State Budget Advocacy Update (5/14/2019)

The State Budget process is moving forward.   We encourage you to take an active role and share your budget priorities with your legislators and follow the deliberations of the Joint Finance Committee which plays a lead role in budget decisions. This is an important advocacy opportunity to support funding for Medicaid expansion, special education, mental health services, transportation, support for youth and adults with mental illness in the corrections system or youth justice system, and more.

Budget Advocacy Opportunities

- Write your state legislators to share your budget priorities. You can find your state legislators and contact information at: https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/   You may also contact Joint Finance Committee members – this Committee reviews and votes on the Governor's budget.
- **Share a story that help** explain why a budget proposal is important to you. Your story can help legislators understand the impact of the budget on people with disabilities and their families.
- The Joint Finance Committee is meeting to vote on budget items. For those who like to get into the details of the budget, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau prepares budget papers that you can read at- http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/budget/2019_21_biennial_budget/bpbd
- The Mental Health Task Force will share email updates as the budget process moves forward. Subscribe to our email list to stay informed.

What's in the Budget That Benefits People with Mental Illness?

Note that the Joint Finance Committee voted to remove some items from the budget including Medicaid expansion and returning 17 year olds to the juvenile court system.

- Medicaid expansion would benefit many low income people who live with a mental illness.
- Increased Medicaid rates for physician's & medical clinics providing mental health, behavioral health and psychiatric services
- Funding for five regional crisis stabilization centers
- Some state funding for Medicaid crisis intervention services delivered by counties for treatment of mental illness, intellectual disability, substance abuse, and dementia.
- Expands Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) program statewide.
- Funds a new unit at the Wisconsin Resources Center to serve the mental health and alcohol and drug abuse needs of inmates at DOC.
- Returns 17-year-olds from adult court to the juvenile court system.
- Funds a 14-bed expansion at the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center to provide mental health services and treatment to youth in the justice system
- Increases funding for redesign of the youth justice system, for smaller, more community-based facilities, allowing the closing of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake.
- $63M for access to mental health services for school age children, additional staff, and training.
- Services for people experiencing homelessness benefit many people with mental health needs.

K-12 Education *Children with mental health needs and other disabilities have experienced an erosion of quality special education services due to flat funding for special education categorical aid over the last decade while costs have increased by 60%.*

- Increases the reimbursement to local school districts for special education from 24% to 60%
- $63M for access to mental health services for school age children, additional services staff, and training for staff and parents.
- Changes funding mechanism to fully cover costs for high-cost special education students.

Transportation – Accessible affordable transportation is a key support for recovery and independence.

- Increases general transit aids by 10%
- Creates a transit capital assistance program to help replace aging buses
- $6M increase to Specialized Transportation aids
- 10 percent increase for paratransit aids
- Clarifies local governments can work together on transit services that cross county or municipal borders.