

Disability Rights Wisconsin: 2025 - 2027 State Budget Priorities

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Crime Victim Services

\$66 million in general purpose revenues (GPR) over the biennium for crime victim services providers: Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is one of many victim service providers in Wisconsin impacted by massive federal funding cuts for fiscal year 2025; Disability Rights Wisconsin's annual award from federal funds went from \$872,000 to \$116,579, severely impacting the provider's ability to provide services to victims of crime. A significant investment by the State is required to maintain any kind of meaningful, statewide support for victims of crime, including people with disabilities.

Civil Legal Services

\$41 million in general purpose revenue funding annually to support civil legal aid services: Wisconsin is one of only 14 states that provides no financial support for civil legal aid from general purpose revenue. Access to civil legal services for the most vulnerable Wisconsinites, including people with disabilities, must be prioritized to ensure vital civil and human rights are protected.

Education

An increase of funding for special education aid to allow for a reimbursement rate of 90 percent: Wisconsin's current special education reimbursement rate is 31.5 percent, the second lowest rate in the nation. Wisconsin's special education students deserve the investment of the State in their education and to support their needs. Increasing state investment in special education will also allow local school districts to more fully designate the funding they contribute to our educational system to meet their local needs.

- The Department of Public Instruction's budget request included an increase of \$820,517,300 general purpose revenue in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,166,550,300 general purpose revenue in fiscal year 2027. This is to increase the reimbursement rate for special education expenditures to 75 percent in fiscal year 2026 and 90 percent in fiscal year 2027. The Governor's budget included more than \$542.9 million general purpose revenue in fiscal year 2025 to 2026 and more than \$587.8 million general purpose revenue in fiscal year 2026 to 2027 to increase the state's rate of reimbursement to a guaranteed 60 percent in each year of the biennium.

Employment

Ensure adequate state funding is allocated to draw down all available federal funds for vocational rehabilitation programs: In 2024, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation served over 30,000 individuals and partnered with more than 3,000 employers to meet labor force needs; nearly 50 percent of those served were under the age of 25. Rising demand for these services requires increased investment from the state to meet its 21.3 percent match.

Increase investment for Individual Placement and Support (IPS):

Only [20 counties](#) are currently providing Individual Placement and Support, a supported employment model that helps people with mental health and substance use disorders find and keep jobs of their choosing. Additional funding is needed to allow expansion into additional counties and move towards statewide access.

Guardianship Support

Increase funding for the Guardianship Support Center (GSC) by \$100,000 per fiscal year: Funding for this critical service has not increased in decades, and the need continues to increase. An investment of an additional \$100,000 would double the current amount of funding, which only supports one full-time staff position.

Long-Term Care

Sum-sufficient funding for the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) waiver:

The Children's Long Term Support waiver is a critical program for many families across the state to meet the needs of their child in their home, school, and community. Sum-sufficient funding is needed to ensure adequate support for kids in this program and parity with Wisconsin's adult long term care programs.

Adequate funding for the Department of Health Services' Division of Quality Assurance (DQA):

The Division of Quality Assurance should have adequate funding to regulate the currently regulated residential settings and to include 1-2 bed Adult Family Homes under the Division of Quality Assurance's authority, and for additional staff in the Division of Quality Assurance's Office of Caregiver Quality to allow for a 25% investigation rate.

Mental Health

Additional investment in school-based mental health services: The mental health needs of students across Wisconsin are well-documented, and significant investment is needed to ensure Wisconsin's schools can support the students they serve in a meaningful and impactful way.

- Disability Rights Wisconsin supports the request of the Department of Public Instruction and the Governor's recommendation for an increase of approximately \$167M in general purpose revenue over the biennium in funding for school districts and independent charter schools that provide in- and out-of-school time mental health services and programs for students, with reimbursements provided in an amount up to the greater of \$100 per pupil or \$100,000 per school district and independent charter school.

Supporting increased access to mental health services: Disability Rights Wisconsin supports expansion of mental health programs that are voluntary, peer-run or peer-supported, and focused on local or regional services closer to where people live.

- Specifically, **Disability Rights Wisconsin requests the State fund the nonfederal share of the Medicaid Community Support Programs (CSP)** which is currently funded by counties. This would allow counties to maintain Community Support Programs and use county funds to improve the quality of the programs to ensure evidence-based treatment, rehabilitation, and support is provided for participants. The Governor's budget estimates approximately \$41 million in general purpose revenue would be needed over the biennium to support this change.

Transportation

Increase §85.21 and §85.215 specialized transportation funding by 10% and incorporate annual inflationary increases for both programs: These programs provide transportation options for many individuals with disabilities who do not drive, especially in rural areas of the state. Additionally, allocate additional funding for these programs to fund transportation for voting-related activities.

Provide funding to review and address the physical and programmatic accessibility of Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) sites: At minimum, funding should be designated to address the 11 Department of Motor Vehicles customer service centers in Wisconsin that are not fully accessible.

Voting

Increase funding by 20 percent (\$9700) for the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) Accessibility Review and Supply Program: The Wisconsin Elections Commission and Disability Rights Wisconsin continue to receive reports of accessibility issues in polling places across Wisconsin. This program both supports accessibility reviews of polling places to identify issues and potential fixes, and provides cost effective, simple options to address many of these issues.