



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

SURVIVAL COALITION 2023-2025 BUDGET PRIORITIES

MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Limited access to community based mental health care has resulted in people with mental illness being placed in costly out of home and institutional settings or confined in jails or prisons. 59 of Wisconsin's 72 counties are designated as "mental health professional shortage areas". Access to mental health care is especially problematic for people covered by Medicaid, and extremely severe in rural areas.

Survival Coalition Recommends:

- **Regional Crisis Centers**
Establish a network of regional crisis centers to allow individuals in crisis to be assessed and supported closer to their home and to their natural supports. Local crisis centers can provide an alternative to the current traumatizing and costly process where law enforcement often transport individuals experiencing a mental health crisis across the state to Winnebago Mental Health Institute, far from their family and support system. This process is traumatizing for the person in crisis, costly, and is a major drain on law enforcement resources.
- **Peer Delivered Services**
Increase funding for Peer Run Respite and Peer Recovery Centers to sustain current programs and allow expansion to ensure more equitable access statewide. Peer delivered services provide opportunities for people to access voluntary services to receive needed support. Peer Run Respite and Recovery Centers employ people who are living in recovery from mental health and substance use challenges to serve as a resource for adults with similar life experiences to find or sustain recovery. These services allow people to gain hope, access help sooner and reduce reliance on crisis and inpatient services, and provide an opportunity for peers to utilize their lived experience to help others.

- **Long Term Care Members and Mental Health Needs**
Provide funding to develop a network of specialized providers to respond to adults and children enrolled in Wisconsin long term care programs who are in crisis. Wisconsin's long term support system is lacking in crisis resources for people experiencing mental and behavioral health challenges. The default support is the emergency room or the Winnebago Mental Health Institute, neither of which are appropriate for people with IDD or for people with mental health conditions that do not require that extreme level of intervention. Funding to create a system of subacute respite facilities and nimble crisis response teams would ensure more appropriate and humane care and be far less expensive.
- **First Episode Psychosis**
Provide grant funding to allow additional Wisconsin counties to offer Coordinated Specialty Care for those experiencing a first episode of psychosis. Individuals with a mental illness that includes psychosis, often experience their first episode of psychosis between 15 and 25. It can be very confusing and scary for the young person experiencing this. Coordinated Specialty Care helps the young person and their family to quickly get the services and supports they need for recovery, and has been very successful in Wisconsin.
- **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)**
Implement the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health proposal to support Dialectical Behavioral Therapy DBT services in Wisconsin. DBT is an intensive outpatient mental health treatment that is evidence based and is effective in treating people who are at risk of suicide. Wisconsin's suicide rate has consistently been above the national suicide rate. Offering comprehensive DBT would reduce Wisconsin's suicide rates, improve access to underserved individuals, and mitigate the current demands on our crisis, law enforcement, and hospital systems.
- **Access to Mental Health Services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind**
Support efforts by the deaf community to allocate funding to increase access to linguistically and culturally appropriate mental health services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind individuals.

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