

2019-2021 Biennial Budget Priorities for Wisconsinites with Disabilities

Disability Rights Wisconsin asks policy makers to support the following priorities for Wisconsinites with disabilities in the 2019-2021 Biennial Budget. These programs and services are vitally important to Wisconsin adults and children with disabilities and support opportunities to live, work, learn, and enjoy life in the community.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Every family deserves to be supported. Families of children with disabilities need not face waiting lists, barriers, or a lack of information about where to turn for help.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- Extend to every child with a significant disability a system that supports their development, fosters family life, and encourages full participation in community life by fully funding the Children's Long-Term Support program.
- Create a Family Support and Disability Resource Center to support children with disabilities and their families in accessing supports.
- Establish a Children's Benefit Specialist position at the county level to provide families with accurate information and provide assistance with applying for benefits, programs and services, and appealing denials.
- Expand the Child Psychiatry Consultation Program statewide.

EDUCATION

Children with disabilities have experienced an erosion of quality special education services due to flat funding for special education categorical aid over the last decade while costs have increased by 60%.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- Increase special education categorical aid by \$600 million dollars to bring the reimbursement rate from the 26% to 60% and end the decade long flat funding for school districts.
- Increase the mental health collaboration grants from \$3.25 million to \$10 million to fully fund.
- Provide \$44 million in categorical aid to increase pupil services staff and expand the original grant to cover other professionals besides social workers.
- Provide \$5 million to support students and families with training and support, which includes a new state program with peer parent specialists.
- Increase the transition readiness grant to provide \$5 million annually to prepare students with disabilities for community employment and independence after high school.

JUVENILE JUSTICE/CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Individuals with mental illness are overrepresented in our criminal justice systems.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- Involve community stakeholders in the Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake shutdown and restructuring of secure juvenile facilities.
- Small community-based facilities with a focus on evidenced-based approaches that will prepare youth to successfully live in the community as quickly as possible.
- Sufficient funding for safe and adequate facilities and appropriate staffing to provide ongoing programming.

MEDICAID

People with disabilities rely on a variety of Medicaid programs, including MAPP (Medicaid Purchase Plan) and long-term care programs. MAPP helps working adults with disabilities gain access to Medicaid but requires more staff and training. Children and older adults in long-term care programs rely on numerous providers to maintain their health and independence. The provider shortage in Wisconsin is acute and inadequate reimbursement rates are a cause.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- Sufficiently fund all Medicaid long term care programs to ensure children and older adults in these programs have access to qualified providers.
- Fund at least 3 DHS positions for implementation for MAPP changes created by the 2017-19 Wisconsin state budget.

MENTAL HEALTH

People need access to services and supports to address their mental health needs and support recovery.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- DHS create a state funded program to ensure access to mental health and substance use services in the language of Deaf Wisconsinites which includes a statewide mental health coordinator, peer specialist program, and clinical training and supervision.
- Reintroduce legislation that would fund Hopeline, a free text line that provides emotional support services for the state of Wisconsin.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Employment is an important part of life and every person who wants to work can work with the right support.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- Promote Individualized Placement and Support (IPS), an evidence-based model of supported employment that helps people with mental illness work throughout their recovery.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation programs are vital to an independent life in the community and allow people with disabilities to participate in their community and caregivers to provide care.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- Increase of 10% in transit and specialized transportation funding to counties and tribes and ongoing increases of at least 3.5% to account for the growth over the past five years and accelerating growth in the future.

SELF DETERMINATION

Ensure more people with disabilities retain their rights and have the support they need to make choices in their lives.



DRW RECOMMENDS:

- Ensure that guardianships imposed before a person's 26th birthday are reviewed at least once before the person turns 26.
- Ensure that guardians preserve their wards' rights by creating requirements that specify core topics in which all guardians of the person and estate must be trained.