



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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## EMPLOYMENT BUDGET PRIORITIES

### STATEMENT

Survival Coalition supports integrated employment at competitive wages as the first and preferred outcome of public programs for people with disabilities. We believe everyone can work in integrated jobs at minimum wage or higher with the right job fit and right supports. Survival's support of integrated employment is based on data showing that employment for people with disabilities results in improved health, social and economic benefits for people with disabilities, and reduced reliance on public benefits that impact the entire state.

### BACKGROUND

People with disabilities can and do work and contribute in their communities. Survival Coalition thanks the Governor's office and Legislature for the full funding commitment to Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Survival also appreciates the Governor's commitment to training workers with disabilities, which he announced during his State of the State speech in January 2014. Yet, the employment rate for people with disabilities nationwide is less than a third of the general population.<sup>1</sup> Within Wisconsin's long-term care programs, only 8% of Family Care participants and 4% of IRIS participants have competitive-wage jobs.<sup>2</sup> People with disabilities who do work make 30% less than the general workforce, and 27% live in poverty.<sup>3</sup>

Wisconsin can do better. Nationwide, public programs that support people with disabilities spend just 1% on education, job training, and employment.<sup>4</sup> Other states have found that employment rates for people with disabilities can go up with the right public policies. Research has shown that it is more cost-effective to provide integrated employment supports than providing employment preparation in segregated settings.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics (December 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services (2012).

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey (2012).

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Livermore, Stapleton and O'Toole, Health Affairs, (2011).

<sup>5</sup> Citera, Robert. "An Evaluation of the Long-Term Service Costs and Vocational Outcomes of Supported and Center-Based Employees in Wisconsin," (August 2010).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Require employment performance targets in state programs that support people with disabilities to show continued improvement.
- Require state agencies to report annually to the Legislature on progress toward improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.
- Increase statewide funding for programs that result in improved integrated employment outcomes, such as corporate initiatives (e.g. Walgreens, Project SEARCH), Customized Employment and Individual Placement and Support for people with mental health disabilities.
- Change state use contracting laws to ensure Wisconsin is a model employer by requiring all workers on state contracts to earn minimum wage or higher, and to allow small businesses owned by people with disabilities to participate in state use contracting programs.
- Initiate a statewide effort within departments to hire people with disabilities in state government jobs. Policy initiatives could include offering provisional appointments, having alternative examination and/or interview processes, instituting trial work periods, and including people with disabilities on special appointment lists.
- Develop a business-to-business technical assistance system in which businesses wanting to hire people with disabilities can connect with more experienced businesses that are already benefitting from hiring people with disabilities.
- Initiate a long-term commitment of staff and funding to expand and improve employment service provider quality and capacity to help people with disabilities achieve integrated employment outcomes. This should include service provider training, certification and quality assurance monitoring across state agencies that purchase these services. This includes developing new service providers where existing quality or capacity is lacking.
- Restructure service provider payment systems to assure that integrated employment is rewarded as an outcome and segregated employment is discouraged.
- Direct DHS to use data it collects on expenses for integrated employment services compared with all other services as a basis for shifting funds toward higher investments in integrated employment supports.

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### Contact Survival Coalition Co-Chairs for additional information

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