Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

Provider Survey

May 2020

Higher Costs, Less Revenue, Uncertain Future

Hundreds of providers of disability services, located throughout all regions of Wisconsin, offer supports that range from personal care in people's homes, to coaching in community jobs, daily living skills training, prevocational and day activities, residential services and other supports for people with disabilities. These primarily small businesses are economic engines within their communities, providing jobs and benefits to direct support professionals and others while also supporting people with disabilities and older adults to live and work in their communities and remain healthy. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for these organizations. Some of these businesses indicate they may not survive. **Fewer providers in Wisconsin will amplify provider shortages that already exist and may result in people not getting needed supports and services.**

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations issued a survey in May 2020 to gauge what is happening to Wisconsin's provider network.

Survey Makeup: 504 responses

80% (403) are small businesses serving under 100 long-term care participants

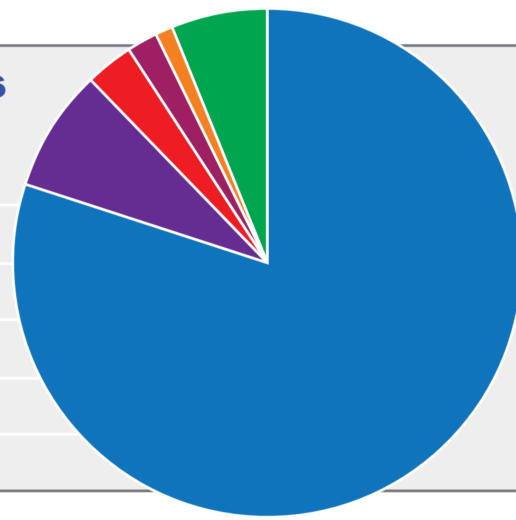
8% (40) serve 100-200

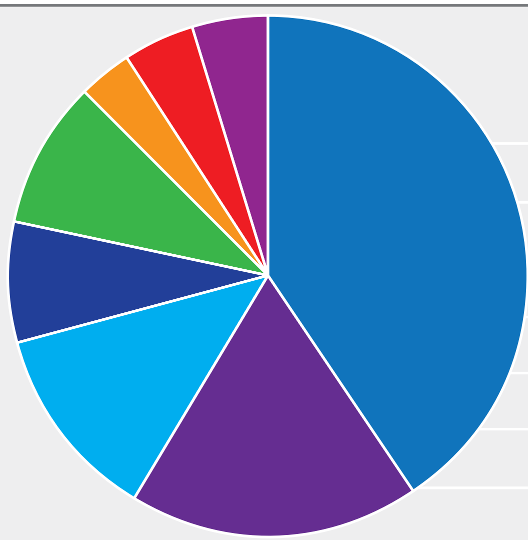
3% (15) serve 200-300

2% (10) serve 300-400

1% (6) serve 400-500

6% (30) serve 500 or more





Provider Type[1]

71% residential services

32% provide supportive home care services

21% day supports

13.5% pre-vocational supports

16% supported employment

5.5% vocational futures planning

8% provide fee for service/personal care (Medicaid)

8% provide children's long-term care supports

[1]The service providers who responded to this survey may be offering their services through a variety of state and federal funded programs including, but not limited to Family Care, Family Care Partnership, IRIS, the Children's Long-Term Support waiver or county mental health programs.

Findings:

Added Expenses: 72% are experiencing increased costs of doing business.

Categories of added costs include:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, over-time pay, staff training, additional food costs, new staff, hazard or incentive pay, increased staff ratios because participants are stressed or are now served in smaller groups.

Decreased Revenues: While more people who are high-risk are staying at home, providers have not been able to bill for typical services.

- Pre-COVID, 43% had revenue of $10,000/month or less; now 54% have revenue of $10,000 or less.
- Pre-COVID 6.4% had revenue over $400,000/month; now 4% bill at over $400,000/month.

Service Changes: Some providers have received authorization to offer their services to people with disabilities virtually, where possible.

- 7.2% are getting full funding to provide virtual services.
- 4.8% are getting partial funding to provide virtual services.
- 6% are waiting to hear if they have approval to provide virtual services.

Future Sustainability: Nearly one-fifth of providers are unsure if they can remain in business when the Safer at Home restrictions are lifted due to the ongoing challenges and risks of the continuing pandemic.

- 18.5% say they are not sure or not at all confident that their business is sustainable.
- 25.7% responded they are neutral that their business is sustainable.
- Only 21% say they are very confident their business is sustainable.

Recommendations:

- Identify home and community-based providers as essential health care workers.
- Ensure direct care workers are prioritized for PPE.
- Increase provider reimbursements to reflect added costs.
- Provide relief funding to bridge the impact on service revenue and business models.
- Issue guidance on appropriate reopening practices for settings serving people with disabilities.
- Continue to fund virtual supports to provide personal choice in service delivery once Safer at Home restrictions are lifted.
- Ensure long-term care participants have adequate technology to access necessary virtual supports.

Quotes from Providers:

The Coronavirus pandemic and the associated restrictions have had a significant impact on our staff and the people we support. There have been decreases in morale, mental and physical health, mental stimulation and social connections and opportunities. Anxiety and depression levels have increased as have behavioral issues. Social isolation, persistent changes in daily routines and limited availability to therapies have only served to exacerbate these issues.

We have higher expenses. We have fewer employees, but increased overtime, increased unemployment, increased costs of disinfecting and PPE supplies, and lost revenue due to adult family home openings not being filled due to no contact orders.

When we do start up there will be a significant cash flow problem due to emptying savings to get by. We won't see reimbursement of services for weeks after we begin but still have employee payroll and other expenses.