



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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2011-2013 Legislative Budget and Policy Priorities

HOUSING

All persons with and without disabilities have the right to integrated, affordable, healthy and accessible housing.

Survival Recommendations:

- Ensure that WHEDA under the new leadership continues to be responsive on disability issues.
- Ensure that housing programs and services are sufficiently funded in the next budget.
- Ensure that homelessness programs in the state are adequately funded.
- Ensure that the new housing plan includes Universal Design and Integration requirements.
- Encourage your local housing authority to work with organizations working on NH Transitions.

Background: With the recent election, housing priorities and issues will largely depend on the actions of Governor Walker and the state legislature.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA): A key appointment will be the new Executive Director of WHEDA. WHEDA administers the federal tax credits for housing development and homeownership programs. In recent years, WHEDA has made an effort to be responsive to concerns in communities. For instance, they have encouraged greater accessibility by giving additional points in the application process for Universal Design.

Division of Housing & Community Development (DHCD): In the state government, the various housing programs and services are somewhat fragmented, but many of the programs are in the DHCD which currently is in the Department of Commerce. Previously, it was in the Department of Administration. Governor Walker could decide to leave it in Commerce, return it to Administration, merge it with other scattered housing programs into a new home, or something else. All those actions, as well as the new director, may significantly affect the priorities and effectiveness of the state housing programs.

Homelessness: This is an issue that advocates should be aware of, particularly since there is increasing homelessness due to the economy. A substantial number of people who are homeless also have a disability, particularly mental illness and/or Substance Abuse issues. This is currently part of the DHCD discussed above.

National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF): Although the planned funding of the NHTF through Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac fell through with the economic crisis, Congress is attempting to capitalize the NHTF with \$1.065 billion. States are required to identify an agency to administer the funds, as well as to have a housing plan for the funds. Wisconsin has neither. If Congress is successful, Governor Walker would need to identify a fiscal agency which would need to quickly create a plan.

Nursing Home Transitions: Advocates are working to develop a partnership with local housing authorities to dedicate a limited number of units or vouchers for people transitioning out of nursing homes.

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