

INDEPENDENCE IS A WISE INVESTMENT

A CALL TO ACTION FROM THE SURVIVAL COALITION



SURVIVAL COALITION

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

Priorities for Wisconsin's 2005-2007 Budget for People with Disabilities

OUR VISION OF A BETTER WISCONSIN:

All people with disabilities receive the support they need, choose to live their lives as they wish, and are full participants in community life.

A SYSTEM IN TROUBLE

People with disabilities want to participate fully in community life. To do so, however, many need some form of assistance—from employment training and placement to help with the most intimate activities of daily living.

Unfortunately, the complex system that provides these community services has been largely ignored through multiple state budgets. The system is now in serious trouble. Chronic under-funding has created two big issues for people with disabilities and the community service system:

- Long waiting lists for services essential to the continued community participation of children, adults and families; and
- Inadequate reimbursement rates to provider agencies, limiting their ability to deliver adequate wages and benefits to their workers.

Due to the State's insufficient investment, counties are forced to use scarce local tax dollars to cover services. As a result, worker turnover is unacceptably high and critical services continue to deteriorate.

The budget solutions outlined here are intended to address these fundamental barriers to independence for Wisconsin residents with disabilities.

THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT

The case for investment is simple: Serving people with disabilities in the community is more economical than institutional care (see graph, inside). Wisconsin benefits in a number of ways when waiting lists for community services are shortened and reimbursement rates for these services keep pace with costs.

When people with disabilities move off waiting lists and receive basic services:

- Those individuals—and those who care for them—once again participate in community life, often contributing to the economy and paying taxes.
- Family members who have had to eliminate or reduce work hours outside of the home can return to work or other activities.
- Vocational and residential staffs are employed.
- People with disabilities may be employed.
- State and local units of government can take advantage of available federal matching funds.

THE SURVIVAL COALITION OF WISCONSIN DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS

The Survival Coalition was formed in 1985 to organize statewide advocacy for people with disabilities.

Today we are the only statewide cross-disability network in Wisconsin. Our 50 member organizations represent and serve hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin residents with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and mental illness.

The budget concerns outlined here represent common ground among these diverse organizations and flow directly from the stated wishes of people with disabilities and their families.

We hope you will take action on one or more of these important issues.

**INVEST IN INDEPENDENCE.
SUPPORT A BUDGET THAT SUPPORTS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.**

REDUCE WAITING LISTS BY ONE-THIRD

People—not numbers—make up waiting lists. Each person on a waiting list represents not only herself or himself, but also a network of family and friends struggling to provide care for that person, often for years. The statistics are disheartening:

- **13,500** Wisconsin residents with disabilities, including children and senior citizens, are on waiting lists for basic services for which they are eligible. The wait can be up to **10 years**.

- **An unknown number** of people with mental illness are in need of critical community services. This includes an estimated 18,000 youth with serious emotional disturbances, **fewer than 2,500** of whom are currently served.

Reducing these waiting lists by one-third will require an increase in State spending of approximately \$7.2 million in fiscal year 2005–06 and \$31.9 million in 2006–07. An additional investment of \$20 million over those same two years would make a significant contribution toward the county match for Medicaid mental health services.

It doesn't make sense, however, to allocate state funding for more "slots" in community service programs where reimbursement rates leave nearly half of the actual cost of those services unfunded.

ENSURE THAT REIMBURSEMENT KEEPS PACE WITH COSTS

A remarkable 80% of State funds passed through to service agencies are used to support employees providing direct care

to people with disabilities. Unfortunately, the State's investment in the care these workers provide has remained stagnant over the last decade. Costs, however, have increased dramatically. This funding squeeze has left agencies with fewer dollars to fund adequate worker wages and benefits, particularly health

insurance. High worker turnover is one of the most troubling results.

Again, the statistics are disheartening:

- Daily reimbursement rate of Wisconsin's Community Integration (CIP) 1B waiver program: **2.8% increase since 1995**.
- Daily rate of Minnesota's comparable program since 1995: **26% increase**.
- Inflation since 1995: **23% increase**.
- Annual worker turnover in Wisconsin's community service system: **50%**.
- Annual turnover in all jobs across the U.S.: **20%**.

High turnover among direct care workers is extremely disruptive to those being served, as well as their families and support networks. For people with disabilities, these workers may mean the difference between independence and institutional care. Yet community care is far less costly (see graph at right).

Increasing the daily CIP 1B reimbursement rate from \$49.67 to \$64.00 (from 55% to 72% of actual costs) would require an additional \$8.9 million in the 2005–07 budget cycle.

This would be a very wise investment. For every \$1.00 Wisconsin allocates to this program, the federal government sends back \$1.43 in federal dollars. Thus, the State's two-year investment of \$8.9 million could prompt a federal investment of \$12.73 million.

WHO'S WAITING?

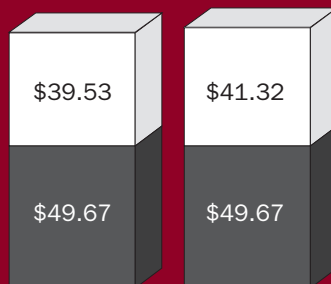
Community Integration Program (CIP) 1B <i>for people with developmental disabilities</i>	3,600
Community Options Program (COP) and COP Waiver <i>for people with physical disabilities</i>	3,200
Community Options Program (COP) and COP Waiver <i>for elderly people</i>	3,300
Family Support Program <i>for children with disabilities</i>	3,400
Community Mental Health Services <i>for children and adults with mental disorders</i>	UNKNOWN

Wisconsin Residents with Disabilities Waiting for Basic Services **13,500+**

REIMBURSEMENT SHORTFALL IS STAGGERING

DAILY SHORTFALL PER PERSON SERVED

Wisconsin CIP 1B reimbursement rate, 2004–05



—Projected Actual Daily Cost—
2005: \$89.20 2006: \$90.99

TRANSPORTATION

People with disabilities, particularly people with severe disabilities, cannot live independently in the community without transportation services. Access to employment, education, and health care are all affected by the availability of transportation for people with different mobility needs.

The State's investment in the Specialized Transportation Assistance Program for the elderly and disabled, however, is only a fraction of what is needed. Counties are forced to divert funds from other equally critical human services to make up the difference. Increasing the State's investment by \$7.5 million in each of the next two years would improve access to vital transportation services.

EMPLOYMENT

Wisconsin citizens with disabilities want to work and contribute to the state economy.

Unfortunately, funding for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Community Aids program, which provides supported employment for people with the most significant disabilities, are insufficient to support the tens of thousands of people with disabilities seeking vocational assistance each year.

An additional investment of \$2.0 million in 2005–06 and \$2.2 million in 2006–07 would facilitate the employment of thousands more Wisconsin citizens with disabilities.

EDUCATION

Most students with disabilities participate in regular education during a large part of the school day. For these students, the level of general school funding is extremely important. Wisconsin and the federal government also make targeted investments in special education. Unfortunately, the State has failed to increase special education funding significantly in five of the last six State budgets.

Both the Governor's Task Force on Education and Superintendent Burmaster recommend substantial increases in special education funding for the 2005–07 biennium. We recommend full funding of Superintendent Burmaster's budget proposal, including an investment in her High Cost Special Education Initiative.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

From "low tech" pencil grips, splints, and canes to "high tech" wheelchairs, computers, voice synthesizers, and Braille readers, "assistive technology" helps thousands of

Wisconsin residents with disabilities communicate, learn, work, play, and tackle activities of daily living.

The current need for assistive technology services—helping people select, acquire, and use these devices—far exceeds available funding. An additional investment of \$580,000 per year over the next two

years could dramatically improve access to assistive technology, enabling more people with disabilities to live independently in the community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

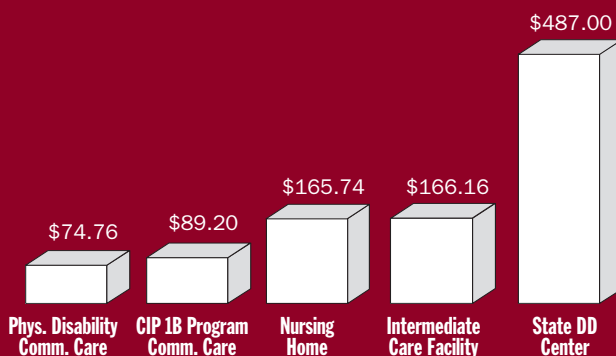
In addition to specific funding recommendations, we encourage the Legislature and Governor Doyle to capitalize on what works best in Wisconsin's community service system.

- Preserve a strong role for county government.
- Retain program flexibility to encourage creativity in service delivery.
- Maintain size limits on group homes.
- Extend the children's disability system redesign effort to more pilot counties.
- Increase funding for the new Children's Waiver.
- Make a long-term investment in the community mental health system.

The State has made considerable progress in supporting people with disabilities as they choose to live independently, but more can be done. We believe independence is a wise investment.

COMMUNITY CARE IS COST-EFFECTIVE

Projected daily costs in various settings, 2005



2005-2007 BUDGET GOALS

from the perspective of people with disabilities

Increase in General Purpose Revenue (GPR) Over 2004–05 Spending, in Millions

	Year 1 (2005–06)	Year 2 (2006–07)	Biennial Total
Reduce Community Integration Program (CIP) 1B waiting lists for people with developmental disabilities by one-third (at \$89.20/day in 2005, with inflationary increases in 2006 & 2007)	2.0	14.1	16.1
Reduce Community Options Program (COP) waiting lists for people with physical disabilities and elderly people by one-third	4.0	14.2	18.2
Reduce COP waiting lists for people with mental illness by one-third	0.8	2.3	3.1
Increase State funding for community mental health services	9.0	11.0	20.0
Reduce family support waiting lists by a third	0.4	1.3	1.7
Increase the reimbursement rate from \$49.67 to \$64.00/day for state-funded CIP 1B services currently being provided to 2,200 people with developmental disabilities	4.4	4.5	8.9
Increase Specialized Transportation Assistance Program funding	7.5	7.5	15.0
Fully fund Division of Vocation Rehabilitation programs to support employment for people with disabilities	2.0	2.2	4.2
Fund Superintendent Burmaster's proposed budget, including the "Keeping the Promise" High Cost Special Education Initiative	30.7	53.3	84.0
Improve access to assistive technology for people with disabilities across the state	0.6	0.6	1.2



50 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS, JANUARY 2005

- AARP–Wisconsin • ABC for Health, Inc. • Access to Independence •
- American Association on Mental Retardation, Wisconsin Chapter • Arc Dane County • ARC Milwaukee •
- Arc–Wisconsin Disability Association • Autism Society of Southeastern Wisconsin • Autism Society of Wisconsin •
 - Brain Injury Association of Wisconsin • Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups •
 - Community Alliance Providers of Wisconsin (CAPOW) • Community Living Alliance •
 - Creative Community Living Services, Inc. • Dane County Developmental Disabilities Coalition •
 - Epilepsy Foundation, South Central Wisconsin • Family Voices • Grassroots Empowerment Project •
 - Hearthstone • Independence First • Independent Living Resources • Kindcare, Inc. •
- Learning Disabilities Association of Dane County • Lutheran Social Services of WI & Upper Michigan •
 - Medical Support Services, Inc. • Mental Health Association of Milwaukee County •
 - Midstate Independent Living Consultants • NAMI Wisconsin, Inc. •
 - National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Wisconsin Chapter • Options for Independent Living •
- People First Wisconsin, Inc. • Rehabilitation for Wisconsin, Inc. • Residential Services Association of Wisconsin •
 - Respite Care Association of Wisconsin • Service Employees International Union Local 150 •
 - Society's Assets, Wisconsin • State Independent Living Council • Team Rehab, Inc. •
 - United Cerebral Palsy of Wisconsin • Waisman Center • Wisconsin ADAPT •
 - Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy • Wisconsin Coalition for Independent Living Centers •
- Wisconsin Council on Children and Families • Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities •
 - Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities • Wisconsin Facets • Wisconsin Family Ties •
 - Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association • Wisconsin Personal Services Association •

ADVOCACY MADE EASY

EVERYDAY ADVOCACY

You don't have to know everything about disability issues to be an effective advocate. Advocacy can mean speaking to a club, church or other organization about the needs of people with disabilities; it can mean writing a letter to the editor, attending a rally, or talking to your friends, neighbors or co-workers.

Telling your story is the most powerful way to help others understand and sympathize with disability issues.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Working to influence legislation—like the State budget—is easier than it sounds. Every letter, email, phone call, or visit is important. Here are some quick tips for making the most of the time you have your legislator's attention.

Before you write, call or visit, come up with a short, clear, and convincing message by answering as many of the following questions as you can.

Who are you?

- Include your name and whether you live in the legislator's district.
- If you're a member of an organization, like the Survival Coalition, be sure to say so.

What is your issue?

- Pick one issue that you care about.
- Describe it in no more than 2-3 sentences.

Why do YOU care?

- Why does this issue matter to you, your family, or your community? Why does it matter enough for you to write, call or visit? How does it affect your life or the lives of people you know?
- Tell a personal story, one from your heart.

Why should THEY care?

- Why should your listener care?
- What's happening in their community?

What do you want them to do about it?

- It's best to know specifically what you want them to do. If there's a bill, ask them to vote "yes" or "no." Otherwise, tell your legislator what you would want them to do if the issue came up.

For more advocacy tips, visit www.dawninfo.org.



HOW TO ACT

GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS

Attend town hall meetings, talk to them when you see them around town, participate in visits to the Capitol. Contact them from time to time with a word of thanks or a brief update. And, when you're really invested in an issue, schedule a meeting in person. Nothing demonstrates your commitment more than taking the time to meet face to face.

SEND A PERSONAL LETTER OR EMAIL

If you're writing about a particular bill or proposal, explain how this change could affect you or your family. Taking a few minutes to write a letter from the heart can make a big difference. While form letters aren't very effective, they are better than no message at all. Legislators read their mail!

CALL TO EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS

A personal call to your legislator carries a lot of weight. If your legislator isn't available when you call, ask to speak to the aide working on disability issues. Part of her/his job is to provide your legislator with important information, including input from the public.

REWARD GOOD WORK

Say thank you. If a legislator really makes a special effort on your behalf, try to recognize that by writing a letter to the editor of your local paper, sending a thank-you note, or acknowledging her/his contribution in front of a group. Remember, legislators are human, too. Treat them as you would like to be treated.

WHO ARE YOUR LEGISLATORS?

Here are the quickest, easiest ways to find out who your legislators are and to send email or leave a telephone message:



www.legis.state.wi.us



Wisconsin Legislative Hotline

1.800.362.9472 or 608.266.9960

My State Senator is: _____

Phone: _____

My State Representative is: _____

Phone: _____