



Disability Benefit Specialist Program Ongoing Training Requirements



In order to effectively serve clients, Disability Benefit Specialists (DBS) at Wisconsin's Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) must develop and maintain an in-depth knowledge of the wide array of benefits available to individuals with disabilities, as well as the skills to appeal eligibility decisions and pursue other advocacy strategies. For this reason, the Department of Health Services requires that all DBSs complete initial and ongoing training (ADRC Contract, Section III. F. 7. a).

Ongoing training, coordinated by the DBS program attorneys at Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW), is provided to all DBS through a minimum of eight events each year, including webcasts, regional in-person events, and statewide in-person events. The dates for all mandatory events are identified in the DBS training calendar issued annually by DRW. This ongoing training builds upon the core knowledge the DBS obtained in his or her initial training, alerts DBS to new benefit programs and changes in existing programs, and offers DBS the opportunity to hone their skills as advocates. DRW frequently solicits input on new training topics from the DBS.

Missed Trainings

If a DBS is unable to attend a mandatory training event, s/he should contact his/her assigned program attorney, ideally in advance of the event, to provide a reason for his/her absence and discuss options for making up the missed training. Some acceptable reasons for missing a mandatory DBS training might include illness or a conflicting professional obligation such as a client's hearing date.

Webcasts

To verify attendance at training webcasts, DBS are required to complete an online survey at the conclusion of each webcast, whether live or archived, to confirm that they have viewed it. The surveys are also used to track technical problems that interfere with the ability to view webcasts. Viewers may access the survey by clicking on the "paperclip" symbol above the webcast presenter screen. DBS should view the live webcast, if possible, so that they can pose questions to the presenters in real time. However, this is not always possible, for a variety of reasons. DBS who miss a live webcast are expected to watch the archived webcast promptly to ensure they are receiving timely information and updates. DBS will be notified by email as soon as the archived webcast is available for viewing.

Attendance Records

Disability Rights Wisconsin tracks DBS attendance at all of the events that are listed as mandatory in the annual DBS training calendar. The assigned program attorney will inform a DBS's direct supervisor and the DBS program coordinator at DHS if s/he identifies a pattern of unexcused absences. Attendance records will also be provided to the DBS program coordinator at DHS upon request.

Substitution of Alternative Training

If a DBS does not believe a given training topic would be useful, given his/her skills and experience, s/he may contact the assigned program attorney to discuss the matter. S/he should be prepared to propose an alternative training event that would be more useful to him/her. The assigned program attorney will consider such requests based upon an assessment of the DBS's current knowledge and skills.

Continuing Education Credits

Disability Rights Wisconsin maintains an ongoing list of DBSs who have requested a certificate of attendance for the purpose of Continuing Education Hours, Credits or Units. To be added to this list, the DBS should contact his/her program attorney. DBS program attorneys refer to the attendance record to verify a DBS's attendance at the event prior to providing a certificate of attendance.

Questions or Concerns

If you have questions or concerns about the date or location of trainings, or suggestions for future training topics, please contact the assigned program attorney at DRW.

If you have questions or concerns about the ADRC contractual requirement for DBS training or difficulties accessing online training materials or webcasts, please contact Rosa Plasencia, DBS Program Coordinator, in the Office for Resource Center Development at (608) 264-9851 or rosa.plasencia@dhs.wisconsin.gov.



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