

Disability Benefit Specialist Program

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. They help people avoid errors by explaining benefits eligibility criteria, appeal options, and deadlines; filling out paperwork; gathering documents; and helping to find legal representation for those who need it.

DBS are available at ADRCs statewide and receive extensive training and assistance. DBS partner with the following organizations:

- **The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council** employs two DBS for **tribal members** living on or near a reservation
- **The Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** employs a DBS for those who use **American Sign Language**
- **Disability Rights Wisconsin** provides ongoing training, technical assistance and case oversight to DBS
- **Wisconsin Judicare, Inc.** provides technical assistance and case oversight to the DBS employed by Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, and provides training on benefits issues unique to tribal members
- **Wisconsin Disability Benefits Network (WDBN)** coordinates initial training for newly hired DBS

DBS Services Make a Positive Economic Impact to Wisconsin communities.

Year: Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) DBS Positions	Federal	State	Other	Total	Average for one DBS
2015: 80 FTE DBS	84%	14%	2%	\$83,887,041	\$1,049,588
2014: 80 FTE DBS	83%	15%	2%	\$77,695,056	\$971,188
2013: 70 FTE DBS	82%	14%	4%	\$71,338,092	\$1,019,116
2012: 67 FTE DBS	84%	13%	3%	\$61,255,177	\$914,256

DBS Program Reaches Many. A DBS opens a “case” for each issue or related issues that they assist with. Matters that require fewer than 30 minutes to resolve are recorded as “information-only” contacts.

Year	Total Cases Opened	Total Cases Closed	Total Carry Over Cases	Total Info-Only Contacts (30 minutes or less)
2015	13,473	14,013	4,615	10,436
2014	13,874	13,352	4,078	10,674
2013	11,728	11,584	4,006	9,302
2012	11,025	10,581	3,550	7,032

The top 10 issues reported for DBS cases closed in 2015 are:

1. 44% - Assistance with Eligibility for Social Security Disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
2. 14% - Medicaid Purchase Plan (MAPP)
3. 14% - Medicare Part D Options/Enrollment
4. 8% - FoodShare
5. 7% - Medicare Savings Programs
6. 7% - BadgerCare+
7. 6% - SSI/SSDI Post-Entitlement Issues
8. 6% - Benefit Check-Ups
9. 5% - Medicaid Financial Eligibility
10. 4% - Medicare Advantage Options/Enrollment

DBS serve diverse population sectors. Of 2015 DBS customers:

- **50%** had a **Physical Disability** only
- **20%** had dual diagnoses of **Physical Disability** and **Mental Health**
- **17%** had **Mental Health** only
- **7%** reported other combinations of disabilities
- **6%** had a **Developmental Disability**

Quick Facts:

Wisconsin’s program data indicates that people who obtain help from a DBS are **more likely to receive a favorable Disability Determination decision.**

In 2015, **75% of DBS** customers had incomes **at or below 120% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**

DBS receive ongoing training to stay current. 2015 training topics included: End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD); Disability Determination Explanation (DDE); Ethics & Boundaries; Vocational Experts; Interviewing Clients; Introduction to Social Security & Social Security Administration (SSA) Advanced Topics.

