



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations Says Health Care Law Provides Important Protections to People with Disabilities

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Wisconsin residents with disabilities had a lot riding on today's Supreme Court decision on the Affordable Care Act, and the state's largest disability coalition is announcing strong support for today's decision ensuring key protections.

"The Court's decision will ensure that health insurance companies cannot deny coverage based on pre-existing conditions or discriminate based on an individual's health status," says Tom Masseau, Disability Rights Wisconsin Executive Director. "These protections are huge for people with disabilities who face major obstacles to getting healthcare." Pre-existing condition protections are currently in place for children and will go into effect for adults in 2014.

The ruling also affirms the importance of services and protections for individuals with disabilities through access to habilitative and rehabilitative services and devices, mental health and substance disorder services, preventive and wellness services, chronic disease management, and basic services for children, such as vision and dental care. It also continues to lower the costs of prescription drugs for people with disabilities and extends and enhances the Money Follows the Person program, which has helped people move out of institutions and into less costly, more independent community-based settings.

Pre-existing condition protections and caps on lifetime limits are particularly significant for people with disabilities and families with children. Nearly one of every seven children under 18 years of age in Wisconsin has a special health care need. The 2009-10 National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs shows that nearly a quarter of Wisconsin families with a child with a special health care need have a condition which

causes a family member to cut back or stop working, and one fifth report trouble accessing care.

“The assurance of coverage for people with disabilities in the private market means many people with disabilities will be able to pursue increased work hours and rely less on Medicaid for their health care because they won’t be afraid of losing that safety net,” says Beth Swedeen, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. “Access to affordable, quality health care allows people with disabilities and their families to work and have active lives because they can manage their illnesses and conditions without going into financial distress.”

Insufficient insurance coverage and limited access to affordable, quality health care currently prevents many people with disabilities from obtaining the care they need. When individuals go without care, they are often left unable to work, wait too long to see a doctor, and subsequently utilize expensive emergency room and crisis services.

“Wisconsin has been a leader in progressive and bi-partisan health care policy and coverage of its residents,” says Maureen Ryan, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers. “We look forward to working with policymakers to implement the Affordable Care Act in our state in a way that keeps Medicaid sustainable and provides adequate coverage for people with disabilities.”

Current data shows that in Wisconsin, since some of the law’s provisions have been in place, approximately 43,000 Wisconsin young adults, including those with disabilities, have been able to continue their coverage on their parents’ policies and 94,700 children have been protected from being dropped from coverage due to pre-existing conditions.

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