

Family Support Program

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Introduction

Family support program

Sec. 46.985, Wis. Stats.

HFS 65, Wis. Admin. Code

The Family Support Program (FSP) provides in-home support for families who have a child with severe disabilities living at home. The program helps families get services and supports they need to care for their children at home and maintain a quality family life. The program is designed to meet the individual needs of the whole family, not just the child with a disability.

Eligibility

Families are eligible to receive assistance if they:

- have a child under 21 with a severe disability living at home; or plan to have a child move back to the family home from an institution or other out-of-home placement within 6 months; and
- will be able to take care of their child at home if needed services and supports were made available.

In order for a family to be eligible for FSP, the child's disability must fit the state's definition of "severe disability". This definition includes children and young adults with severe physical, sensory, or emotional disabilities, as well as children with developmental disabilities. The disability must also seriously limit the child's ability to carry out basic daily living activities such as self-care, learning, communication, mobility and self-direction.

FSP Guidelines and Procedures,
Ability to Pay Instructions
Appendix D

There are no limits on the income of families in determining eligibility. Families with higher incomes will be asked to share the costs of the services they receive, on a sliding scale basis.

Waiting lists exist

Because each county has limited funding for this program, eligibility does not guarantee a family will receive services. Most counties have waiting lists. In addition, agencies may have long waiting lists for service provision. Families have a right to know the criteria for the waiting lists and their place on the waiting list. Families with a crisis situation or who are bringing a child home from an out-of-home placement may be given priority on these lists.

What the Program Offers

The FSP provides information and assistance in finding services and community resources. It can also assist in linking families with other families for support. Funding is available to purchase services and

HFS 65(8)(b), Wis. Admin. Code

goods that cannot be purchased through other sources. The FSP allows families to help in choosing the kind of services and goods needed. Funds can be used for such things as home modifications, in-home nursing services, child care, parent courses and home training, counseling and therapies, transportation, specialized diagnosis and evaluation, specialized diets and clothing, and specialized equipment and supplies. A family is limited to receiving a maximum of \$3,000 annually for each child with a disability.

In addition to the items listed above, there are other goods and services which could be funded, based upon individual family need and program approval.



Some counties limit the maximum annual allocation to a certain dollar amount far below the \$3,000 per year allowable maximum; give every family, regardless of need, a set annual dollar amount; or limit the array of services and supports that can be purchased or considered allowable. Some families have successfully overcome these arbitrary limits by challenging the county's decision to depart from the guidelines set forth in state statute and administrative rules.

How to Apply

Families can apply for services through their local county-based FSP. The application process includes an eligibility determination and a needs assessment. The agency that runs the FSP program must determine eligibility. The agency is responsible for notifying the parents in writing of the child's eligibility within 30 days of receipt of the application. A family may appeal a denial of eligibility of services or a termination of services to the Division of Hearings and Appeals.

Appeal rights
Sec. 46.985(6)(b), Wis. Stats.
State hearing process
Sec. 227, Wis. Stats.

State of Wisconsin, Division of Hearings and Appeals
5005 University Avenue, Suite 201
Madison, WI 53703-7875
608-266-3096 (Voice)/608-264-9853 (TTY)

If the application is approved, a Family Support Program Coordinator will visit the home to develop a service plan that addresses the family's support needs and to set priorities.

Who to Contact

To find the FSP Coordinator in your county, contact your county Department of Human Services (also called the Department of Community Programs or Unified Services Board), or contact your County Clerk. If the name and telephone number of the local County Coordinator is not known, call Wisconsin First Step at 1-800-642-7837 (Voice & TTY).