

Next Steps for Families

- Participate in the **Legislator in Your Living Room** effort in March. Find out when your legislator will be in the home district and invite him/her over for coffee. Ask other families to join you. Share your personal stories and introduce your children.
- Sign up for the DAWN network for the latest updates on disability issues – www.dawninfo.org. To receive specific Family Action Network information on children's issues, e-mail Liz Hecht at hecht@waisman.wisc.edu.
- Connect with your county People Can't Wait Coalition: Call (877) 272-8400 or e-mail Dennis Harkins at dwharks@aol.com.
- Look for trainings on communicating with your legislator coming to your region in March or April. Check for locations and dates at: http://www.dawninfo.org/co/com_people_cant_wait.cfm

Next Steps for Legislators

- Contact the Wisconsin Survival Coalition for more detailed information on disability issues. Lynn Breedlove, Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy: lynnb@w-c-a.org or 608-267-0214.
- Read the full Survival Coalition Children and Families issue paper located at: www.dawninfo.org/co/sc/sur_issues.cfm
- Call your county Family Support Program coordinator and ask to meet families who participate in this program.

END WAITING LISTS FOR FAMILY SUPPORT!

Next Steps



There's No Place Like Home

The Family Support Program, which provides resources and support to families to allow them to stay together and have a better quality of life while raising a child with significant disabilities, needs your help.

The program, created in 1986, is drastically under funded. Currently there are an estimated 3300 families waiting for help in Wisconsin. That means there are more families on waiting lists than are receiving support.

Some families will wait up to seven years to receive the assistance they may need to keep a job, maintain their health, or simply keep a child at home with his or her parents.

We need legislators to understand this issue now, before making critical budget decisions that will affect families for the next two years.

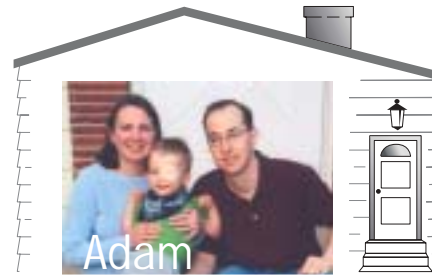
Please, take a moment to read this flyer and consider ways that you might create a better future for families in Wisconsin.

*- There's No Place Like Home Campaign
A group of committed parents & advocates*

The Facts...

- The Family Support Program provides a small amount of money, up to \$3,000/year, for families to meet the unique needs of a child with a significant disability.
- Currently 3300 families are waiting for this support. (The program serves approximately 2500 families.)
- Many Wisconsin families will wait seven years for support.
- 56% percent of families raising children with disabilities report financial hardship related to the care of their child.
- 54% of caregivers stopped working or reduced hours to care for a child.
- Dozens of families have been forced to place their children in foster care or other out-of-home situations due to lack of support.
- Families need and have a right to this support.
- Wisconsin is ready to redesign services for families and children with disabilities in a cost-effective manner!
- The 2001 Legislative Council Study Committee supported redesigning the system of long-term supports for children with disabilities.
- Wisconsin has the opportunity to generate new federal revenue - 6 federal dollars to every 4 state dollars - by launching Children's Redesign now.
- Children's Redesign promises improved access and coordination of services. Funding waiver slots helps some families on Family Support. As waiver slots are funded, less will be needed for the Family Support wait list.
- Supporting families raising children with disabilities at home is good for the children, good for the economy and good for Wisconsin!

\$5.1 MILLION NEW STATE DOLLARS FOR EACH YEAR OF THE BUDGET IS NEEDED TO SERVE THE 3300 FAMILIES ON THE WAITING LIST.



“One of the most challenging aspects of raising a child with special needs is the financial strain it has put on our family. ..If we had family support money, we would be able to build a ramp for our house so that Adam could use an electric wheelchair in our home.” - Adam’s family (on a 3-year waiting list.)

“Erika is fed with a feeding tube, and we want so badly for her to eat someday. We have a narrow window of time to do this and would like to take her to a national feeding clinic where they wean children from tubes. At this time, we simply can’t afford this.” – Erika’s family (on a 5-year waiting list.)



“Tanya...demands that I spend more time, effort and money to encourage her development...The FSP has helped me purchase equipment ...books on tape ...nutritional supplements and respite... It’s a win-win situation when you have families like us raising our children with disabilities at home. - Mother of Tanya



Where Will We Get The \$?

We understand there is a severe budget crisis, but we also see a variety of ways to fund the Family Support Program...

Wisconsin is missing a huge opportunity to **capture federal dollars** to assist families raising children with special needs. The Department of Health and Family Services is prepared to submit a waiver, which will generate new federal dollars. Consider using Intergovernmental Transfer (IGT) funds as the state match for the waiver. Fully funding Family Support, and obtaining these federal dollars, can serve more families in critical need.

Wisconsin not only ranks low in accessing federal dollars to serve individuals with disabilities, the state also **over relies on institutional care** – an extremely costly alternative. Disability advocates, including folks who have lived in institutions, strongly recommend the **closing of the state centers** and using the savings that result to serve children and families in the community.

Finally, if any program is considered for an increase in this budget session, we think **kids and families need to be a priority.**

The Facts...