



Disability Benefit Specialist Services CY 2012 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 twelfth year of operation, the program expanded to serve Adams, Kewaunee, Menominee, Oconto, Oneida, Shawano, Taylor, and Vilas counties. Services were available in **36 ADRCs** covering **67 of Wisconsin's 72 counties**. Specialized services were offered for tribal members and for people who were deaf or hard of hearing.

NUMBERS SERVED

Number of Cases (A single client may have more than one case.)
11,025 new cases opened in 2012
3,550 cases carried over from CY 2011
10,581 cases closed in 2012

Number of Information-Only Contacts (No case opened. Brief contact ≤ 30 minutes)
7,032 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.)

- Ø **Estimated statewide impact** of DBS services in 2012: **\$61,255,177**
- Ø **Federal funds accounted for 84% of benefits gained** with help from a DBS. State (13%) and other funding such as donations (3%) made up the remainder.
- Ø **Average monetary impact** of one full-time DBS in 2012: **\$914,256**
(Average based upon a total of 67 FTE positions, including 13 part-time and 59 full-time staff.)

DBS CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS

(Includes all clients with new cases opened in CY 2012.)

Client Age Range	
42%	50-59 years old
24%	40-49 years old
13%	30-39 years old
11%	21-29 years old
6%	18-20 years old
4%	Other

Client Disability Categories	
45%	Physical Disability only
17%	Physical Disability and Mental Illness
16%	Mental Illness only
7%	Developmental Disability only
3%	Other Disability combination
9%	Unknown/Not reported

Client Income (Includes only clients for whom income was reported. Income was reported for 84% of DBS clients in 2012.)
Seventy-eight percent (78%) of DBS clients with a known income were at or below 120% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).*

*Family unit of 1 = \$1,117/month; family unit of 2 = \$1,513/month

TOP TEN ISSUES ADDRESSED IN DBS CASES

(A single case may involve multiple issues. Data includes only issues reported for cases closed during 2012.)

Issue	Percent of Cases
SSI/SSDI Eligibility	43%
Medicare Part D Options/Enrollment	16%
Medicaid Purchase Plan (MAPP)	11%
Medicare Savings Programs (QMB, SLMB, SLMB+)	7%
FoodShare	6%
Benefit Check-up	6%
Medicaid Financial Eligibility	6%
SSI/SSDI Post-Entitlement Issues	4%
Medicaid Disability Determination	4%
Medicaid Coverage, Items/Services	4%

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY DETERMINATION CASES

Disability benefit specialists play a key role in helping people to obtain disability benefits such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicare and Medicaid. They work with people to avoid common errors throughout the disability determination process by 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. Nationally, 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.* As illustrated below, Wisconsin's program data suggests that people who receive help from a DBS 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 2012)			
Application/Appeal Level	Total Number of Cases	Number of Cases with Known Decision**	Percentage of Cases where Benefits were Awarded**
Initial Application or Continuing Disability Review	2,887	2,207	44%
Request for Reconsideration	1,282	959	28%
Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Hearing	542	165	68%

* Social Security Administration Fiscal Year 2013 Continuing Resolution Operating Plan, Appendix 2, November 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 the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, are devoted to reaching tribal members living on or near a Wisconsin reservation. Program services began in April 2010. In 2012, tribal DBS caseloads increased by 139 percent, and the agency added a clerical assistant position to support the DBSs. Tribal DBSs provided services in 305 cases this year, reaching residents of all eleven tribal reservations. One hundred fifty-six cases were resolved in 2012, netting an estimated \$855,090 in benefits for tribal DBS clients.

SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

A disability benefit specialist 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 2012, this DBS provided services in 72 cases, reaching people who were deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind in fifteen counties, with an estimated monetary impact of \$262,951. In addition, she made presentations and distributed materials about benefits and program services to consumers and professionals at a myriad of local and statewide events.

DBS TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Initial training for newly hired disability benefit specialists is coordinated by the **Wisconsin Disability Benefits Network (WDBN)**, with subject matter expertise provided through a sub-contract with Disability Rights Wisconsin. In 2012, a total of eighteen new hires were trained completing 40 hours of online training and four days of in-person training.

Ongoing training, technical assistance and substantive case oversight are provided to the disability benefit specialists under a contract with **Disability Rights Wisconsin**. A staff of eight attorneys (7.15 FTE) was employed under this contract in 2012. Ongoing training events this year included two statewide events, eight regional skills-based workshops, eight regional roundtable sessions, and three webcasts on a wide array of benefits-related subjects, including the Medicaid Purchase Plan, immigrant and qualified alien eligibility issues, youth transitions, continuing disability reviews, letter writing techniques, Medicare Advantage and supplement plans, psychological evaluations and assessments, Social Security work incentives, the Affordable Care Act, Badger Care Plus, guardianship, powers of attorney and more.

Wisconsin Judicare, Inc. provides program attorney services to the tribal disability benefit specialists, including training on benefits issues unique to tribal members, as well as technical assistance and substantive case oversight.



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