



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Real Lives. Real Work. Real Smart. Wisconsin Investing in People with Disabilities



2011-2013 Legislative Budget and Policy Priorities

Real Lives

- When people with disabilities, and where appropriate their families, can plan and direct their services and supports it enhances quality of life, increases independence and helps them become part of their communities.
- Disability is a bipartisan issue. For over 25 years administrations and legislators from both parties have recognized that we must keep the community promise to Wisconsin's elderly and people with disabilities,

Real Work

- People with disabilities want to work in order to be productive members of society and they are good, reliable employees. Yet people with disabilities are much less likely to be part of the labor force and this group is disproportionately impacted by the recent recession. According to the Department of Health Services, only 6 percent of Family Care members who want to work are working in integrated settings in the community, even though studies in Wisconsin show supported employment services are more cost effective than facility-based services. Good jobs in the community are not only possible, they are good for Wisconsin.
- In order to become productive working adult members of society, children with disabilities need access to quality schools and the same opportunities to attend the school of their choice as children who do not have disabilities. Far too many students with disabilities drop out of our schools or don't graduate with a real diploma. Dropouts from the class of 2008 were estimated in one study to cost Wisconsin almost \$3.9 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes.
- Community based services for adults and children with disabilities create jobs; this is one of the fastest growing job sectors. But there is already a direct worker shortage. These jobs must be viable in terms of wages, benefits and training to attract a sufficient number of workers.

Real Smart

- Community-based care is smart care. Programs and policies that assist people with all disabilities to live and work more independently create jobs and reduce current and long term spending. A 2009 Health Affairs study found lower overall long-term care costs in states that have "well established non-institutional programs" than those that do not.
- The right services at the right time can reduce costs in both the long-term and short-term. Earlier recognition of the need for intervention for people with disabilities can avert the need for long-term supports. Accountability through the use of best practices and expectation for measurable outcomes ensures that we are maximizing our investment.
- We need a balanced approach to the budget that optimizes revenue, including available federal funds, and does not cut those programs that are most efficient in the long run. Increased government efficiencies can occur through collaboration among state agencies and support of regulatory and administrative policies to allow counties to share services.

Wisconsin

The message is clear—community-based care saves money, creates jobs and allows people with disabilities to be full participants in our communities.

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