



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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New Survey Shows Dire Impact of Wisconsin's Direct Care Workforce Crisis

The results of a new direct care consumer survey released Tuesday by the Survival Coalition show Wisconsin is experiencing a crisis-level shortage of direct care workers. These workers, which include personal care, home health and therapy aides, make it possible for people with disabilities and older adults to lead safe, healthy and independent lives in the community.

"We heard from over 500 people living in all corners of the state, and it is clear that the direct care workforce crisis is posing serious threats to their health and safety," said Survival Co-Chair Beth Swedeen. "People told us they are missing work, doctor's appointments, meals and medications because they can't find workers."

Survival Coalition surveyed people who depend on direct care services and their family members about the impact the workforce crisis is having on their lives. Overwhelmingly, respondents said they cannot find enough workers to meet their needs. Eighty-five percent of people surveyed said they don't have enough workers to fill their shifts, and 95% of people said it is either "Very Hard" or "Somewhat Hard" to find direct care workers. About 43% of people say they can't find a worker for seven or more shifts each month.

"The workforce crisis is forcing people to choose between living in the community or moving to a more expensive nursing home or institution," said Survival Coalition Co-Chair Maureen Ryan. "Roughly 1 in 5 people said they are thinking about moving out of an apartment or community living arrangement due to the workforce crisis."

As part of the survey, Survival Coalition asked respondents to provide personal stories about how the workforce crisis is impacting their lives.

"We received heartbreaking stories from individuals across the state that have been left in their wheelchair overnight, suffered falls, spent the entire day in their bed or considered

suicide because the workforce crisis is leaving them without the supports they need,” said Survival Co-Chair Kit Kerschensteiner. “Family members are also leaving the workforce or retiring early to take care of their loved ones fulltime because they are concerned for their safety.”

Survival Coalition calls on the Governor and the Wisconsin State Legislature to address the direct care workforce crisis.

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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