

# Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities: Policy platform highlights seven priority issues facing people with disabilities

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The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) has finalized its 2019-21 state budget and policy recommendations.

The platform focuses on seven priority issues that impact people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) and their families in Wisconsin and is available on BPDD's website at: <http://wi-bpdd.org/index.php/policy-statements/>

BPDD's recommendations focus on the following critical issues:

- **[Direct caregiver workforce.](#)**  
In Wisconsin a shortage of professional direct care workers has created a crisis for people with disabilities, older adults, and their families. Improving worker retention and increasing the number of workers is a critical need.
- **[Transportation.](#)**  
People with disabilities are not able to get where they need to go on their schedule. Access to transportation is consistently the top concern for people with disabilities in Wisconsin
- **[Employment.](#)**  
Wisconsin's bi-partisan Employment First legislation recognizes community integrated employment as a priority for people with disabilities. BPDD hears from Wisconsin families who want more competitive integrated employment

choices and improvements are needed to our service system to increase the number of people with disabilities working in the community.

- **Education.**

Poor educational preparation of students with disabilities translates into a lifetime of high unemployment, lower wages, and greater reliance on public benefit programs. Improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities is needed across all school options, and greater accountability is needed.

- **Medicaid & Medicaid-funded Long-Term Care.**

50% of people with disabilities in Wisconsin rely on all of Wisconsin's 20 Medicaid programs. Medicaid provides services and supports that are not available or are not available at the level needed on the private insurance market and keeps people with disabilities living in their homes and out of costly facilities like nursing homes. Sustaining and improving Wisconsin's Medicaid programs is critical for people with disabilities.

- **Public Benefit Reform.**

People with disabilities may rely on multiple public benefit programs to access the health care,

- food, housing, and funding they need to live independently and stay out of institutions. Navigating a path for people with disabilities to gradually increase their income and assets while maintaining access to some or all supports across public benefit programs is all but impossible; lack of coordination and different requirements across benefit program often act as a limiting factor to greater employment and economic stability.

- **Improving self-direction and independent decision-making.**

People with disabilities can acquire new skills and decision-making capacity throughout their lives. Ensuring more people with I/DD retain their rights to make decisions and have the support they need to make choices in their lives

Public policy topics and recommendations were developed in consultation with our board, and reflect the pressing needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities and their families, the goals and priorities outlined in BPDD's federal five year state plan, [BPDD's unique charge and voice](#), and the ability for each recommendation to improve the lives of people with disabilities and achieve systems change.