



WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) Highlights

EMPLOYMENT

- Wisconsin’s Employment First Law, which BPDD was critical in having passed in April 2018, prioritizes community employment for people with disabilities and aims to increase the number of people in community integrated jobs who are paid wages comparable to people without disabilities.
- The Partners in Business Disability Employment Law, passed in April 2018, awards funds to BPDD based on our successful pilot work to provide coaching to businesses interested in hiring people with disabilities. Through this law, BPDD provided mini-grants to employment service providers, school districts, and businesses to adopt specific strategies to teach co-workers how to provide natural supports to colleagues with disabilities. This innovative approach has resulted in more hours worked each week by employees with disabilities, as well as reduced public funds spent on job supports.
- The BPDD “Let’s Get to Work” youth employment effort tripled the employment rate for youth with the most significant disabilities in a statewide effort to improve public programs charged with equipping youth for the workforce. As a result, Wisconsin’s statewide public instruction team uses strategies from the project to coach struggling school districts and improve employment outcomes for students with the most significant disabilities.

“ WPDD has played a unique role strengthening integrated employment and self-determination throughout Wisconsin. Dane County has benefited from their Employment First! initiative which improved vocational outcomes at one of our local high schools; increasing the percentage of students who now leave high school with integrated employment, earning minimum wage or more. ”

“ We always wanted our son to be a contributing member of society. I tell (James) he’s a tax paying citizen now. ”

James' Dad, Holmen, WI. James is a youth employment project participant.



- BPDD created the country’s first Take Your Legislator to Work effort that supports individuals with developmental disabilities who are working in the community to invite their state legislator to visit them on the job. Over the past 7 years, BPDD has facilitated nearly 350 visits with 300 legislators and nearly 400 constituents, including the Governor and State Department Secretaries. As a result, more legislators report that they believe hiring people with disabilities is good for business and that they are more likely to support policies and legislation that expands employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Seven other states have adopted the effort.

“ I was able to learn how having a job has helped a person with a disability increase their self-esteem, foster new relationships and have pride for money earned through employment. ”

State Legislator

SELF-ADVOCACY

- BPDD took a lead working with the Legislature on Wisconsin’s new Supported Decision-Making (SDM) law, passed in April 2018. The law helps eligible people with disabilities and older adults retain their independence and ability to make choices about their lives while also empowering them to ask a Supporter to help them gather information, compare options, and communicate their decisions to others.

“ We wanted our son to have the chance to grow and learn to make decisions that affect his life. As his parents, we won’t always be around to guide him, and we didn’t want to restrict his life and future happiness. So, we chose not to pursue guardianship and instead to develop a circle of supporters to help him make those big decisions in life. ”

- BPDD's Partners in Policymaking has trained more than 200 people with developmental disabilities and family members to use their personal experiences to help shape public policy. Program alums have run for (and won!) seats on their local school board, city council, and county board. Dozens have testified at public hearings on city, state, and federal issues.
 - More than 99% of Partner graduates say they will be a stronger advocate and be more actively involved in issues that affect people with disabilities.

“

I feel more connected with the disabled community and have so many new contacts. I have always wanted to advocate and now I have the tools, support and people to do so.

Partners Graduate

I learned that my child has a valuable place in the community. I had always known I needed to fight for him, but it didn't click that he is a natural part of the community and an asset. ”

Partners Graduate

- BPDD helped facilitate 145 legislative visits for self-advocates and family members through our Youth Leadership Forum and Partners in Policymaking projects. In addition, BPDD worked with collaborators on Disability Advocacy Day, which draws over 500 participants to learn about hot topic issues and then meet with their legislators about those issues.

“

I learned your voices matter when talking to others in your community and school and I can get more kids to become leaders too. ”

- Youth Leadership Forum Participant

- At the annual BPDD Self-Determination Conference, which drew more than 600 participants and focused on the theme “What's Your Superpower?”

“

I saw people with disabilities in a new light. Visiting with friends, getting coffee for breakfast in the AM, etc. It will make me think differently about people with disabilities. ”

- More than 700 self-advocates and family members participated in BPDD policy efforts to increase employment, improve public schools and Medicaid-funded programs, and expand transportation options.



Youth Leadership Forum Delegate visiting Senator Dave Hansen

COMMUNITY LIVING

- 300 more people chose to self-direct their long-term care supports during the last year, with an average underspending of 14%.



- Our SPARKS mini-grants allow local groups that include people with developmental disabilities to work on an effort to improve their communities. Self-advocates and family members from Oshkosh, WI used a \$3,000 Sparks mini grant to leverage \$300,000 for a fully accessible playground used by the whole community. They are now meeting with communities in the Midwest on how to build their own accessible park and the Oshkosh Parks Program has created inclusive programs and park options citywide.

“

Knowing we were backed by the SPARKS Grant gave us confidence and energy to develop and provide the best training we could in this pilot year. ”

SPARKS recipient

- There are currently 5 Family-Led groups supported through a technical assistance grant that works with over 40 families. The Family-Led project supports groups of families working together on shared challenges that ultimately improve the lives of their loved ones. “Moving On” workshops provided to families led to two young women deciding to become roommates, finding an affordable apartment and having the tools to succeed in their own apartment.
 - Kristine went off to college, but found herself back home after graduating, watching her independence slowly slip away while she struggled to find a job. Six months ago, she joined a Family-Led group in Mukwonago, WI to do the Moving On workshop series. This kickstarted Kristine on the road to independence. Her mom Janet describes her as a new woman these days, really motivated to work on her independent living skills, applying for grad school at UW-Milwaukee and planning a move to Milwaukee.
- Building FULL Lives provides coaching and business planning expertise to providers working with hundreds of people around the state with the most significant disabilities and their families to more flexibly support people with disabilities in the community. 12 service provider organizations are partnering with over 70 community sites at which people with disabilities can learn, socialize and work alongside other community members.
 - One provider organization has transformed their service delivery from 23% of people with disabilities receiving services in the community to 82% now served in the community and four other organizations have closed or dramatically shifted their facility-based work or day services to community-based services.



It's freedom. Freedom....to explore for job, for kitchen, for Meals on Wheels...here and there. Combined my work skills.

Person with a disability served for 20 years in a facility and now working and volunteering in the community to achieve his dream job of doing food prep at a restaurant.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Mind and Memory Matters is a three-year federal project to raise awareness and educate the public about the risk factors and early signs of dementia in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The project, in collaboration with the Department of Health Services, reached more than 1,100 people, including people with I/DD, families, and caregivers.



Quotes on BPDD's Impact on Wisconsin Residents

I believe this council is one of the BEST investments in Wisconsin to mobilize and empower individuals to get involved in making our communities a better place to live for people with disabilities and without.

Parent

BPDD shines a light on the issues that are key to our kids having successful and satisfying lives in the community as they grow. I've been empowered by knowing where and how advocacy is needed, found opportunities to add my own voice, and have been inspired by the examples of families living rich and full lives while supporting a member with a disability. There is a lot of isolation involved in parenting a child with special needs, but BPDD builds bridges that make this club that we didn't necessarily want to join one which we are so proud to be part of.

This past year I received a Sparks grant. Being able to include the BPDD logo on my materials helped others see that this was a legitimate, credible project with merit. I also received feedback and ideas from BPDD staff that helped improve my project ideas. Two years ago, I participated in the Partners in Policymaking training. I have stayed in touch with my fellow partners and participate in advocacy activities. The Partners training changed the trajectory of my life. The training provided me with information, skills and connections essential to my disability advocacy and gave me confidence that I can make the world better for people with disabilities, from a fair and non-partisan mindset. Thanks to these two activities, I am better able to meet the needs of my daughter and better able to advocate for her rights at school and in other activities. BPDD has been a huge part of my journey from a scared and isolated parent with a child in crisis to an empowered and connected parent whose child has hope.

My daughter and I learned about WI-BPDD many years ago when we were given the opportunity to participate in a Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment (YIPPE) training to learn about advocacy and to continue to pursue dreams of a future with opportunities. My daughter now has both a high school and college degree. I'm not so sure that would've happened without the Board. It's been quite the journey with my daughter now serving as a role model and continues to follow the dream of living an independent life!