

LONG-TERM SUPPORT ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Background

Wisconsin has been a leader in providing long-term supports so people with disabilities and older adults get the help they need to stay in their homes and out of costly institutions. But the Family Care, IRIS, PACE and Family Care Partnership programs were capped in the state's budget last July. That means 15 counties have not yet been able to roll out the programs, and waiting lists now top 8,000.

An additional 2,000 children with disabilities are waiting for supports through the Children's Waivers.

Family Care and other long-term care programs provide daily supports to people with disabilities and older adults including help getting out of bed, eating meals, getting dressed, going to work and living in their own homes.

Talking Points

- If the cap isn't lifted, wait lists will grow to 16,000 people by mid-2013. Waiting lists lead to a rise in preventable, inappropriate, and expensive new admissions to nursing homes. Children with long-term needs under 18 as 18-21 year olds remain on the children's waivers into adulthood.
- The average cost of Family Care is \$2800 per month, compared with nearly \$5,000 a month for nursing home care and nearly \$4300/month for the legacy waivers (CIP/COP). Further cost savings in the long-term care programs depend on full roll out of Family Care/IRIS statewide.

Ask

- Lift the cap on enrollment in Family Care, IRIS, PACE and Family Care Partnership in the counties that have these programs. The Senate has passed a bill that would lift the caps and roll out the Family Care/IRIS/Partnership programs statewide. But the bill still needs an Assembly vote to lift the caps
- Continue expansion of Family Care statewide to continue saving money while allowing people with disabilities to live, work, and participate in their communities.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

Background

Survival Coalition supports integrated employment as the default outcome for people with disabilities. We assume that everyone can work in integrated jobs at the same variety of community businesses as anyone.

Talking Point

- Employment is a necessary activity for all adults, including people with disabilities, to be able to live in the community. Wisconsin is lagging behind other states in terms of the number of people with disabilities engaged in Integrated Employment (IE) and the wages earned by workers with disabilities.

Ask

- Support an “Employment First” policy across all state agencies and the organizations they fund. This means that community employment at minimum wage or higher is the preferred outcome of publicly funded services provided to citizens with disabilities.
- Make sure that everyone understands and implements the interagency agreement between the Department of Public Instruction, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Health Services so that planning for employment after school can begin by age 14.
- Make sure that all individuals with disabilities who want to work have information about their rights and assistance available to overcome barriers to integrated employment.

EDUCATION ISSUE

Background

This legislative session has included a lot of discussion around education reforms and other issues which have a great impact on students with disabilities. The Governor and Education Committee chairs in the Senate and Assembly have convened a Read to Lead (literacy) Council, a School Accountability Design Team, and are in the process of creating a College and Workforce Readiness Council. Finally, even though special education categorical aids were not changed in the recent state budget, overall cuts to public education are having an impact on students with disabilities in school districts across Wisconsin.

Talking points

- Wisconsin still has an achievement gap for students with disabilities. A recent survey of parents of children with disabilities shows that cuts to public education in the last budget are having a negative effect –their child is having a worse educational experience this year.
- Too many education reform discussions are happening without representatives of students with disabilities meaningfully at the table. Changes to school accountability rules, teacher licensure, effectiveness measures, etc. must take into account the learning needs of ALL students – including students with the most significant disabilities.
- Students with all range of disabilities must be prepared for college and the workforce. We must look at potential changes to how we train teachers and the expectations and quality in our transition programs.
- Voucher schools in Wisconsin do not currently serve students with disabilities well, or at all. A special needs scholarship must be adequately funded in order to actually provide a quality choice to a majority of parents.

Ask

- Please ensure that membership in the new Wisconsin College and Career Readiness Council and the Read to Lead Council (created in AB 558/SB 461) include an organization that represents ALL students with disabilities, including students with the most significant disabilities as well as a parent representative.
- Amend AB 558/SB461 (the literacy bills) to ensure that the literacy needs of ALL students with disabilities are addressed and that these students have access to necessary assistive technology and accommodations.

TRANSPORTATION

Background

State budget cuts to public transportation are starting to affect people with disabilities. The Legislature cut public transportation services by 10% in the 2011 – 2013 State budget. Now counties and municipalities throughout the state are reducing services and/ or increasing fares. Senate Bill 436, the Workplace Mobility Act, will restore funding for public transportation.

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau says the needed funds are available in the transportation fund. This bill will use approximately \$9.6 million of the \$32.9 million balance in the fund to restore the funding for the transportation people need to get to jobs.

Talking Points

- Public transportation services are very important to people with disabilities as many do not drive because of their disability or the expense of owning a car.
- Reduced funding for public transportation may mean a person with a disability cannot get to work or a care provider does not have transportation to get to someone's home and provide needed services.
- When public transportation services are cut, the independence of people with disabilities and their ability to live productive lives in the community is at risk.

Ask

- Please support Senate Bill 436 to restore the 10% cut in funding for public transportation, and help people with disabilities, care providers, and many others get to work.

MENTAL HEALTH PEER SPECIALISTS

Background

A Peer Specialist is a mental health professional paid position that is held by a mental health consumer who is in recovery. Peer Specialists are highly trained and certified by the State of WI to work directly with consumers and their Recovery Team.

For consumers of mental health services the support of Peer Specialists has proven to be one of the most effective strategies for achieving and maintaining recovery.

Peer Specialists provide support, understanding, personal advocacy and hope. Numerous studies demonstrate that Peer Specialists improve outcomes for consumers dramatically and reduce costs for the mental health system.

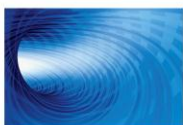
Talking Points

- The majority of agencies and organizations used by mental health consumers have not yet integrated Peer Specialists into the service system.
- The mental health system relies on expensive, often less effective treatment options such as psychiatrists, hospitals, and county-run crisis centers geared toward crisis management rather than crisis prevention and recovery.
- Peer Specialist services are a smart investment. Providers who integrate Peer Specialists into their service system should expect to see savings through lower personnel costs, fewer and shorter hospital stays, and reduced use of more expensive crisis oriented programs. Services provided by Certified Mental Health Peer Specialists may be covered by Medicaid and have the potential to bring in federal matching funds for community mental health services.

Ask

- Please mandate the hire of paid Peer Specialists throughout the mental health service delivery system and adjunct systems including Dept. of Corrections, Div. of Vocational Rehabilitation, Dept. of Health Services including Family Care and Partnership, Badger Care, and SSI Managed Care

REAL LIVES, REAL WORK, REAL SMART, WISCONSIN INVESTING IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



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