

Understanding TABOR (Taxpayers Bill of Rights)  
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At a recent meeting of the Colorado Partnership for Quality Mental Health I heard an informative presentation called "Understanding Tabor," by Carol Hedges, from the Bell Policy Center.

As many of you may know, the Tabor Amendment to the Colorado Constitution was passed in 1992. The goal of TABOR was to limit the growth of government and keep expenditures and revenues to a minimum. TABOR uses three primary vehicles to control government growth, 1) voter approval for increases in taxes, debt or policy change, 2) limitations on how much revenue government can collect and keep and 3) limitations on how much government can spend. The bottom line is that TABOR has a direct effect on state and local fiscal decisions to raise and spend revenue.

This year, the effects of TABOR will become more obvious. Due to decreased revenues, deep cuts in state services must be made that are/or will be affecting mental health services in general and children's mental health services specifically. Because of TABOR and its "ratcheting effect", we will not be able to restore spending when the revenue picture and the economy improve. Because of TABOR it is nearly impossible to expand services even when needs are great.

Budget cuts are necessary to keep our budget balanced - but costly to our children and families in need of mental health services. The issues are complex and the impact on services will be far-reaching.

I encourage you to learn more about the TABOR amendment. Carol Hedges at the Bell Policy Center is more than willing to help by providing you with a pamphlet entitled "Understanding Tabor: The First Steps," and speaking to your group. She can be contacted at:

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