

WisGOP: Gov. Tony Evers' inept COVID-19 response continues to fail Wisconsin families

Posted on Friday, Apr 9, 2021

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[Madison, WI] – Once again, Gov. Tony Evers' failure to lead on COVID-19 is hurting Wisconsinites who are still reeling from the impact of the pandemic. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [reported](#) on Thursday that the Evers administration has failed to provide food assistance to tens of thousands of Wisconsin children who would normally receive subsidized meals at schools, but were stuck learning virtually while their classrooms were shuttered.

As Gov. Evers refused to lead on reopening schools, his administration also shut down the live call center intended to serve struggling parents who were trying to feed their children. Instead, the hotline became a voicemail system that directed families to leave a message or send an email — but parents are not receiving responses about how Gov. Evers' administration plans to rectify this problem for hungry Wisconsin kids.

This is just the latest example in Gov. Evers' long list of failures throughout his COVID-19 response. Over the course of the pandemic, Gov. Evers has been more invested in pointing fingers while his administration remains asleep at the wheel — from the DWD's continued [disastrous handling](#) of unemployment claims that was still providing ["incorrect and contradictory information"](#) to jobless Wisconsinites months into the pandemic, to the DHS' [undercounting](#) of 1,000 COVID-19 deaths in long-term care facilities, hurting Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens.

Gov. Evers would rather shirk his responsibilities, cast blame on others and find excuses to do nothing than resolve the disturbing problems in his administration. He likes to say that “what’s best for our kids is best for our state,” but in this case, what’s best for our kids is a new governor.

Read more from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [here](#) or find excerpts below.

‘My kids deserve to eat’: Wisconsin officials fail to get food assistance to thousands of poor children

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#)

Patrick Marley and Molly Beck

April 8, 2021

Wisconsin has failed to send food assistance to tens of thousands of poor children who are supposed to be getting extra help because they have been learning at home during the coronavirus pandemic.

Under a federal program created last spring, the families of students who qualify for subsidized meals in Wisconsin schools are supposed to receive \$6.82 to cover food for every day their children are not in school buildings and are instead learning virtually.

That amounts to about \$1,250 for the school year for students who are attending school entirely virtually.

But tens of thousands of students haven’t gotten their benefits because the state Department of Public Instruction didn’t collect the addresses of all students. It also has not determined whether nearly 500 schools are holding classes virtually — even though the state promised to do so months ago.

The state doesn’t have addresses for about 78,500 students who may be eligible for the program. It’s unclear how many of them qualify for benefits because it will depend on whether they have been attending school virtually.

Sherrie Tussler, executive director of the Hunger Task Force in Milwaukee, said she was frustrated state officials hadn’t done more in recent months to make sure they got the aid to as many families as quickly as possible.

“Why did we wake up one day and realize we didn’t have addresses?” she asked.

Health Services Deputy Secretary Julie Willems Van Dijk would not answer a question about why the needed information was not collected sooner during a Wednesday interview with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

[...]

Also last week, the state sent letters to about 168,000 others telling them that they didn’t qualify for benefits. That notification generated a flood of questions, overwhelming an understaffed call center that shut down almost as quickly as it opened.

The call center on Thursday stopped taking live calls and turned on a voicemail system that told people to leave a message or contact the state by email. State officials haven’t said when the call center will start functioning.

Tiffany Lipson of Milwaukee received benefits for one of her children, but not two others — even though all three have attended school virtually.

She has tried the call center eight times in recent days but has been reluctant to leave a voice message because she isn’t confident anyone will pay attention to it. She’s sent emails as well but has only gotten automated responses, she said.

[...]

“If the kids were in school, they would have to give them meals. And I just feel like they don’t feel like they have to be rushed to do that (now) because they’re not in school.”