



WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE  
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



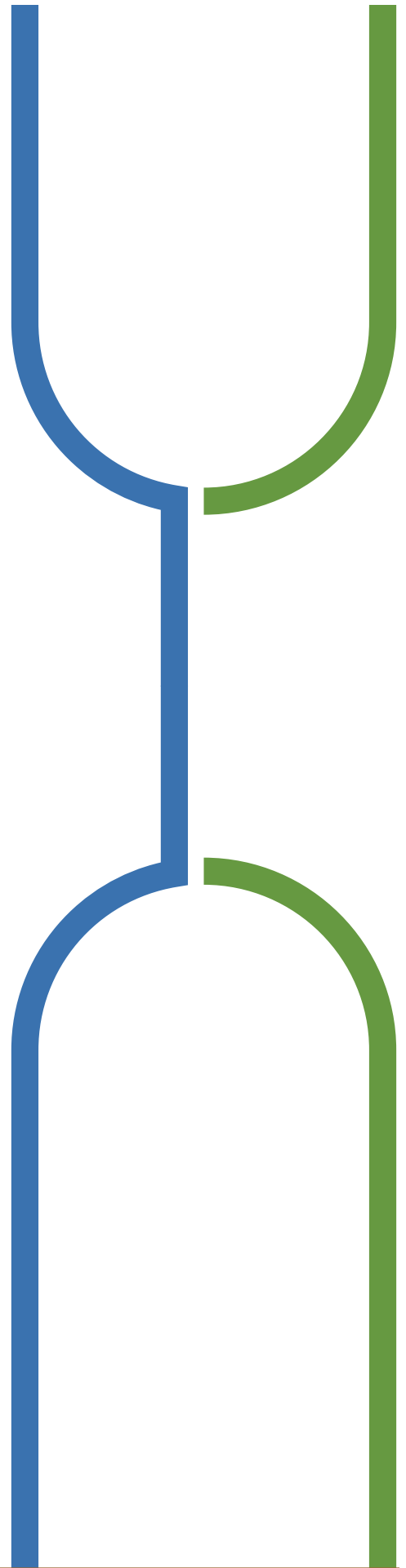
# WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

# 2024 Annual Report

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This work is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$1,434,492 with \$1,305,492 or 91% from federal funding. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent the official views of nor are endorsed by ACL, HHS, or the U.S. Government



# Message from Leadership

We invite you to look at our 2024 annual report to see how the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) has worked across the state to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

BPDD is made up of people living with developmental disabilities and family members who are appointed by the Governor, as well as representatives from state agencies and service systems. BPDD members come from all parts of the state, and are charged in the Developmental Disabilities Act to find the most pressing needs of people with developmental disabilities and develop creative, cost-effective ways to meet needs in ways that ensure the voices of people with developmental disabilities are at the center of all decisions.

BPDD gathers input from around the state and then develops a 5-year state plan with projects and activities that aim to get people information and help them understand and use programs and opportunities to improve their lives. We offer resources and opportunities both in-person and virtually, in accessible formats and in multiple languages.

We also advocate at the state level to improve services and supports so people with developmental disabilities can live the lives they want, free of abuse or neglect. More than 70% of our funds are invested in local communities in all areas of the state.

We invite you to learn more about us and the opportunities we provide to the disability community at [wi-bpdd.org](http://wi-bpdd.org)

## A few highlights include:

1. Helping diverse families learn about and use programs. We teamed up with the Department of Public Instruction with our Families Supporting Families project to support Black, Tribal, Hmong and Spanish-speaking families through grants to community-based organizations of color in local communities. 92% percent of families say they feel more empowered to advocate for their child.
2. Being a leader on plain language, including supporting state agencies to put information on their websites and other places that are easy to understand.
3. Taking policy actions: We have been a leader in shaping policies that impact Wisconsinites with disabilities and their families. Our work has improved voting access, improved protections for people with disabilities, helped families at risk of lead poisoning and explored affordable, accessible housing options.



Ashley Mathy, Board Chair



Beth Swedeen, Executive Director



As a working board the following statements were developed by board members in accordance with the Developmentally Disabled Assistance and Bill of Rights Act.

## Mission:

To unite ALL of Wisconsin in supporting our residents with developmental disabilities to lead their most independent lives.

## Charge:

We visited communities around the state to find out what issues matter to you and what you'd like to see changed. We listened. And from your words came our 5-year state plan for people with developmental disabilities.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement:

We want all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to have the lives they want. Yet, we know that not all people are living the lives they want because of racism and discrimination. We commit to finding and addressing these inequities at BPDD and in the service systems. We will listen, we will learn, and we will achieve change.

## Land Acknowledgement:

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) has the honor and responsibility to acknowledge the Indigenous people who have called this land home for generations. Our office is in Madison, known as Teejop (pronounced day-JOPE) by the Ho-Chunk people. They had 10 million acres that were recognized by treaty. They were repeatedly removed from Wisconsin from 1832-1874, but they kept coming back to their homeland and are still here.

While BPDD is located on Ho-Chunk land, we work across the state. No matter where you are in the state, you are on the ancestral land of Tribal nations. There are 12 Tribal nations in Wisconsin, 11 of which are federally recognized. We encourage you to learn about and appreciate the history of the Tribal nations who cared for this land and continue to contribute to our communities.

BPDD also wants to recognize the different ways that Indigenous cultures see disability: people with disabilities have a place and a purpose in tribal communities. These are cultural teachings we can all learn from. BPDD developed this land acknowledgement with Tribal members connected to the Board, based on studying other land acknowledgements. Special thanks to Kenneth Funmaker, Jr., and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for providing language.

# What We Do

**We Lead:** we take bold steps to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities. We help lead the way with new ideas.

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**We Partner:** we bring together people with developmental disabilities, their family members, organizations, and others. Together we find solutions to problems and take action to bring about change.

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**We Advise:** we are a trusted advisor to leaders in state government and the state legislature. We work with them to improve laws, policies, programs, and services.

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**We Advocate:** we advocate for and with people with developmental disabilities to have the same opportunities in life that other members of the community have. We advocate for people to be included and supported so they are successful.

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**We Inform:** we provide information and resources so people with disabilities and their family members can understand their rights, increase their independence, and find the services and supports they need.

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**We Strengthen:** we fund advocacy and leadership training. People with developmental disabilities and their family members learn how to effectively advocate for themselves and others.

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**We Innovate:** we are a leading organization in Wisconsin that funds grants focused on developmental disabilities. Grantees develop and test new ideas. We use what we learn to bring about change throughout Wisconsin.

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**We Connect:** we facilitate community based organizations to bridge people to accurate and timely resources.

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# We Lead

Our **Living Well Grant** is leading the way to improve the health, safety, independence, and well-being of people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities living in the community. We work with many partners to empower people with disabilities to understand their rights.

**681** People trained on rights including professionals, families, and self-advocates.

**12** Self-Advocates trained as peer mentors

**12** Promising practices, best practices, and tools shared through the Living Well Blueprint.

**6499** People learned about how to assert their rights by viewing the “Let’s Talk about Rights” video series.

**1335** Living Well: Healthy, Safe, and Connected Toolkits distributed to professionals, families, and self-advocates.

**2513** Let’s Talk About Rights Guides were distributed to professionals, families, and self-advocates.

“My connections to the disability community have been deepened through BPDD. Given this, I feel safer, and more capable of meeting my (disabled) family’s needs and helping others to do the same.”

*Self Advocate/Family Member Survey Respondent*

“Coming to these have reinforced that what I’m doing is good...I want my son to have a voice. This has been helpful reinforcement for me....I’m not being too soft. He is his own person, and he should have a voice and a say.”

*Early Choice-making webinar participant*

## We Inform

We continued our **webinar series** on ‘hot’ topics to give people easy-to-understand information on issues important to them. These free webinars focused on knowing your rights for people with disabilities, families, and professionals; supported decision-making and early choice-making.

Our **Self-Determination Conference** focuses on how to live more independently, participate more in your community, and direct your public funds efficiently. Informational sessions continue to be led by individuals with lived experience. The conference was attended by nearly 700 people.

Webinar Data point:

Over **900**  
people participated in the webinars

**103** survey  
respondents  
reported that they will now  
participate in advocacy  
activities

Self-Determination Conference Data points: Of over 100 survey respondents

**75%** reported making more choices about what is important to them

**82%** met at least one new person they plan to stay in touch with

**83%** reported that because of the conference they have more resources to get the life they want

# We Partner

We partner with People First Wisconsin (PFW), a statewide self-advocacy organization run by people with disabilities. We help PFW strengthen their leadership and increase opportunities for more people with disabilities to advocate for issues important to them.

## People First WI Data points:

**6** grants received this year.



Total number of people with disabilities employed by PFW in the last two years grew from **3** to **18**

**\$355,000**  
in grant awards

PFW members serve on **12** boards and councils across the state

“Being part of People First has definitely changed my life for the better. I am learning so much, and I have a strong desire to help others to be their best selves.”

*People First WI Self-Advocate Leader*



# We Partner

Our partnership with the WI Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to support community-based organizations that serve families of color grew this year from five organizations to nine. The new organizations focus on the Hmong community and aim to decrease disability stigma and connect families to resources and each other.

## Families Supporting Families Data points:

Over **1,045** people participated in at least one event

**94%** of families feel more connected and supported.

**68** more youth with disabilities and family members are taking on leadership roles.

## Success Stories



Some families hesitate to advocate for many reasons: feeling it's disrespectful to question authority, fearing retribution, not knowing what to say. Early on, one family didn't feel comfortable speaking up. Over time, they became comfortable advocating for their son and calling repeat IEPs to revisit their concerns.

Youth are getting opportunities to lead. One family shared this about their child serving on the Junior Board, "...the members speak up more in school, are able to make more friends and connect more...My baby has friends to go to for help with schoolwork and problems and be a leader in the community."

**\$845,000** in funding received through partner organizations



# We Connect

Through a COVID grant with USAging, we continued to support Parent University in Milwaukee to connect more people to vaccinations and essential health information. Parent University partners with Hayat Pharmacy to host shot clinics and to visit senior centers and homes to vaccinate people and do health checks.

**747** people vaccinated

**1447** people connected to accurate vaccination and health information and to other available services



We continued to fund a public health community organizer through the Coalition on Lead Emergency who connects families to lead testing and education. Our funding served as a bridge to more permanent funding with the coalition.

**90** community members attended a first town hall meeting with their elected officials

Nearly **1,000** children referred for lead testing and 347 families referred for lead abatement

Over **2,000** families trained on finding lead in water, paint and soil, and how nutrition can impact lead absorption





# We Strengthen

We develop future leaders across the state through **Partners in Policymaking**. These leaders use their strengthened advocacy skills to work with legislators and communities on policies that benefit people with disabilities.

**15** people with disabilities, parents and family members completed the program this year

**300+** graduates total

**100%** feel that they are stronger advocates

**100%** plan to be more engaged with their legislators



Our **Youth Leadership Forum** (YLF) is a career awareness and leadership training program designed to increase youths' skills in self-advocacy and leadership and expose them to the variety of options after high school.

**26** high school students participated

**93%** say they will be stronger advocates in their communities

YLF was one of the first times I felt like I fit in. I could just be me because everyone there had a disability.

*2024 YLF Graduate*

# We Advocate

We co-chair the **Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition** (DVC), a non-partisan effort to help ensure people with disabilities exercise their right to vote.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court restored the use of drop boxes, which the DVC advocated for as a way to make it easier for people with disabilities to return their absentee ballots.

**40+**

organizations are part of the vote coalition

Trained and connected over

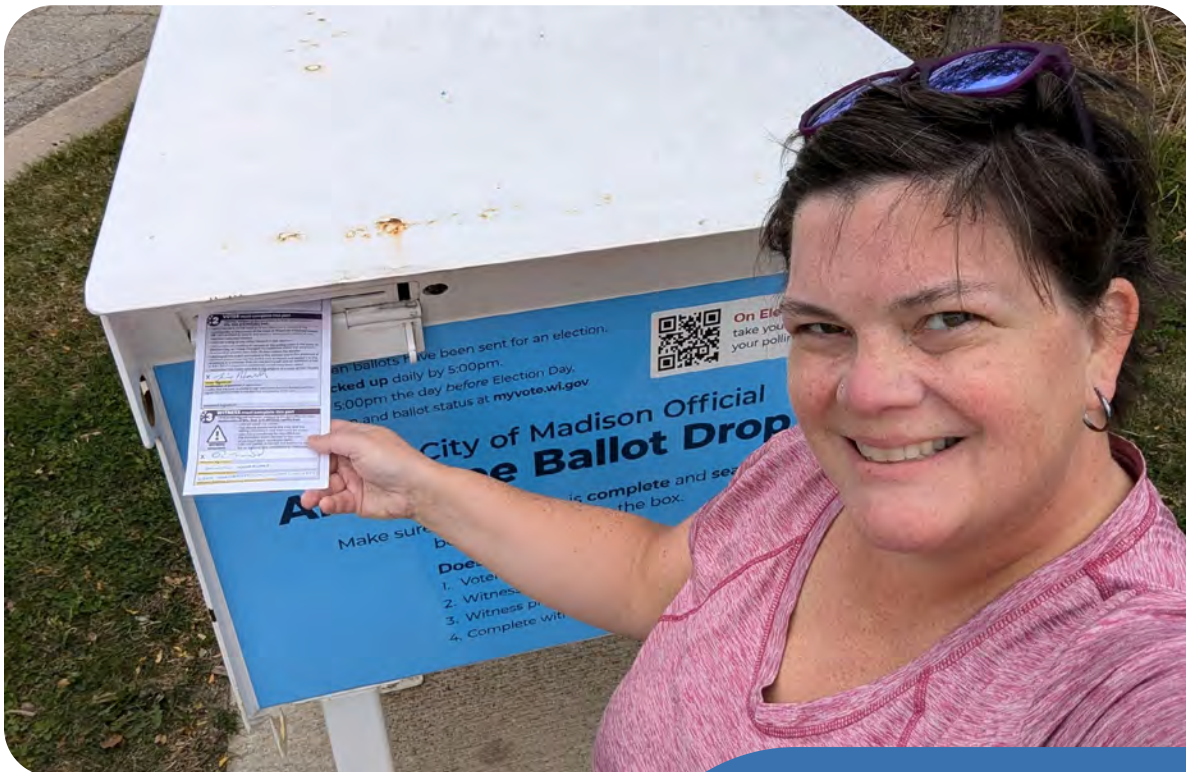
**4,687** self-advocates

and their supporters on the voting process and their rights

Reached over

**14,000**

readers with our monthly newsletter.



I vote because my voice is important, and I want to help make decisions about things that affect my life. I believe that everyone's voice is important.

- Kira Mevis, Green Bay, WI



# We Innovate

Communities know best how to serve their families. Rather than design projects for others to implement, we look to our partners to lead and decide what is needed. 16 innovation grants were awarded to local organizations. We developed the Wisconsin Disability Policy Program with a grant from the Inclusion Foundation. The program will equip a pool of people with lived experience to inform and support policymakers and build skills and connections to facilitate future careers in disability.

**\$250,845** that we committed for innovation went to culturally and ethnically diverse communities

We provide a platform for the voices of lived experience through our **Self-Determination YouTube channel** run by a group of self advocates.

**2,156** Total Subscribers

**560** New subscribers

**38,717** views of videos that share strategies to be stronger advocates and more self-determined

**58** new videos posted

**83** Self-advocates featured





“As a result of (Partners in Policymaking), I have built relationships with state legislators and met with federal legislators related to bills waiting for support & approval to get into law by sharing my story & advocating for people with disabilities.”

- Survey Respondent

## We Advise



**1** bill signed into law that we influenced



We testified on **18** bills



**18** Public comments submitted on state and federal policies



# Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

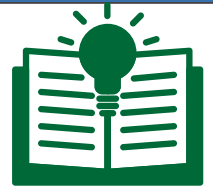
## We Lead

- Living Well Grant



## We Inform

- “Hot topic” webinars
- Supported Decision-Making
- Self-Determination Conference



## We Partner

- People First Wisconsin
- Families Supporting Families grants

People First Wisconsin



See Our d&sAbility

## We Connect

- Public Health Community Organizer (Lead)
- USAging COVID



## We Strengthen

- Partners in Policymaking
- Youth Leadership Forum



## We Advocate

- Disability Vote Coalition



## We Innovate

- Innovation Grants to communities
- Self-Determination YouTube Channel



## We Advise

- Policy efforts
- Legislature
- Governor



# Financial Information

	FY 2023
Programming	\$1,101,888
Board Operations	\$203,604
Grants and Contracts	WI Department of Public Instruction: \$95,000  Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board: \$85,000  Peer mentoring project: \$100,000  Living Well Project: \$215,000  Inclusa Foundation Policy Project: \$350,000  Subtotal: \$845,000
State Funding	\$102,180
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,252,672</b>





# Board Members

**Ashley Mathy, Chair**  
Rhineland

**Felicia Clayborne, Vice Chair**  
Wauwatosa

**Sydney Badeau**  
Brodhead

**Shanice Baquet**  
Milwaukee

**Tara Brzezinski**  
Neenah

**Kevin Coughlin**  
Dept. Of Health Services

**Anna Eggebrecht**  
Dept. Of Workforce  
Development

**Patrick Friedrich**  
Milwaukee

**Dr. Cheryl Funmaker**  
J'apresanacat'iga  
Wisconsin Dells

**Desi Kluth**  
Pewaukee

**Ryan McGuire**  
Fitchburg

**Stephenie Mlodzik**  
Appleton

**Daniel Parker**  
Dept. Of Public  
Instruction

**Marcia Perkins**  
Milwaukee

**Cindy Piotrowski**  
Stevens Point

**Hector Portillo**  
Madison

**Nathan Ruffolo**  
Appleton

**Lisa Stephan**  
Two Rivers

**Julie Strenn**  
Wisconsin Rapids

**Daniel Strutz**  
Rhineland

**Hope Swanson**  
Disability Rights Wisconsin

**Kate Szidon**  
Waisman Center

**Andy Thain**  
Thorp

**Tricia Thompson**  
Menomonie

**Kelly Weyer**  
Mukwonago

**Christianne Whiting**  
Verona

**Chris Wood**  
Eau Claire

**Houa Yang**  
Madison

**George Zaske**  
River Falls



# Board Staff

**Beth Swedeen**  
Executive Director

**Fil Clissa**  
Community Inclusion

**Molly Cooney**  
Employment And Diversity  
Outreach Specialist

**Sally Flaschberger**  
Living Well Grant Manager

**Jeremy Gundlach**  
Communications Director

**Tami Jackson**  
Public Policy Analyst

**Russell McCullough**  
Office Associate

**Kaitlin McNamara**  
Living Well Project  
Coordinator

**Jenny Neugart**  
Disability Grassroots  
Organizer

**Tami Rogers**  
Office Manager







WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE  
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

If you'd like to know more about any of our projects you can visit our website at [www.wi-bpdd.org](http://www.wi-bpdd.org) or contact us using the information below.

**Phone: 608-266-7826**

**Address: 101 E. Wilson St., Rm. 219  
Madison, WI 53703**