



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor's Budget Finds the Balance
But Some Adjustments Needed to Disability-Related Programs

Madison, March 23, 2009. As the Joint Finance Committee begins its hearings on the Governor's budget the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organization wishes to commend the Governor for recognizing the need to continue to expand community-based options for people with all types of disabilities. Community-based care is not only cost effective and favored by people with disabilities, it is also the law. In particular we commend the Governor for the following:

- Measured expansion of ADRCs and Family Care to a number of additional counties.
- The addition of 1000 new long-term support slots for children with disabilities over the coming four years.
- Pursuing a 1915(i) Medicaid state plan amendment to fund community-based mental health services.
- Voluntarily relocating 100 people from Southern Wisconsin Center.

Survival Coalition also supports the Governor's effort to use both revenue enhancement and spending cuts to balance the budget. Given the current economic situation relying on only cuts could be devastating to the values that Wisconsin embraces.

Nonetheless, there are a few areas where Survival Coalition would like to see modifications in the Governor's proposals:

- The budget fails to address, or delays implementation of, critical aspects of the Family Care program, including failure to adjust the rates for ADRCs, delaying the ability of Milwaukee County to move people off of their waiting lists, and inadequately funding the Family Care Ombudsman program. These oversights could undermine the ability of this program to meet its goals. Furthermore, while the expansion of Family Care is slowed down there is no increase in long-term care funding for those counties that will not become part of Family Care.
- While providing additional funds for community-based mental health services the Governor also added a new requirement for counties to pay the state share of the cost for placements at the two mental health institutes. As constructed, we believe these provisions move too much risk to counties before providing adequate funding for counties to develop their capacity for community-based care.
- The Governor's proposal for a 56% cut in GPR funding for Independent Living Centers (ILCs) will be devastating for a large number of the ILCs in Wisconsin and is based on faulty assumptions about the ability of ADRCs and disability ombudsmen to provide some of the services now being provided by ILCs.

Survival Coalition will develop specific proposals to address these issues. In doing so, we are mindful of the broader budget picture.

Survival Coalition also has concerns about some other areas where there are holes in the budget: \$143 m. in unspecified savings to the Medicaid program, inadequate new funding for special education, and less than adequate funding for specialized transportation services. We urge the members of the committee to make sure to examine these areas where new federal funds may help to fill the holes but are not clarified in the budget.