



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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A New Year's Message from the Disability Community: Looking Forward

As 2014 approaches, we continue to work toward a better future for people with disabilities. 2014 will bring opportunities to make real progress on achieving the vision that many people with disabilities, their families, and their supporters have been working toward for years. People with disabilities are our neighbors, our relatives, and friends. But for too long and for too many people, the presence of a disability has closed off opportunities that most of us take for granted.

In the coming months, we expect changes at the state and federal level that will set out a different way to think about how we support people with disabilities. Specifically you may have heard about a federal ruling that encourages less segregation for people with disabilities and a new focus by Wisconsin Department of Health Services on the type of employment (integrated employment) that is healthier for people.

These changes will help people with disabilities achieve independence and self-sufficiency and break through the barriers of poverty and isolation. Old ways of thinking will be challenged by these new directions. But these changes will bring opportunities to directly and positively improve the choices and lives of people with disabilities. These are the changes for which many people with disabilities and their families have been waiting. As the Secretary of Wisconsin's DHS recently said: integrated employment of our youth with disabilities in the future is essential to the fiscal viability of our state's long-term care investments.

We have a lot to celebrate from the advances made in 2013. More businesses are recognizing the skills and contributions that people with disabilities bring to the workplace as an asset to Wisconsin's workforce. More people with disabilities are becoming valued employees and co-workers in businesses across the state and succeeding at many types of jobs within our communities, and even are starting their own businesses. Wisconsin has strengthened its investment in programs that will connect more people with disabilities into jobs in their community.

Wisconsin can continue to be a leader in the way it supports its residents with disabilities. We can set policies that will empower people with disabilities to be engaged and included in our communities.

We invite you to get to know a person with a disability in 2014, hire them at your business, include them in your community. We are better together.

Thank you for joining us in believing in the capacity, contributions, and abilities of people with disabilities.

We are looking forward, and hope you will too.

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

Sincerely,

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Survival Coalition Issue Teams: education, employment, housing, long term care for Adults, long term care for children, mental health, transportation, workforce, voting, Medicaid and health care.

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Investing in People with Disabilities