



Disability Benefit Specialist Services CY 2011 Summary Report



Disability benefit specialists (DBS) help people with disabilities **ages 18-59** to understand and access Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, health insurance and other public and private benefits. Their services are an integral part of every Wisconsin Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

In its eleventh year of operation, the program expanded to serve Lincoln and Langlade counties. Services were available in **35 ADRCs** covering **59 of Wisconsin's 72 counties**. Specialized services were offered to tribal members and to people who were deaf or hard of hearing.

NUMBERS SERVED

Number of Cases (A single client may have more than one case.)
10,339 new cases opened in 2011
3,567 cases carried over from CY 2010
10,344 cases closed in 2011

Number of Information-Only Contacts (No case opened. Brief contact ≤ 30 minutes.)
7,184 contacts

MONETARY IMPACT OF DBS SERVICES

(Monetary impact is an estimate of the value of benefits obtained or retained with help from a benefit specialist.)

- **Estimated statewide impact** of DBS services in 2011: **\$59,239,378**
- **Federal funds accounted for 88% of benefits gained** with help from a DBS. State (10%) and other funding such as donations (2%) made up the remainder.
- **Average monetary impact** of one full-time DBS in 2011: **\$925,615**
(Average based upon a total of 64 FTE positions, including 15 part-time and 56 full-time staff.)

DBS CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS

(Includes all clients with new cases opened in CY 2011.)

Client Age Range	
42%	50-59 years old
24%	40-49 years old
13%	30-39 years old
10%	21-29 years old
6%	18-20 years old
5%	Other

Client Disability Categories	
42%	Physical Disability only
18%	Physical Disability and Mental Illness
15%	Mental Illness only
7%	Developmental Disability only
7%	Other Disability combination
11%	Unknown/Not reported

Client Income (Includes only clients for whom income was reported. Income was reported for 79% of DBS clients in 2011.)
Seventy-five percent (75%) of DBS clients with a known income were at or below 120% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).*

*Family unit of 1 = \$1089/month; family unit of 2 = \$1,471/month; family unit of 3 = \$1,852/month

TOP TEN ISSUES ADDRESSED IN DBS CASES

(A single case may involve multiple issues. Data includes only issues reported for cases closed during 2011.)

Issue	% of Cases
Disability Determination Process (SSI/SSDI/Medicaid)	34
Medicare Part D	18
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Eligibility	12
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Eligibility	11
Medicaid Purchase Plan (MAPP)	9
Medicare Savings Programs (QMB, SLMB, SLMB+)	7
FoodShare	6
Medicaid Coverage	6
Benefit Check-up	5
Medical Assistance, Financial Eligibility	5

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY DETERMINATION CASES

Disability benefit specialists play a key role in helping individuals to access SSI and SSDI benefits. They work with individuals to avoid common errors in order to reduce frustration throughout the disability determination process. This includes explaining eligibility criteria, appeal options, and deadlines; filling out paperwork; gathering requisite documents; and helping to locate legal representation for those who request a hearing. ADRC data suggests that people who receive help from a DBS to file an application or appeal are more likely to receive a favorable decision.*

DBS Case Outcomes for SSI and/or SSDI applications and appeals (Data includes all cases closed in 2011 involving SSI and/or SSDI applications or appeals)			
Application/Appeal Level	Total Cases	Cases with Known Decision**	Cases where Benefits were Awarded**
Initial Application or Continuing Disability Review	2633	2046	46%
Request for Reconsideration	1109	821	27%
Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Hearing	497	173	66%

*Nationally in 2011, favorable SSI and/or SSDI disability determinations were issued in 34% of initial applications, 12% of requests for reconsideration and 58% of administrative law judge hearings (Social Security Administration Fiscal Year 2012 Operating Plan, Appendix 2, February 2012).

** Excludes cases with outcome listed as unknown or pending and those for whom the application or appeal was withdrawn prior to the issuance of a decision. Reasons for a pending or unknown outcome at case closure may include the provision of information-only services; client withdrawal or lack of contact; or referral to a private attorney.

SERVICES TO TRIBAL MEMBERS

Two full-time disability benefit specialists employed by Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council first began offering services in April 2010 to tribal members living on or near a Wisconsin reservation. In 2011, tribal DBSs provided services in 222 cases, reaching residents of all eleven tribal reservations. The total monetary impact of these services is estimated to be \$810,944.

SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

A DBS has been contracted since 2007 through the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to reach out to individuals using American Sign Language (ASL). In 2011, this DBS provided services in 98 cases, reaching individuals in 19 counties, with an estimated monetary impact of \$242,438. In addition, she made presentations and distributed materials about DBS services to consumers at ten events across central and southern Wisconsin, and created an informational video about the program in ASL for consumers on the Department's website.

DBS TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Department currently contracts with **Disability Rights Wisconsin** to provide technical assistance, substantive case oversight and ongoing training to the disability benefit specialists. A staff of 8 attorneys (7.15 FTE) was employed under this contract in 2011. **Wisconsin Judicare, Inc.** provides program attorney services to the tribal disability benefit specialists. Initial training for newly hired disability benefit specialists is coordinated by the **Wisconsin Disability Benefits Network (WDBN)**.



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