



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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October 25, 2013

The Survival Coalition of more than 30 disability organizations supports the recent efforts of the Center for Medicaid/Medicare Services (CMS) to further the implementation of the watershed federal court ruling from 1999 through the creation of a federal rule that aims to stop segregation of people with disabilities. This ruling also focuses Medicaid dollars spent by states on options that allow people with disabilities to live and work in their communities with people who do not have disabilities, while helping states manage their Medicaid budgets.

Survival Coalition finds it concerning that some facilities in the state are sending families of adults with disabilities inaccurate and fear-mongering information about this federal rule, saying their sons and daughters might lose their home or job because of CMS. Even if funding streams do change as a result of this rule, it will only happen through a planful process, not overnight. The rule will not have the impact of putting vulnerable people out on the street. To tell families such a thing is egregious and irresponsible – particularly by entities that receive state and federal Medicaid funding.

The Olmstead federal court decision (on which the CMS guidance is based) is not new. CMS is simply giving states more detailed guidance, based on its years of enforcement, on how to interpret a ruling that said segregating people with disabilities is not right. The federal rule will allow for a phase-in period for facilities to change their business model to a range of supports for people with disabilities to work in integrated jobs. Consider these facts:

- Many facilities in Wisconsin have already been successful in rebalancing and updating their business models, providing a true range of employment supports that include integrated employment supports. Here is a video with examples of Wisconsin facilities/CRP business owners that show how they have changed their business models: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xd3qgUwLHbw>
- Contrary to the alarming message from some facilities, many youth in Wisconsin get only one choice for employment when they leave high school: go to a facility and be dependent on full Medicaid funding for the rest of their lives. This is why we have a significant imbalance in Wisconsin's Medicaid funding streams to segregated employment settings that the rule will gradually begin to change. While other states have already begun the work to reduce the numbers of people with disabilities in segregated, sub-minimum wage settings in the last decade, Wisconsin has actually experienced an increase of more than 1,000 individuals in the past 5 years. This is an

expensive model to sustain with public dollars.

- Despite the fact that 57 counties have Family Care/IRIS programs that will pay for more efficient community-based employment supports, as of April 2013, only 8% of the 28,000 working-age adults in Family Care and 4% of the 9,000 IRIS participants are employed in integrated employment. This compares to the state of Washington, where 80% of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities are in integrated employment.
- Wisconsin spends 2.6 times the amount of dollars on pre-vocational and day service supports for individuals with disabilities than it does on integrated employment supports.
- Increasingly, individuals with disabilities – and particularly youth coming out of Wisconsin high schools – say they want to work in the community in a variety of occupations: child care, retail/service, pet/animal care, landscaping/gardening, etc. and earn enough money to reduce their reliance on public benefits. Segregated facilities do not offer these types of employment experiences or choices.
- Even people with significant disabilities can and want to work at jobs in the community that are a match for their strengths and skills. Until Wisconsin Medicaid funding shifts to a new balance, this will not happen and people who want to work alongside friends without disabilities will remain trapped in an old model.

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