

March 2015

SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

ISSUE:

About 3000 children and youth with significant disabilities and their families are waiting for essential supports, such as specialized equipment or home modifications. The wait for children ranges from 1 to 8 years depending on where a family lives.

BACKGROUND:

Children and youth with significant disabilities can have extraordinary needs that require unique supports so families and their children can fully participate and benefit from the typical community experiences that all children enjoy. Families who are well informed and have access to supports can play key roles in identifying and securing opportunities for their children and youth with disabilities.

Waiting for services means missed opportunities for: cognitive, physical and behavioral development, and learning skills for independence. An inability to meet less costly needs now can lead to expensive crises and higher future costs, in addition to significant stress for families.

SURVIVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Reduce wait lists** by 1000 children. Ensure that new funding is equitable to address the needs of all children, regardless of specific disability or diagnosis.
- The proposed **consolidation of Family Support and COP** into one program must reflect the values and philosophy of the current Family Support Program; keep the focus on supporting

the family, not just the child; and maintain the current flexibility and choice of supports to meet the needs of diverse families. Family Support funding must be earmarked for this purpose.

- **Provide short -term assistance** to waiting families. Some families say having a person who can help them navigate supports is their primary need. This assistance assures access to information on a broad range of school, community and private sources of supports and services.
- **Build on efficiencies** experienced in counties using a single point of entry for eligibility. COMPASS Wisconsin Threshold (now only available in 13 counties) has improved families' access to information and supports and has streamlined the eligibility process for families in need. Wisconsin should expand this efficient single-point-of-entry model statewide.
- **Reduce Medicaid administrative costs**, delays in service for children and stress for families by reducing the frequency of repetitive reviews for services deemed medically necessary.
- Direct DHS to work with stakeholders to **develop specific family outcome** measures and implement a family-based outcomes survey that will be used to improve supports to children and families.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT SURVIVAL
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