actions will include:

- Creating a planning team of self-advocates, ODHS employees, labor union representatives, legislative leaders, and community providers and partners.
- Working with the above groups to find solutions and create a timeline as the budget becomes clearer.
- Communicating with all who live and work at SACU, labor unions, legislators, and the I/DD community about this process.

We don't know what the Legislature will decide. If the Legislature approves budget cuts for SACU, they most likely would start in July 2026. This gives us time to prepare together.

Resources and more information

We will engage you throughout this process. We will keep you updated.

During the Legislative Session, we will host update meetings every other week. These will be over the lunch hour on Zoom. We will send an email in January with the meeting links and more details. You can also check [our community engagement web page](#) for that information and other opportunities to give us your feedback.

We will post information and resources related to SACU and the budget on [SACU's web page](#). We are creating frequently asked questions that we plan to post next week. If you have unanswered questions, please send them to odds.questions@odhs.oregon.gov. Thank you.

Again, we know this news about potential reductions in SACU might be distressing or confusing to some of you. To contact ODDS staff with any questions, email us at odds.questions@odhs.oregon.gov.

As we move forward, our top priority will continue to be the safety and well-being of the individuals we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana Hittle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dana" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Hittle".

Dana Hittle

Interim Director

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