

Making Your Voice Heard without Leaving Home

The pandemic continues to impact our lives, it might seem harder to advocate for a cause and make your concerns heard. Until recently, most advocacy efforts meant attending a hearing or a face-to-face meeting with your elected officials.

Today, we're learning to make our voices heard by using our phones and computers. Hearings and other public meetings can be accessed virtually, and elected officials regularly meet with their constituents over the phone or Zoom. By taking part in virtual focus groups, committees or giving your input by completing after-visit surveys you are using the new tools for families to influence change in systems without leaving home.

Our Next State Budget

Wisconsin's budget writing committee, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC), will be hosting public hearings during April. One of these will be a virtual hearing on April 28. Your comments on how state funds will be used over the next two years can also be submitted by email. To learn more, go to legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments. Check out our [Budget Priorities for Children and Families](#) and [Suggested Issue Talking Points](#) if you need ideas for your state budget request to improve the lives of families who have children with disabilities.

Jump Start Your Advocacy Efforts

Visit the [Advocate page](#) on the Family Voices website to find tools and videos to help craft your message for policymakers. Examples of testimony are also available. As families who **live the system**, we are resourceful and creative in finding and paying for our children's needs. This makes the perspective that we offer very valuable to policymakers! So, take a few minutes and use your voice this spring to positively impact change for all families.

Investing in Families: A Budget Priority for Wisconsin Disability Advocates

As families who have children with disabilities, many of us struggle to navigate systems like health care, long-term supports, education and Medicaid. While each county has an Aging and Disability Resource Center, **which only serve adults**, there is no statewide, coordinated effort to connect children with disabilities and their families to information and services.

Family Voices, in partnership with the County Human Service Association, Survival Coalition and other advocates, are urging Wisconsin Legislators to invest in families by adding funding for a **Disability Resource Center for Children and Families (DRCCF)**. The DRCCF will give families one name and one number to get in-touch with staff who have information, advocacy and resource navigators, children's benefits specialists and a "front door" to eligibility for long-term supports. For more details, see the insert in this newsletter or visit our [Policymaking](#) webpage.

Did You Know? Now You Know! Are You Tele-Ready? New Tools for Families

As part of the 2020 CARES Act grant, national Family Voices has developed videos and tools to increase access to and understanding of telehealth for families. While many of us have made the transition to “seeing” our providers virtually over the past year, we can all improve our experiences with remote, or virtual, visits with our children’s providers.

These informative videos are now available on our [Family Voices website](#). Check out the **Fab 4** including:

1. Are You Connected?
2. Do You Have a Device?
3. Can You “See” Your Provider?
4. Your Family’s First Telemedicine Appointment

For Wisconsin’s part, we have a new [Are You Tele-Ready? Fact Sheet](#) and we’re hosting live Are You Tele-Ready? **training sessions** over Zoom. Come learn with us about telehealth and how to make the most of your child’s next visit. Our next Are You Tele-Ready?, in partnership with the Western Regional Center, is [Wednesday, April 14, 11:30 – 12:30](#). You can find more details on our website’s Training Calendar.



Circles of Life Conference

Registration
NOW OPEN!

May 6. 9:00 – 4:30 and May 7, 9:00 – 1:00

The 36th Annual Circles of Life Conference will be held virtually using Zoom. Participants will have **28 breakout sessions** to choose from—Learn about Medicaid, long-term support programs, forgiveness, financial planning, care mapping, shared plans of care and so much more!

This year’s keynote speaker: **Matt Glowacki** will inspire us to see our world in a more inclusive and empathetic way.

Registration deadline is April 23. Scholarships are still available to cover the cost of registration \$75 for families and \$125 for professionals.

Go to circlesoflifeconference.com for details and registration.



Family Voices Annual Listening Session*

We Want to Hear from You! Don’t miss the Family Voices Listening Session **May 5, 4:00 – 5:15pm**. Tell us what is working for your child and family and what could make your life better as you care for your child with a disability or special health care needs.

*You **DO NOT** have to attend the conference to participate in the listening session!



Auction

Don’t miss this year’s **online auction** to benefit the parent scholarship fund. Bidding ends April 30 and winners will be announced during the conference. Go to the [Elsie Shaw Scholarship Fund Auction](#)



Children and Youth with
Special Health Care Needs

Northeast Region
Children’s Hospital
of Wisconsin
Fox Valley
877.568.5205

Northern Region
Marathon County
Health Dept.
Wausau
866.640.4106

Southeast Region
Children’s Hospital
Milwaukee
800.234.5437

Southern Region
Waisman Center
Madison
800.532.3321

Western Region
Chippewa County
Dept of Public Health
Chippewa Falls
800.400.3678

Each family has a voice • Together, our voices will be heard

familyvoiceswi.org

Policy/Budget Update

A Call to Action!

Now is the time to let state legislators know what is important for your family and your community! Family Voices is closely monitoring the 2021-2023 state budget and we are urging families to stay informed and get involved in advocating for what is best for Wisconsin families. Visit the [Advocate](#) page of our website to find our **Budget Asks**, including the **Disability Resource Center for Children and Families**, increases in funding for special education, and increases in school-based mental health services and pupil-services staff including social workers, psychologists and school nurses. These additional staff are desperately needed now more than ever as children and teens return to in-person school life.

Joint Finance Committee Hearing Dates and Locations



April 9 Whitewater

April 21 Rhinelander

April 22 Menomonie

April 28 virtual

If you plan to be part of the virtual session—**highly recommended**—please note that pre-registration is required, and space is limited!

For registration information visit

legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments

COVID Vaccine Update



Starting April 5, all adults ages 16 and older are now eligible to receive a free COVID vaccine, however, the supply is still limited so getting your shot may take time. The best way to find out where vaccines are available near you is to go to your local health department's website and/or contact your child's health care providers. Many pharmacies across the state now have vaccines available with an appointment.

The new state **COVID hotline** can answer your questions about the vaccine. Call **844.684.1064**

Want to Learn More?



For more information on these articles visit these websites:

Family Voices of Wisconsin

familyvoiceswi.org

National Family Voices

familyvoices.org

Joint Finance Committee

Public Comments

legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments

Family Voices Telehealth

Training Webinars

familyvoices.org/telehealth/curriculum/

Family Voices Trainings

Family Voices and the Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs are hosting **virtual trainings this spring**. Learn about programs and services for your child without leaving home! See our website for times and registration details familyvoiceswi.org/events/month. Or, watch them online, any time at familyvoiceswi.org/learn.



What's After High School?

Learn about the transition to adult life for youth with disabilities and special health care needs.



Did You Know? Now You Know!

Explains all the resources and services for children with disabilities and special health care needs from birth through young adulthood.



Coordinating Your Child's Health Care

This training was created to help you partner with your child's care team.



Medicaid Made Easy

Gives you a solid understanding of Wisconsin's Medicaid programs for children and their funding.

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Spring 2021 Volume 16, Issue 1

This newsletter is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number H84MC21690-01-00. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

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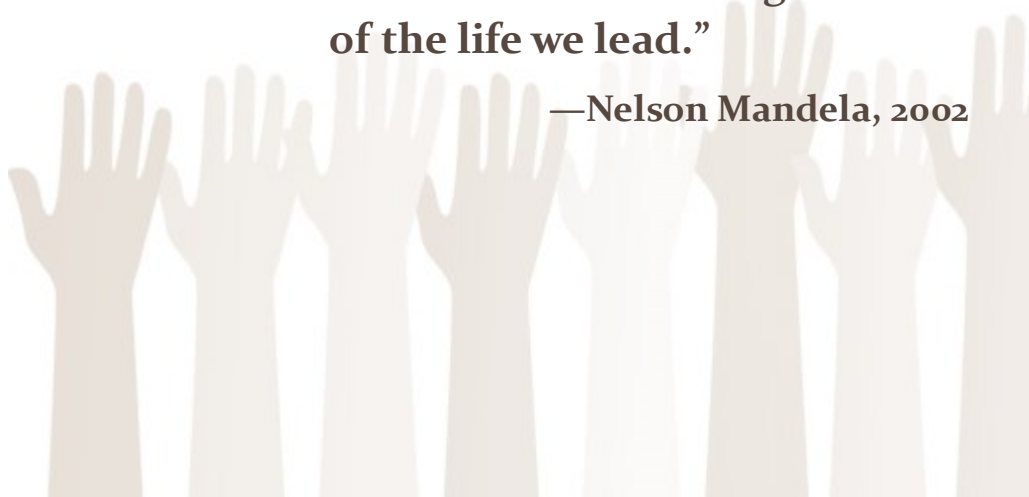
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“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we lived. It is the difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”

—Nelson Mandela, 2002



About Family Voices

If you have a child with a disability or special health care need, you’ve come to the right place! We’re here to help you **navigate** the services available to your family. It’s a complicated system and our goal is to provide you and your family with some tools. **Connect** with other families, learn how to **advocate** for your child, and discover how you can be a voice for all children with special needs.

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