



Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities statement on federal autism report

Sept. 22, 2025

Press Contact: Beth Swedeen, beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov, (608) 220-2974;
Sydney Badeau, badeausydney@gmail.com

Over the last several months, people with disabilities, families, and advocates have grown increasingly concerned about leaders using public platforms to advance outdated and dangerous ideas that portray people with disabilities as burdens or of lesser value if they do not exactly match the metrics of success defined by able-bodied people.

“Last week, the disability community was horrified as a host on a major media outlet publicly suggested ‘involuntary lethal injection’ as a policy solution for homeless people who also have mental health issues,” said Beth Swedeen, Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities Executive Director. “This week, people with autism are being identified as population of people whose existence the government seeks to prevent or change into people who are more ‘normal’.”

Autism is a complex condition that does not have a single cause. Autistic people share a diagnosis, but have a wide range of talents, abilities, and support needs that are individual to each person. Autistic Americans have the same unalienable rights as all Americans, the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. We all find different ways to achieve these things, and it is the individual, not the government, who decides our own worth.

“The government should not decide whose lives are worth living or what criteria must be met to have a worthy life,” said Sydney Badeau, Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities Board Chair.

“I know many people with autism. They do not want to be cured. They don’t want to be targeted. They don’t want to be told it is ok, or better, if they don’t exist,” said Badeau. “People with autism have always existed. We are part of what humanity looks like, and we are amazing.”