

WI State Budget - Proposed Elimination of the Family Support Program

The Family Support Program is a very popular and effective program that provides a small amount of funding to support families and children with significant disabilities. **The Governor's budget proposes to eliminate the Family Support Program and create a new Children's COP (Community Options Program).** The existing COP program, managed by counties, was designed for adults with disabilities and frail elders. Turning Family Support into a COP program offers administrative efficiencies for counties, but does not appear to improve supports to families. For a Children's COP to be beneficial to families and children with significant disabilities the proposal must address the following:

1. Keep the focus on supporting the entire family, not just the child with disabilities;
2. Maintain the current flexibility and choice of supports to meet the needs of diverse families and;
3. Preserve current program funding for the purpose of Family Support;

What Can You Do?

Educate Your Legislator and Joint Finance Committee members about why Family Support is important.

To Find your legislator go to: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/> and type your address under "Find My Legislators" or call this toll-free number: 1-800-362-9472.

1. As the name says, Family Support was designed to support families, while COP was designed to support adults. The current budget language does not mention families!
ASK: Support revisions to the proposed language to reflect a focus on supporting children **and their families.**
2. The Family Support Program offers maximum flexibility for supports and services to meet the diverse needs of families such as: after school care for an older child; special supplies and equipment; or education for the family to provide medical cares for their child.
ASK: Support changes in the language that maintains this flexibility.
3. Current budget language instructs DHS to "seek a waiver of Medicaid law to obtain federal funding for Children's COP". If Children's COP became a Medicaid waiver it would become significantly less flexible than the current Family Support Program and would also duplicate the existing Children's Medicaid waivers.
ASK: Remove the "Medicaid authority" language for Children's COP from the budget bill.

Tell your story! Sharing your family story helps a legislator understand, in plain language, what the Family Support Program does for families. When you talk with your legislator be sure to share information about the types of supports your family needs and the ways Family Support has helped you.