



Governor signs two bills that improve independence, employment of people with disabilities

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(MADISON) – Today Governor Walker signed two bills continue Wisconsin’s national leadership in supporting the independence and employment of people with disabilities.

The **Supported Decision-Making** legislation (AB 655) helps people with disabilities and older adults retain their independence and ability to make choices about their lives while also empowering them to ask a Supporter to help them gather information, compare options, and communicate their decisions to others.

“People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) can acquire new skills and decision-making capacity throughout their lives. Everyone, no matter their limitations, needs opportunity, experience, and support to make well-informed decisions,” Beth Swedeen, BPDD Executive Director, said. “The new law establishes a formal process that allows older adults and people with disabilities to retain their authority to make life decisions, while also having trusted people provide support.”

People who can use Supported Decision-Making agreements include people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, people with physical disabilities, people with mental health conditions, and people of any age with degenerative diseases or conditions that substantially interferes with activities of daily living or with the ability to provide self-care.

Wisconsin is the fourth state to sign Supported Decision-Making into law; no other state’s law is as comprehensive and stands to benefit so many of its citizens.

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD), the Arc, the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR), and Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) are pleased to offer free training on Wisconsin’s Supported Decision-Making law. You can register for a free webinar on May 23rd about Wisconsin’s new law here:

<https://thearc.webex.com/thearc/k2/j.php?MTID=t16235070cf8e1aebd67d94599abfef58>

The **Partners in Business Disability Employment** bill (AB 819) provides direct support and technical assistance to businesses interested in hiring people with disabilities. This bill expands a successful model that has resulted in a 75% community employment success rate statewide.

“The Employment First and Partners in Business bills continue the commitment by both the Legislature and the Governor to improving job opportunities for people with disabilities,” said Beth Swedeen.

“People with disabilities want to work, contribute to their communities, and pay taxes. These bills help both employees and employers find the right match.

“Many people with disabilities and their families have been passionate advocates for these pieces of legislation this session and have been eagerly awaiting these bills to become law,” said Beth Swedeen, BPDD Executive Director. “We are pleased that our state is being recognized as a leader on these issues by the national disability community on these issues.”