



AUTISM SOCIETY

Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism

Greater Madison

ADVOCACY ALERT

Visit the new ASGM Advocacy web page, for information on ASGM statements, upcoming events, helpful links and more:

autismmadison.org/advocacy



**ASGM presents
“Autism, the Budget,
and Beyond”**

at 7 pm on Tuesday, April 19. Learn about autism-related concerns in recent and upcoming Wisconsin legislation, with a presentation from Beth Swedeen of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Join us at Midvale Lutheran Community Church, 4329 Tokay Blvd., Madison. Free and open to the public; the evening will also include a short (10 minute) membership meeting of the ASGM.

Some things to keep in mind when writing to a legislator:

1. Make sure you have his or her correct name and address.
2. Write as legibly as possible if using pen and paper.
3. If you are in his or her district, be sure to say so; include your home address.
4. Tell clearly what you are writing to him or her about: a personal concern, a proposed bill or action or rule change, an existing program or service, a proposed change to a program or service.
5. Tell clearly how what you are writing about affects you or your family.
6. Tell what you would prefer to see happen.
7. Ask your legislator to support you in that preference.
8. Tell where additional information on your issue can be obtained or include it as an attachment.
9. Give information on how you can be contacted if the legislator wishes to speak with you.
10. Thank the legislator for taking the time to read your letter.



Who are My Legislators?

Visit the web address below and click “Who Represents Me?” to find your legislators’ contact information:

<http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>

Or call the Legislative Hotline: 1-800-362-9472

Autism and the Proposed Wisconsin Biennial Budget

What to Be Concerned About, What to Do

Thousands of people with autism and their families in the State of Wisconsin rely on special education services in schools, and Medicaid services for health care, essential therapies, and vital support in their workplaces and daily lives. Wisconsin has been a leader in providing the Katie Beckett program, Children's Long Term Support Waivers, Family Care and IRIS, for people with autism and other disabilities. The following are potential threats in the Wisconsin budget proposal to vital autism services and supports.

Medicaid in the Budget

The proposed budget includes 500 million dollars in reductions to Medicaid. Medicaid dollars fund the Katie Beckett program, Children's Long Term Support Waivers – including intensive autism programming, Family Care and IRIS and provide services for people of all ages with autism and other disabilities. While the budget does not specify monetary cuts to these programs, with potentially \$500,000,000 of budget cuts to be made and the combined impact of a significant loss of federal matching dollars, all Medicaid-funded programs are vulnerable.

What to do: Tell your legislators to require transparency from the Department of Health Services as they make \$500 million dollar cuts to vital Medicaid Programs. Tell them the importance of protecting and maintaining the Katie Beckett program, Children's Long Term Support Waivers, Family Care and IRIS for the welfare of children and individuals with autism.

Education in the Budget

The proposed budget reduces funding by \$800 million in the next two years from the general education fund, in addition to reducing the revenue cap by 5.5%, resulting in a net loss of 1.7 billion dollars for local school districts. Special education funding will be frozen and some categorical aids (approximately \$29 million) that affect alternative education programs will be repealed. The budget will provide \$40 million to expand school choice and voucher schools that serve very few students with disabilities.

What to do: Tell your legislators to eliminate the reduction in revenue caps which tie the hands of local school districts. Tell them the importance of strong public education for our communities. Ask them to reduce the cuts to public education which significantly affect students with disabilities.

Medicaid Decision-Making & "Budget Repair" (2011 WI Act 10)

Under Act 10, the so-called "Budget Repair" act, future statutory changes and cuts to those important services could be made on an emergency basis between the Department of Health Services and a legislative committee, instead of going through the full legislature as is currently required. While public hearings would still be held, the revised process is a dramatic transfer of power from the elected legislature to the appointed head of the Department of Health Services.

What to do: Act 10 is currently halted in court. It is possible that this issue may be re-voted on in the near future, or may be rolled into the full budget. Tell your legislators to maintain much-needed transparency and balance of power in the oversight of state programs, and protect services for children and individuals with autism by keeping the power to change Medicaid-related statutes in the full legislature, rather than the Department of Health Services.