

Specific Steps Needed to Protect People with Disabilities and Older Adults in Wisconsin

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations is a cross-disability coalition of more than 40 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.

- When Wisconsin begins to reopen, county public health agencies and local communities will be on the forefront of local planning and guidance on how businesses and services can safely resume, as well as monitoring COVID-19 cases and conducting contact tracing.
- Local stakeholder committees should include representation from the disability community to help ensure that community plans are inclusive of the needs of community members with a disability.
- Advocates for vulnerable populations and service providers who offer home and community-based services should be directly consulted in local planning efforts.

At risk people

- COVID-19 is particularly dangerous to people with disabilities, older adults, and people with chronic conditions.
- Direct care staff and family caregivers who are supporting high risk populations are at greater risk of contracting the disease or spreading it to the most vulnerable.
- Children with disabilities whose parents are returning to work or families supporting a member of any age who is living with them
- People who reside or receive services in congregate settings are at extreme risk.

At risk places

- There are many kinds of congregate settings in local communities including:
 - Childcare settings
 - Group Homes (Community Based Residential Facilities)
 - Adult Family Homes
 - Residential Care Apartment Complexes
 - Day service and prevocational facilities (Community Rehabilitation Programs)
 - State developmental disability centers and other intermediate care facilities (ICF-ID)
 - State, county, and private sector mental health institutions and inpatient facilities



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- Mental health crisis centers, day treatment programs, peer run respites, clubhouses, and drop-in centers.
- Birth to 3 and other programs that offer center-based services for children with disabilities
- Transitional housing and emergency shelters that serve a high percentage of people with mental illness and other disabilities.
- Assisted living facilities
- Nursing homes
- Public transit and transportation service vans

Local planning can help reduce risk

- Plans can prioritize Home and Community Based workers who provide in-home services for people in Family Care, IRIS, and CLTS for PPE, COVID-19 testing, and eventual vaccination.
- Plans can prioritize families where there is an at risk child/ren with access to testing, PPE and eventual vaccination.
- Plans can prioritize workers in all congregate settings that serve people with disabilities and older adults for PPE, COVID-19 testing, and eventual COVID-19 vaccination.
- Plans can outline protocols for congregate settings to prevent infections, including guidance on social distancing, best practices to reduce risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19, what to do if workers or clients become sick, and plans on how to ramp up or ramp down services in a setting should an outbreak occur, and.
- Plans can address responses, including increased social distancing or temporary closures, should COVID-19 infections increase.
- Local plans should address the need for appropriate language assistance and accommodations to make sure people who are visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, and non-readers can access COVID-19 information.