

The Arc Wisconsin supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) over “The Arc” of their lifetime. Since 1960, The Arc Wisconsin has served individuals and their families through our 14 locally affiliated chapters across the state. The Arc Wisconsin works to develop programs and advocate for public policy — giving people with I/DD the opportunity to learn, live, and work inclusively in their communities.



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ADDRESS THE DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE CRISIS

Direct care workers are essential to helping people with disabilities with things like bathing, dressing, medications, meals, participation in the community, supports at a job, and more. Although many Wisconsinites with disabilities are eligible for Medicaid personal care services or long-term care supports through programs like Family Care and IRIS, direct care workers are difficult to find. According to a Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations survey, 85% of all people with disabilities cannot find paid help to meet all their care hours. Agencies report a worker turnover rate of 50%. Direct care workers make an average of \$10.47/hour and often do not have access to health care benefits. Agencies that provide direct care services have limited revenue and can be up to 90% or more reliant on Medicaid rates to pay the wages and benefits of their employees. Workers are instead taking jobs at fast-food and retail stores where pay, benefits, and hours are better. An estimated 43% of the direct care workforce makes wages so low they qualify for public assistance. Wisconsin’s projected need is expected to increase by 20,000 workers in 2026. ¹

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:



Direct Care Workers who provide care to people with I/DD should be paid a higher wage and have access to affordable health care.



Make a similar investment in the IRIS direct care workforce (no IRIS worker funds are currently included in the budget).



Support expansion of Medicaid/Badgercare to 138% FPL to ensure there is access to affordable healthcare for workers; explore other options like a Medicaid buy-in that allows workers to purchase Medicaid healthcare on a sliding scale.



Increase the personal care rate. The Governor’s proposed 1.5% rate increase for personal care is far too low. An increase of at least 11% is necessary to raise worker wages and address the needs of critically underfunded agencies.



Support the Governor’s proposed \$29 million increase to the Family Care workforce.

¹ National Alliance for Caregiving 2015 Report on Caregiving in the U.S.