

2013

Wisconsin Legislative
Budget Summary

A Review of Budget
Impacts on the Disability
Community



Survival
Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

SURVIVAL COALITION 2013-2015 BUDGET REPORT

People with disabilities, their families and advocates across Wisconsin have spent the last several months testifying at hearings, making phone calls, and sending messages to legislators, sharing their ideas for improving the lives of people with disabilities by engaging in the state budget process. The Survival Coalition of more than 30 disability organizations in Wisconsin has assembled the following summary of the state budget's impact on the disability community.

It includes an assessment of the impact on the lives of people with disabilities, their families, and allies across a series of issues areas.

MEDICAID AND HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

Background:

Many adults and children with disabilities rely on Medicaid to pay for essential health and long-term care services, such as acute health care; personal care that helps individuals bathe, dress, and eat; therapies; and durable medical equipment. All Medicaid services in Wisconsin are funded with a federal funding match – most at 60%. In Wisconsin, some people know Medicaid-funded programming by different names: Forward Card; Katie Beckett; BadgerCare, Medical Assistance Personal Care, Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP), etc.

Survival Recommendations - Budget Summary:

- Maintain all current eligibility standards and services provided through Medicaid programs.
- Provide Medicaid health care coverage to all individuals, including those with chronic disabling conditions and mental health needs, under 133% of the federal poverty level.
- Support positive premium changes in the Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP) program to eliminate a work disincentive; oppose changes to the informal work definition.

Final Results:

- + The budget covers all individuals under 100% of the federal poverty level – expanding coverage to an additional 80,000 adults.
- Coverage for new individuals under the 100% poverty level is funded in part by reducing BadgerCare eligibility and eliminating coverage for 90,000 parents. People who lose Medicaid coverage will be eligible to enroll in the new insurance exchanges, but these plans will not cover many services currently provided through Medicaid and may be cost prohibitive. Many people with chronic conditions may not be able to afford coverage, particularly those just above the poverty line. There is no increased federal funding for this plan; therefore this Medicaid change requires additional state tax dollars.
- The budget authorizes the Department of Health Services (DHS) to adopt a more limited benefits package for BadgerCare with higher cost-sharing for children and adults, if it is approved by the federal government.
- ± The budget does not include any changes to MAPP. The unfair premium structure remains in place. Removal of this budget item gives advocates the opportunity to work with the Department of Health Services to develop an alternative that does not risk loss of Medicaid for so many individuals.

ADULT LONG TERM CARE

BACKGROUND:

Survival Coalition supports an adult long-term care system that allows eligible individuals to live inclusive lives in the community with individualized and appropriate supports and services. Survival believes that ending wait lists for needed supports is equitable and cost-effective, reducing dependence on costly emergency and nursing home care.

Survival Recommendations - Budget Summary:

- The Survival Coalition supported the expansion of Family Care and IRIS long-term supports for frail elders and people with disabilities waiting in northeast Wisconsin.

Final Results:

- Expansion rejected and required another study that will be due in December 2013. Despite various audits and implementation over the last two years of proven sustainability measures and cost-savings in Family Care, the new report will require DHS to make additional projections on cost-shifts, anticipated growth, cost-efficiencies and strategies for “delayed entry” into publicly funded programs.

MENTAL HEALTH

Coordinated Services Teams (CST): The Governor’s budget proposed new GPR to further expand the CST model for children and youth who are involved with multiple systems of care in order to reduce out of home placements, reduce juvenile justice involvement and improve functioning.

- + The Legislature approved the Governor’s proposal.

Survival Coalition supported the Governor’s proposal, but also asked for additional funds to replace expected reductions due to the sequestration of federal funding that currently support CST.

Peer Run Respite: The Governor’s budget proposed funding the creation of peer run respite services to help build a companion infrastructure to the formal service system in order to better meet consumer needs and potentially reduce costs. The model would be piloted in three regional sites.

Survival Coalition supported the Governor’s proposal and also the addition of a fourth pilot site.

+ The Legislature approved the Governor’s proposal.

Office of Children’s Mental Health: The Governor proposed creation of an Office of Children’s Mental Health to coordinate efforts across departments with a goal of making sure everyone is working most efficiently to achieve better outcomes for our youth with emotional disturbances.

Survival Coalition supported the Governor’s proposal.

+ The Legislature approved the Governor’s proposal as well as adding a requirement for a yearly report from the Office.

Comprehensive Community Services: The Governor proposed providing the state share of funding for Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) to provide equitable access to community-based mental health services for children and adults across Wisconsin. The funding would only be available for entities that offered CCS on a regional basis.

Survival Coalition supported the Governor’s proposal.

+ The Legislature modified the Governor’s plan by requiring DHS to submit a report to the Committee no later than March 1, 2014, that describes the criteria for regionalization, a description of how the regions will be established and an evaluation of the estimated long-term costs of the proposed regional model. In addition, the motion transfers the GPR funding recommended by the Governor (\$10,202,000 in 2014-15) to the Joint Committee on Finance supplemental appropriation and requires DHS to submit a request for the release of these funds under a 14-day passive review process after DHS submits the report to the Committee.

LONG-TERM CARE WORKFORCE

Background:

Wisconsin’s direct-care workforce today totals nearly 90,000 workers and is larger than any other occupational grouping in the state. In addition, Home Health Aides and Personal Care Aides are among the fastest growing occupations in the state through 2018, increasing by 38% and 34%, respectively. However, low wages—more than four in ten direct-care workers rely on public assistance as a result of low wages and part-time hours—hamper recruitment and retention for this workforce. Wisconsin’s booming demand for direct-care workers cannot be met without making these jobs more competitive so that they attract enough qualified workers to support the long-term care system.

Survival Recommendations - Budget Summary:

- Increase long term care reimbursement rate: Survival recommended increasing the long-term care reimbursement rate to specifically address direct-care worker salaries and benefits.
- Increase employment and training initiatives: Survival recommended increased investments in the community based direct care workforce through Department of Workforce Development employment and training initiatives.
- Recruitment and retention: Survival supported efforts to enhance the recruitment, retention and access to a competent long-term care workforce to all employers, including self-directing employers.

Final Results:

- The budget did not increase the long-term care reimbursement rate.
- ± The budget does not include any direct investments in employment and training initiatives for the long-term care workforce. However, the budget does provide performance based funding to the Wisconsin Technical College System and University of Wisconsin System which takes into consideration the number of degrees and certificates each institution awards in high-demand fields.
- ± The budget provides funding for a staff position to oversee the new labor market information program to be housed within the Bureau of Workforce Information and Technical Support and designed to provide information on labor market trends to the Secretary of DWD, other state agencies, the Governor's office, Wisconsin employers, and the general public. This new system could bring awareness to the needs of the long term care workforce.

TRANSPORTATION

Background:

Transit and paratransit services are critical to maintaining the independence of people with disabilities because many do not drive or own a vehicle because of their disability and/or limited income. When transportation is cut, not only are people with disabilities unable to work or get out in their community, but a caregiver who relies on public transit may no longer be able to provide care when it is needed. Reductions in transit aids have resulted in significant reduction of paratransit services and increases in fees.

Survival Recommendations - Budget Summary:

- Keep transit in the segregated transportation fund
- Preserve the state investment in local transit and restore the 10% cut in Transit Operating Aids made during the 2011-2013 budget
- Maintain the \$5 million allocation for the biennium designated for paratransit services
- Increase funding for the *Specialized Transportation Assistance Program for older adults and people with disabilities, 85.21*, by \$5 million, over the biennium
- Support development of Regional Transit Authorities as a way to increase efficiencies, improve regional connectivity, and provide local communities the flexibility and tools to save their systems from decline
- Provide local governments with the ability to support transit in a sustainable way, and to designate a dedicated funding source for transit.
- Actively pursue coordination at local, regional, state level and utilize all funding options to do so, i.e. United We Ride grant from 2009.
- Ensure Wisconsin's ability to enhance coordination through increased funding for mobility management programs.

Final Results:

- + The budget will keep Transit in the segregated transportation fund.
- + The budget includes a \$250,000 annual increase in funding for paratransit.
- ± The budget increases transit funding by 4% effective January 1, 2015.
- The budget includes no funding increase for the Specialized Transportation Assistance Fund (85.21)
- The budget contains no support for Regional Transit Authorities.

EDUCATION

Background:

The Survival Coalition's position is that Wisconsin must invest in ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, are college and workforce ready by taking targeted steps to reduce achievement gaps, restore essential funding, and establish a more equitable funding formula. Cuts to public education disproportionately impact students with disabilities. Drastic cuts in the last biennium significantly impacted all students, including those with disabilities.

Survival Recommendations - Budget Summary:

- Oppose special needs scholarships.
- Oppose overall voucher expansion.
- Increase categorical aids for special education from its current 26% to 30%, and increase categorical aids for students with high costs (exceeding \$30,000/year) by \$1.5 million each year of the biennium.
- Increase overall per pupil spending by \$200 each year of the biennium.

Final Results:

- + The budget took out special needs scholarships.
- The budget expanded vouchers statewide with a cap of 500 new students the first year, and 1,000 new students the second year of the biennium. The budget also created a tax credit for families sending their children to private schools.
- The budget did not provide any increases in special education funding.
- ± The budget included a per-pupil increase of \$150 per pupil per year: above the Governor's original budget, but below the recommended \$200 per pupil per year.

EMPLOYMENT

Background:

Survival Coalition supports integrated employment at competitive wages as a priority goal and presumed outcome for working-age adults with disabilities. Yet, currently only 4% of working-age participants in the IRIS waiver and 8% of working-age participants in Family Care are employed and earning competitive wage.

Survival Recommendations - Budget Summary:

Survival Coalition recommended an increase in Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) funding by \$1,826,200 GPR in 2013-14, \$2,030,700 GPR in 2014-15, and 1.92 GPR positions annually to capture the total estimated federal match and address the significant statewide DVR waiting list.

Final Results:

- The budget included only the minimum increase in DVR funding and did not reduce the statewide wait list.

Children's Long Term Care

Background:

Children and youth with significant disabilities can have extraordinary needs that require unique supports and services. Families often provide medical, behavioral, financial, and other daily supports beyond what most families provide. There are approximately 3000 children and their families in Wisconsin waiting for essential support and services. Over one third, (37%) of children eligible for long-term supports are waiting, compared to 6% of eligible adults.

Survival Coalition Recommendations - Budget Summary:

- \$5.4 million in GPR to reduce the waiting list for children with significant disabilities by 1,000
- \$1.3 million in GPR to provide access to short- term service coordination for 600 families whose children are eligible, but waiting for long- term supports.

Final Results:

- The budget does not include any new funding to reduce waiting list for children with significant disabilities.
- The budget does not include funding to provide access to short-term service coordination to additional families.



The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations is a cross-disability coalition of more than 30 state and local organizations and groups. For more than 20 years, Survival has been focused on changing and improving policies and practices that support people with disabilities of all ages to be full participants in community life.

www.survivalcoalitionwi.org

**Real Lives, Real Work, Real Smart, Wisconsin
Investing in People with Disabilities**