

2027-2031 State Plan

Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

Background

The [Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act](#) (DD Act) says each state must set up a Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council. The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) is Wisconsin's DD Council.

Every five years, BPDD makes a new state plan to improve the lives of people with I/DD. We work to make sure they are included and able to participate in their community while staying healthy and safe.

The state plan must meet all the requirements of the DD Act. This includes having a self-advocacy goal or objective each year. It must include:

- 1) support to a statewide self-advocacy organization,
- 2) making sure people with I/DD provide leadership training to their peers, and
- 3) supporting the participation of people with I/DD in cross-disability leadership coalitions.

The federal government expects Developmental Disabilities Councils to:

- identify goals that can be met in five years using available resources,
- focus on efforts to change entire systems, not on direct service,
- not be involved in legal action, such as lawsuits, and
- include an objective focused on responding to unplanned disasters.

To develop our state plan, we collected ideas from more than 500 people with I/DD and their families, providers and advocates over a 1-year span. They shared their worries and dreams. Key issues raised include the need for greater respect, dignity, and acceptance; the need to expand self and family advocacy; expand use of peer support; address the caregiver crisis, the decline of well-being and lack of mental health services, employment services, and education. To decide which areas to focus on and how to best use available resources, BPDD board members considered the input, data, and the current state and federal situation.

Below is the State Plan with goals, objectives, and examples of activities we could use to reach them. It is due to the federal Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in August 2026.

2027-2031 State Plan

October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2031

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) aims to unite all of Wisconsin in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to lead their most independent lives. BPDD is charged with bringing people together to solve problems, remove barriers and create statewide change for the developmental disability community. BPDD is dedicated to improving the **independence, productivity, and integration** of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Independence means having choices, making decisions, and having control over one's life.

Productivity means contributing to one's household, neighborhood and community. It means working in the community and earning a living.

Integration means being present in the community, participating in the life of the community and being valued as a person, friend, family member and neighbor.

Rationale:

As we gathered input from people across the state, it became clear that many people with I/DD and their families feel a lack of dignity and respect. They experience this in many ways like bullying and not having a say in their daily lives. It's also experienced in things like having to figure out overly complicated service systems and seeing cuts to services and programs that people need to survive. People are worried about the cuts to agencies that enforce laws that safeguard people's rights. People voiced the need to stop myths about people with disabilities to increase respect, dignity, and support they deserve. People noted that these myths impact the community's beliefs and attitudes about those with disabilities and their use of public benefits. These untrue beliefs can impact

decision makers as they decide on budgets, cuts to services, and other practices, policies, and laws.

To address these issues, Goal 1 and its objectives focus on dignity and making sure people's human rights are honored. This includes having the support and freedom to direct their lives as they choose and having access to resources to strengthen their mental health and overall well-being.

Dignity means being treated like you matter because you are human. It is inherent or built in. You don't have to earn it. It is the worth every person has. It is the basic right to be valued.

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections everyone has just for being human. They are the rules that say people matter and must be treated fairly, safely, and with dignity. You don't have to earn them, and they shouldn't be taken away. Here are some examples of human rights:

- Vote
- Privacy
- Control over your money
- Be free from people hurting you
- Decide your own schedule and who you want to be around
- Make your own choices

Goal 2 and its objectives focus on expanding the advocacy and leadership skills of people with I/DD and their family members so that they have greater control over how systems and decisions work and impact their lives. This includes advocacy opportunities and leadership training. It also includes more peer-led education and peer mentoring, which have been shown to positively impact both the people receiving the education and mentoring and the systems these innovative services are a part of.

Definitions:

Developmental Disabilities Network: In addition to establishing a Developmental Disabilities Council, the DD Act requires each state to establish a Protection and Advocacy Agency (P&A) and University Center on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). In Wisconsin, Disability Rights Wisconsin is the P&A, and the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is the UCEDD. Together the three organizations are known as the Developmental Disabilities Network.

Dignity: being treated like you matter because you are human.

Human rights: things that people are free to have or do. Rights are decided by international laws, United States laws and State laws.

Public benefits: things that the government gives to help support you like healthcare, food assistance, or housing.

Self-advocacy: speaking up for yourself; saying what you want and need

Self-direction: guiding or managing your own life or work or supports

Well-being: what you think and feel about your life; whether you are satisfied with your life and feel that the things you do are meaningful

Goal 1: People with I/DD have dignity and a sense of belonging.

By September 2031, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families are treated with dignity and use their human rights so they can fully belong and participate in their communities.

Objective 1.1: Improve people's well-being

By September 2031, as a result of BPDD action, 500 people with I/DD have greater well-being through social connections, making decisions about their lives, and accessing community-based mental health resources.

Objective 1.2: Support people to meet their needs and use their rights

By September 2031, by participating in BPDD activities, 1,000 people with I/DD and their families are better able to meet their needs by using their rights.

Objective 1.3: Respond to emergencies and natural disasters, if needed

By September 2031, BPDD will partner with the Developmental Disabilities network, state agencies, and/or other organizations to respond to natural or human-made disasters that impact people with I/DD and their families.

Suggested activities:

- Provide education and training to people with disabilities, families, and service providers on rights and how to advocate for them
- Identify effective models of mental health services and copy them in other parts of the state
- Collaborate with the Developmental Disabilities Network Partners on mental health efforts
- Provide education on the full range of decision-making options available
- Provide education to service providers and businesses about natural supports and paid co-worker supports in the workplace
- Support voting activities
- Host a quarterly webinar series on topics of interest such as future planning; co-operative service models; plain language; digital literacy and tech supports, etc.
- Host a statewide conference to help people direct their services and lives.

Goal 2: People with I/DD have a say in how things work

By September 2031, the voice of people with I/DD impacts all systems and decisions so that people with disabilities and their families have better lives.

Objective 2.1: Increase advocacy

By September 2031, BPDD will strengthen our statewide self-advocacy organization and improve the advocacy skills of 900 people with I/DD to expand the number of people using these skills effectively.

Objective 2.2 Increase leadership

By September 2031, because of BPDD action, 1,000 people with I/DD and their families take on leadership roles in their communities and provide leadership training to their peers.

Objective 2.3: Educate policymakers and other leaders

By September 2031, the Board will act as a policy adviser to the legislature, Governor, and other policymakers on policies that impact all aspects of community life, decision-making, and full inclusion, resulting in 25 policies and practices that increase or protect community participation, decision making and full inclusion.

Suggested activities:

- Support a statewide self-advocacy organization to strengthen their chapters and to provide members with opportunities to engage in advocacy activities
- Support opportunities for people with disabilities and families to connect with legislators to educate and advocate on issues important to them
- Provide advocacy and leadership training to youth and adults w/ IDD and families
- Coordinate internship and fellowship opportunities for people with I/DD and family members at state agencies and disability organizations
- Expand peer-led education and peer mentoring in all areas
- Encourage and equip people with I/DD and family members to serve on boards, coalitions, and committees
- Equip organizations with strategies to meaningfully include people with lived experience in their boards and throughout their organization
- Engage in systems change activities that promote the inclusion of people with I/DD in all facets of community life
- Educate legislators and other decision-makers on issues that impact people with I/DD and families and how policies and laws may affect people

Accessibility Information:

The State Plan is available in Spanish, Hmong, and in plain language English, Spanish and Hmong versions. If you need another language or format, please email molly.cooney@wisconsin.gov or call 608-266-0266. The plan is due to the federal Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities by August 15, 2026.