

MARCH 2014

ADULT LONG TERM CARE

ISSUE:

Survival Coalition advocates for a community-based support system that allows eligible adults to live inclusive lives in the community with individualized and appropriate services to meet their needs.

BACKGROUND:

Wisconsin's system of Long Term Supports helps people with disabilities and elderly residents maintain better health and independence through personal care and support/services in individual homes, and other community-based settings. Nursing homes and other institutional settings are a more costly way to provide care. Long term care supports available through Medicaid assist people with daily tasks—like dressing, bathing, meals, household chores and tasks, getting ready for work, transportation—and management of chronic health conditions, allowing them to stay in their homes and avoid costly institutional care

SURVIVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Provide equity in Long Term Care Service Statewide.** A December 2013 DHS report to the Joint Finance Committee clearly demonstrates that providing Family Care statewide reduces the growth of state spending by \$34.7 million over the next ten years and eliminates a 1600 person, 15 county wait list. Family Care expansion creates equity in long-term care supports statewide while saving taxpayer dollars. **Provide Family Care/IRIS to the remaining 15 counties.**
- In times of acute mental health or health care crisis, a lack of community support capacity is resulting in people with long-term care needs being placed and treated in costly institutional settings. Some people with complex mental health needs are being involuntarily committed,

and are held indefinitely in costly mental health institutions because there are no appropriate community supports available through long-term care providers in their community. **Direct DHS to provide added funding to create community supports that long-term care providers can access to return individuals with complex needs to the community.**

- **Right-size remaining institutions for developmentally disabled.** It is time for Wisconsin to follow the lead of other states, and wisely use the funding for institutions. Evidence is clear that living in the community is preferred by individuals and more cost effective for taxpayers. **Combine Southern and Central Centers, develop a plan for transitioning current residents into the community, and reinvest in quality community supports.**
- **Improve careers for Personal Care Workers.** Increase the Medical Assistance Personal Care rate to ensure providers' abilities to keep pace with rising operational costs, and to specifically provide direct care workers with competitive wages and benefits. Average reimbursement rates are now 15% below actual provider costs related to worker wages and benefits. The industry's last rate increase was 1.5% in 2008.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT SURVIVAL

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Visit the Survival web site at:
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**Real Lives, Real Work, Real Smart, Wisconsin
Investing in People with Disabilities**

March 2014

INCREASE 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 appreciates the Governor and Legislature's support for services to children with serious emotional disturbances.

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.
- **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** 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. The survey would: a) identify gaps in family knowledge and gaps in the types of services currently needed by and provided to families; b) create a continuous quality improvement process for children with significant disabilities.

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INCREASING EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Survival Coalition supports integrated employment as the first and preferred outcome of public programs for people with disabilities. We believe everyone can work in integrated jobs at minimum wage or higher with the right job fit and right supports

ISSUE:

People with disabilities can and do work and contribute in their communities. Survival Coalition thanks the Governor's office and Legislature for the \$14 million additional commitment to Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and funding of Individual Placement and Supports (ISP) to increase the number of people with mental illness in integrated employment. Survival also appreciates the Governor's commitment to training workers with disabilities, which he announced through his Better Bottom Line initiative. Yet, the employment rate for people with disabilities in Wisconsin is less than a third of the general population. People with disabilities who do work make 30% less than the general workforce and 27% live in poverty.

Wisconsin can do better. Other states have found that employment rates for people with disabilities can go up with the right public policies.

SURVIVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Require State programs to set employment performance targets that support people with disabilities to show continued improvement.

- Require annual reporting to the Legislature by state agencies of their progress toward improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.
- Strengthen statewide funding for programs that result in improved integrated employment outcomes, such as Individual Placement and Support for people with mental health disabilities.
- Change State statutes to allow private businesses to benefit from state contracts by including businesses with integrated workforces and small businesses owned by people with disabilities to participate in state use contracting programs.
- Develop a business-to-business technical assistance system in which businesses wanting to hire people with disabilities can connect with more experienced businesses that are already benefitting from hiring people with disabilities.

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EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Wisconsin and federal law guarantee children with disabilities a free and appropriate public education. Often, however, these children do not receive the supports and services they need to be successful.

ISSUE:

Wisconsin must invest in ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, are college and workforce ready. This means taking targeted steps to reduce achievement gaps, increasing funding to keep pace with costs, and ensuring transparent and fair accountability across all educational options.

BACKGROUND:

According to the Department of Public Instruction:

- In 2011, just 6% of 8th graders with disabilities scored proficient on the reading assessment compared to 33% of peers.
- In high school math, only 8% of students with disabilities were proficient compared to 44% of peers.
- Nearly half of all students with intellectual disabilities spend more than 40% of their school day outside the regular classroom where research shows students have the best outcomes.
- Students with disabilities are only graduating or completing high school at a rate of 68%, compared with the statewide general graduation rate of 87.5%.

There are tremendous costs when students with disabilities leave high school without adequate preparation for competitive employment or postsecondary education. Adults with disabilities have an employment participation rate of only 18.7%, compared with 68.3% for those without disabilities.

Over the last two decades, the state's share of special education funding has dropped from 44% to 26%. Maintaining the same level of categorical aid, while special education costs continue to rise, shifts the funding source for essential special education supports to general aids and property taxes.

SURVIVAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Increase the state's share of special education funding** from 26% to 44%.
- **Increase the state's commitment for high-cost special education** (pupils who cost more than \$30,000 annually to educate) from 43% to 55%.
- **Oppose Special Needs Voucher/Scholarship proposals that do not ensure parent rights and drain funds from public schools.** Instead, fix discriminatory open enrollment practices.
- **Support a robust school accountability system.** Use a uniform definition of disability across all school options so parents can adequately compare outcomes. Include multiple strong performance measures as supported by Accountability Design Team and address discrimination by requiring reporting of numbers of students turned away from voucher, charter or open enrollment due to disability.

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