



## State COVID-19 legislation must reflect needs of people with disabilities

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(MADISON) – State lawmakers may take up legislation **as soon as Tuesday to respond to the COVID-19 crisis**. It is important that the needs of people with disabilities are reflected in COVID-19 decisions and funding.

Survival Coalition reviewed the Legislative Summary of the COVID-19 response bill, and sent a [letter to legislative leaders](#) with questions and recommendations.

85,000 people rely on home and community-based services (HCBS)--Family Care, IRIS, CLTS and personal cares--to stay in their homes and out of expensive Medicaid funded institutional settings. Congress has not provided enough support for the workers and small business that provide these critical services people need to live and work in the community.”

The COVID-19 pandemic makes continuation of HCBS services even more critical for high risk populations--like older adults and people with disabilities--to help them self-isolate and prevent spread of COVID-19

Wisconsin also must ensure home and community-based provider organizations and workers do not go out of business or lose their jobs because of the COVID-19 crisis, and can start up as soon as the public health emergency has passed.

“Legislation must allow DHS to apply for Medicaid waivers and bring in additional federal money to help respond to COVID-19,” said Beth Swedeen, Survival Co-Chair. “Legislators should ensure that enough of those extra dollars are directly going to support constituents in Family Care, IRIS, and CLTS, provider organizations, and the overtime, hazard pay, and protective equipment for direct care and home health workers.”

“Many families are filling in caregiving gaps as best they can, while working from home and homeschooling young family members. They are unsure of what will happen when more people get sick,” said Lisa Pugh, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. “Legislation should temporarily change the Family Medical Leave Act policy so family members can care for siblings, grandparents, and people with disabilities whose normal daily supports have changed because of COVID-19.”

“The legislature must reconvene and take action, but we need to pass a clean bill that is focused on COVID-19,” said Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. “This is not the time to make broad changes to unrelated policy, including giving the Joint Finance Committee more power or reducing training hours for Certified Nursing Assistants.”



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

Survival Coalition is conducting a second survey of people with disabilities and older adults to hear from real people about their questions, concerns, and emerging issues that are occurring because of the COVID-19 crisis.

Survival Coalition will be releasing full results this week.

Of the hundreds of responses gathered so far, here is a preview of some of the personal experiences people are sharing from across the state.

*I have a personal attendant that comes to help with showers on a regular basis, but they haven't been able to come for almost a month because of worries about spreading the virus. —Julie, Eau Claire*

*We already feel like we are third rate citizens and we are so worried we are going to be denied a ventilator if we go in and test positive, because of our disabilities. — Jason, Eau Claire*

*In the coming weeks we are worried about losing care workers we have hired to support our family, our son being isolated from his support network/community, and losing progress that has been made in therapy and daily living skills. —Kelli, Dane County*

*My primary concern is what will happen if I am not able to care for him [my son] due to having to self-isolate at home or am hospitalized. —Michelle, Bayfield County*

*My daughter Chloe is non-verbal and has a significant cognitive delay. She typically has after school Care one on one and respite services. Currently she is home 24/7 and we have no supports. It is very difficult to care for her and work at the same time. — Sara, Outagamie County*