

Support a Disability Resource Center for Children and Families

Families who have children with disabilities struggle to navigate systems like health care, long-term supports, education, and Medicaid. Information on these supports can prevent crises like lost jobs, lost opportunities for child development, and lost economic stability. Wisconsin has no statewide, coordinated effort to connect children with disabilities and their families to information, assistance and services. A statewide [Disability Resource Center for Children and Families](#) will offer:

- Information, assistance, and resource navigators to help families find available resources, programs and services.
- Children's disability benefits specialists.
- Advocacy services for children.
- A front door to eligibility determination for Children's Long-Term Support programs including Katie Beckett and Comprehensive Community Services.

What can you do!

Invest state funding to develop and implement a statewide Disability Resource Center for Children and Families so families know where to get help and can get the help they need.

Support Special Education

Wisconsin has under-funded special education for years and the pandemic has added to these challenges. Wisconsin only reimburses local costs up to 30% for special education, despite the last state budget that included the first increase for special education in over a decade.

What can you do!

Increase special education funding to cover 40% of costs, which will provide the quality education that students with disabilities need.

Increase high-cost special education to bring the reimbursement rate for eligible costs to 60%.

Support Children's Mental Health

Wisconsin falls far short of recommended school staffing for services like school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses who help students with mental health needs. Students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities have the highest suspension rate and the second-lowest graduation rate of any disability group, which could be improved by increased access to school-based mental health services.

What can you do!

Provide an increase for pupil services staffing to pay for additional school counselors, psychologists, nurses and social workers.

Support Family Caregivers

Families take on many diverse roles as they care for their children with complex needs. As workforce shortages impact all parts of our economy, families are doing things like providing medical care coordination, direct care, special education, and therapies. Many family caregivers leave their jobs or must cut work hours because there are no other options for help. Constant stress is damaging the physical and mental health of the entire family.

What can you do!

- **Support family caregiver tax credits.**
- **Expand who can use Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) to include grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings.**
- **Address the current workforce shortage:**
 - Provide emergency funding for community-based supports to keep people in their homes.
 - Allow low-wage care workers to work and earn more pay without losing health care or childcare.
 - Direct the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to include the community-based direct care workforce in its Fast Forward grants.