



**PEOPLE CAN'T WAIT –
MILWAUKEE**

ARC Milwaukee
 Autism Society of Southeastern WI
 The Advocators
 Bell Therapy
 Catholic Charities
 Creative Community Living Services
 Creative Employment Opportunities
 Curative Care Network
 Dunganvin Wisconsin
 Easter Seals Southeastern Wisconsin
 Eisenhower Center
 Goodwill Industries of Southeastern WI
 IndependenceFirst
 Kindcare, Inc.
 L & L Supportive Living
 Lutheran Social Services
 MADDSA - Milwaukee Area
 Developmental Disability Service
 Agencies –Representing 35
 Organizations
 MCTAB – Milwaukee County
 Transition Advisory Board
 Milwaukee Center For Independence
 Milwaukee Public Schools
 Options for Community Growth
 Penfield Children's Center
 People First WI
 R&K Support Services
 REM Wisconsin
 Ranch Community Services
 Special Needs Adoption Network
 St. Ann Center
 Transition LEAPP
 UCP of Southeastern WI
 Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy
 WI FACETS

Position Paper: Creating a Department of Disability Services Now Is the Time...

Milwaukee County is undergoing many changes as we enter the 2003 budget process. There is a new County Executive, many new County Supervisors, and a \$51.4 million deficit. Nevertheless, the People Can't Wait Coalition believes the time is right to establish a new Department of Disability Services, overseen by a Commission on Disability, to provide a better structure for serving people with disabilities and their families into the future.

The idea for a separate department came out of the two-year long Adult Services Division Needs Assessment and Master Planning Process that was completed this spring. The Master Plan found that Adult Services was hampered by its current location in the Department of Human Services because it had no clear vision and mission, it lost resources to repair holes in other DHS programs, and so was generally unable to make consistent progress on improving community services and reducing waiting lists.

Recently, a competing reorganization plan advanced by the County Department of Audit called for merging the Adult Services Division with the Department on Aging. This plan has not received support in EITHER the aging or disability communities, but several County Supervisors still seem to think it has merit. Also, it has become increasingly clear that the current Department of Human Services will be abolished during this budget process.

Preliminary internal analysis by Adult Services staff indicates that establishing a separate Department of Disability Services could also save money. If the Department of Human Services is abolished, and a new Department of Disability Services is established, current estimates indicate a cost saving of over \$350,000, which could be used to offset expected service cuts in the coming budget.

We would like your support for a new Department of Disability Services.

- It is the unanimous preference of the disability advocacy and service provider community.
- It will provide a new mission and focus for disability programs, and an opportunity to advance the goals set out in the Master Plan.
- It provides the best structure to improve community services and reduce waiting lists.
- It will be overseen by a Commission on Disability Services that will increase the accountability of County-funded disability programs.
- It saves money that can be used to offset potential cuts.

The disability community is committed to establishing a dialogue with the Department on Aging about the merits of Family Care, and we are open to exploring other ways to improve coordination and increase efficiencies between the two systems.

For more information, contact:

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