

**ANNUAL REPORT
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2021
(JULY 1, 2020-JUNE 30, 2021)**



**COUNCIL ON
PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities (Council) was created by the Wisconsin State Legislature in 1989 to address the needs of people with physical disabilities. The combined efforts of consumers, advocates, and legislators led to Wisconsin State Statute §46.29, establishing the 14-member Council, and assigning the Council the following responsibilities:

- Develop, approve, and continue modification of a state plan for people with physical disabilities.
- Advise and make recommendations to state agencies on funding, programs, policies, and legislation that impact people with physical disabilities.
- Promote public awareness about the abilities of and barriers to people with physical disabilities.
- Encourage the development of programs and policies that prevent physical disabilities.
- Submit recommendations in an annual report to the state legislature on imposed ordinances related to accessible parking and motor vehicle use by people with disabilities (Wis. Stat. § 346.50 (3m)).
- Consider all questions and matters concerning people with physical disabilities arising within the Council or brought to the Council for review.
- Form committees for consideration of policies or programs for people with physical disabilities.
- Meet at least four times annually.

The Council envisions a world where all people with physical disabilities have access to the same opportunities and life choices as any other Wisconsin resident.

To achieve this vision, the Council promotes programs and policies that enable people with physical disabilities to:

- Be included and integrated in their communities.
- Make their own life choices.
- Enter, re-enter, or remain in the workforce to the maximum of their capacity.
- Participate in improving and evaluating services.
- Utilize beneficial assistive technology.
- Access transportation and parking.
- Access affordable housing that is universally designed.

To learn more about the Council, please visit our [website](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd).

The Council is administratively attached to the Department of Health Services.

ANNUAL REPORT DEDICATED TO DR. NOAH HERSHKOWITZ

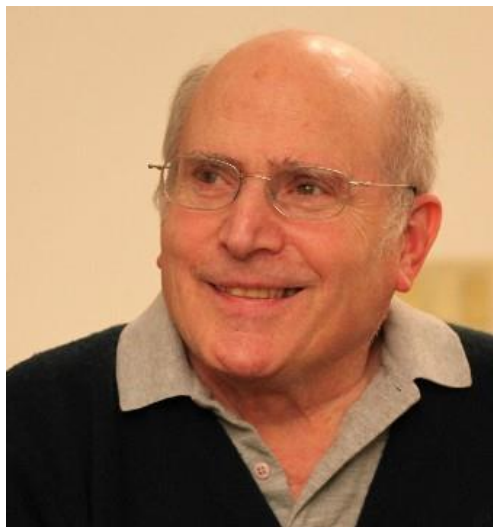


Image Description: Picture of Dr. Noah Hershkowitz smiling and wearing a gray collared shirt and black cardigan.

It is with great honor and sorrow that the Council dedicates this annual report to the memory of our dear friend and Council member Dr. Noah Hershkowitz.

Dr. Noah Hershkowitz, an Irving Langmuir Professor Emeritus of Engineering Physics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison died on November 13, 2020. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and a kind and generous mentor to generations of students.

Noah was born on August 16, 1941 in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. He graduated in 1958 from the High School of Music and Arts, where he met Rosalyn, his future wife of 58 years.

He obtained his B.S. in Physics from Union College in Schenectady in 1962, and went on to earn a Ph.D. in Physics at Johns Hopkins in 1966. He was a Professor of Physics at the University of Iowa (1967-81), and a Visiting Professor at UCLA (1974-75) and the University of Colorado-Boulder (1980-81), before joining the University of Wisconsin faculty in 1981. He began his career in nuclear physics but soon changed to plasma physics because “it looked like it would be more fun (and it was).” Not only did he make groundbreaking contributions to his chosen field, but he also gained the respect and admiration of his colleagues, both as a physicist and a human being.

Noah had a profound impact on the education, careers, and lives of many undergraduate and graduate students, including more than 50 who received their Ph.Ds. Retiring in 2012, he remained active as an emeritus professor, continuing to collaborate on papers and to supervise students with whom he shared his love of physics.

He chaired multiple associations and committees and was a Fellow of the American Physical Society (APS), the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the American Vacuum Society (AVS), and the Institute of Physics (IoP UK). He was the founder and Editor-in-Chief for sixteen years of Plasma Sources Science and

Technology, now a top journal in the field, and also served as an Associate Editor of Physics of Fluids and Physics Review Letters.

Noah received numerous awards during his career. Among them was the James Clerk Maxwell Prize in Plasma Physics (2004), the highest honor afforded by the APS Division of Plasma Physics (DPP), in which he was cited for his fundamental contributions to the physics of low-temperature plasmas. In 2015, he was presented with the IEEE Marie Skłodowska-Curie Award for innovative research and inspiring education in basic and applied plasma science.

Diagnosed with primary progressive multiple sclerosis (MS) at the age of 40, Noah never let MS slow him down. His acceptance of his disability was an inspiration to his family, friends, students, and colleagues. He was a member of several disability awareness committees, including the APS Task Force on Disabilities, the Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities, and Access to Independence. He also raised awareness simply by getting on with the work he loved: teaching, doing research, and traveling to conferences around the world, even after he had to use a wheelchair full-time. He continued to work until his final hospitalization, and was a co-author on three papers presented at the APS DPP conference the day before he died.

Noah served his peers within the state of Wisconsin and was very active on Council Committees and at full Council meetings. He also served as the Council's Transportation Committee Chair the past four years. Noah's keen intuition and the ability to articulate his own personal experiences to help others understand physical disability and the mission of the Council was a benefit to all. The Council considers it an honor to have known and worked with him.

COUNCIL YEAR-END SUMMARY

The Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities worked on the following major initiatives during State Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021).

- Policy: COVID-19 Pandemic and Response
 - Collaboration with Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities (GCPD)
- Policy: State Plan for People with Physical Disabilities, 2022-2024
- Policy: Participation on the Wisconsin Non-Driver Advisory Committee (WiNDAC)
- Project: New Emergency Preparedness Materials and Outreach Grant

POLICY: COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RESPONSE

COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (GCPD)

Ben Barrett serves as the Council's representative on the Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities (GCPD) and as a GCPD Executive Committee member. GCPD is dedicated to enhancing the health and well-being of Wisconsin citizens who have disabilities.

GCPD and its constituent councils across the disability spectrum have been closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities. National data is clear that people with disabilities are at greater risk than the general population to contract the virus, to be hospitalized for it, and tragically, to die from it. In the midst of this extreme level of concern, it is more important than ever that people with disabilities be afforded equal access to health care services.

Wisconsin is in a state of emergency, which is the exact time when people with disabilities and other vulnerable adults need additional support. Yet, GCPD has learned that people with disabilities have been denied reasonable accommodations, which has impeded their access to health care services. GCPD learned this when it recently conducted the *Right to Have a Support Person/Caregiver at Appointment Survey*.

Based on the survey results, GCPD learned that in many health care settings, a common policy designed to control the spread of COVID-19 has unfairly infringed upon the rights of people with disabilities, specifically, by not allowing a disability support person (paid or unpaid) to accompany a person with a disability during medical consultation and treatments. The accompanying person would be in a position to provide personal care and positioning, clear communication, and explanation of medical options. Perhaps most important, the accompanying person would be in a position to provide personal advocacy. Regrettably, these policies may result in harmful and sub-optimal clinical outcomes for people with disabilities. The Council also recognizes that this has had a disproportionate impact on people with physical disabilities who may rely on caregiver support to access medical care.

As a result, the Council and GCPD have partnered to create the [Emergency Preparedness Communications Folder](#), available on the Council's website (dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd/toolkit.htm). The folder was designed as a resource for health care providers and people with disabilities to address communication and access barriers. Accessibility applies to both communication and physical access.

POLICY: STATE PLAN FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, 2022-2024

The Council's State Plan Committee began working on identifying priority areas for the new State Plan for People with Physical Disabilities. Kathy Johnson served as Chair of the State Plan Committee from June 2020 through May 2021 and the Council thanks her for her service in this role. Ben Barrett is now serving as Chair of the State Plan Committee. The Council identified the following topics as critical to the success and overall health and well-being of people with physical disabilities:

- Emergency Preparedness
- Employment
- Living Independently (which includes Housing and Long-Term Support)
- Transportation

The Council is finalizing the State Plan, which should be completed in November 2021. The Council is hopeful that the program and policy recommendations included in the State Plan, if implemented, will result in increased quality of life and opportunities for people with physical disabilities in Wisconsin. The Council looks forward to continuing to address issues that will allow people with disabilities to have the same opportunities and life choices as every Wisconsin resident.

POLICY: PARTICIPATION ON THE WISCONSIN NON-DRIVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) formed the Wisconsin Non-Driver Advisory Committee (WiNDAC) in spring 2020, as an advisory forum to discuss transportation mobility, safety, and access for Wisconsin's non-driving populations. The Advisory Committee is comprised of people who do not drive due to physical, mental, or developmental disabilities; age; financial constraints; or personal choice.

The Council is a member of WiNDAC and has been active in advising and identifying transportation barriers for non-drivers and developing recommendations to reduce these challenges and improve mobility for all. Jason Ostrowski participated in WiNDAC on behalf of the Council through April 2021, and Charles Vandenplas, the Council's Transportation Committee Chair, is now serving in this role. The Council thanks Jason Ostrowski for serving in this role on behalf of the Council.

The Council's State Plan for People with Disabilities, 2022-2024 identifies the need to promote accessible, safe, and affordable transportation for all people with physical disabilities, wherever they choose to live; as well as collaboration with others on non-driver initiatives, public transportation and rural transportation.

PROJECT: NEW EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MATERIALS AND OUTREACH GRANT

NEW EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MATERIALS

The Council and Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities (GCPD) partnered to create the Emergency Preparedness Communications Folder. This folder was designed as a resource for health care providers and people with disabilities to address communication and access barriers. Accessibility applies to both communication and physical access. This folder includes several documents including:

- Know Your Rights.
- Health Care and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Emergency Preparedness Visual Communication Tool.
- Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine Infographic.
- Office for Deaf or Hard of Hearing COVID-19 Communication Card

It is the Council's hope that health care providers will be able to utilize the information and communication tools enclosed in this folder to increase access to health care and that this information will be used to educate staff about reasonable accommodations and about the civil rights of people with disabilities. In addition, it is important for health care professionals to be aware of how to effectively communicate with patients who have a range of disabilities, including people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, or who have a speech, vision, or intellectual disability. The communication tools enclosed can be helpful. The folder also contains information on how providers should ensure that accessible medical equipment is available for people with disabilities (such as scales, examination tables, or chairs) and should plan for additional time during examinations, if needed.

In addition, the folder contains information for people with disabilities about their rights, how to request a reasonable accommodation in a health care setting, and what to do if this request is denied. This information will assist individuals with disabilities to increase and maintain their access to health care services. This folder also contains communication tools that may be useful to people with disabilities for communicating in health care or emergency situations when a reasonable accommodation is being put into place, but urgent communication is needed, or when a reasonable accommodation has been denied.

The Emergency Preparedness Communications Folder is available in both electronic and print formats. The electronic version is available on the [Council's website](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd/toolkit.htm) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd/toolkit.htm). You may also request print copies by contacting the Council directly.

OUTREACH GRANT

The Council issued the fourth edition of the “Be Prepared, Have a Plan: Emergency Preparedness Toolkit for People with Disabilities.” The toolkit serves as a resource for people with disabilities to proactively prepare for emergencies and natural disasters. The toolkit includes tips, checklists, forms, medical emergency wallet card, visual communications tool, and other resources.

In February 2021, the Council received a \$100,000 grant from the Department of Health Services Office of Preparedness and Emergency Health Care (OPEHC) to update the Emergency Preparedness Toolkit, create new documents and information related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and develop an Emergency Preparedness Toolkit mobile application.

The new materials the Council developed include:

Know Your Rights – This handout provides information on federal and state laws that protect people’s civil rights and prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities in the health care setting. It also discusses how to request reasonable accommodations and what to do if these requests are denied.

Emergency Communications Folder – This folder was designed as a resource for health care providers and people with disabilities to address communication and access barriers in the health care setting.

Pandemic Information – The pandemic section of the Emergency Preparedness Toolkit was updated to include additional prevention and preparedness information based on the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Emergency Preparedness Application – The Council also began to design an Emergency Preparedness Application (app) for smart devices that will be available via Google Play and the Apple App Store. The app will include all the forms and checklists from the Emergency Preparedness Toolkit in a fillable format, which can be saved to a smart device or sent to a printer. The Council anticipates completion of the app in fall 2021.

The Emergency Preparedness Toolkit and all related tools and materials are available on the [Council's website](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd/toolkit) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd/toolkit).

To date, the Council has received over \$200,000 in grant funds to support the Emergency Preparedness Toolkit since 2017 and has disseminated 2,262 emergency preparedness toolkits and conducted 30 toolkit presentations to a total of 1,241 individuals throughout Wisconsin.

If you or your organization would like more information on the Emergency Preparedness Communications Folder, the Emergency Preparedness Toolkit, or to request a formal presentation on disability etiquette, effective communication, or emergency preparedness, please contact the Council at 608-266-5364 or ashley.walker@dhs.wisconsin.gov.

LOOKING FORWARD

In order for the Council to accomplish its goals and achieve its vision, it is necessary to hear from people with physical disabilities and other concerned individuals. The Council values and relies on input from the public on programs and policies that impact people with physical disabilities. Write, email, or call with your concerns, opinions, or suggestions to the Council. Individuals are also encouraged to attend Council meetings, as all meetings are open to members of the public. Additionally, a portion of every meeting agenda is set aside to receive public comment. The Council will carefully consider the problems people cite, the laws people feel need to be changed, and suggestions people have to make state programs more effective for people with physical disabilities.

The Council is hopeful the policies and project it worked on during State Fiscal Year 2021 will result in increased quality of life and opportunities for people with physical disabilities in Wisconsin. The Council looks forward to continuing to address issues that will allow people with disabilities to have the same opportunities and life choices as every Wisconsin resident. If you would like to work with the Council on projects, policies, or legislation, please contact us.

Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities

1 West Wilson St., Suite 551
PO Box 2659
Madison, WI 53701-2659

Phone: 608-716-9212

Website: dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Wisconsin-Council-on-Physical-Disabilities-1890634407878497>

STATE COUNCIL MEMBERS AND LIASIONS – STATE FISCAL YEAR 2021

Council Member* Name	Location/County	Council Role
Ben Barrett	Trego, WI/Washburn County	Council Chairperson/Person with a Physical Disability
Jason Ostrowski	Waukesha, WI/Waukesha County	Council Vice-Chairperson/Person with a Physical Disability
Roberto Escamilla II	Hayward, WI/Sawyer County	Employment and Health Committee Chair/Person with a Physical Disability
Gabriel Schlieve	Eau Claire, WI/Eau Claire County	Person with a Physical Disability
Dr. Noah Hershkowitz	Madison, WI/Dane County	Person with a Physical Disability
Karen Secor	Montreal, WI/Iron County	Emergency Preparedness Committee Chair/Public Member
Charles Vandenplas	Shawano, WI/Shawano County	Person with a Physical Disability
Nicole Herda	Two Rivers, WI/Manitowoc County	Parent of a Person with a Physical Disability
Jackie Gordon	New Richmond, WI/St. Croix County	Council Secretary/Relative of a Person with a Physical Disability
Kathy Johnson	Madison, WI/Dane County	Relative of a Person with a Physical Disability
Artrell Mason	Milwaukee, WI/Milwaukee County	Person with a Physical Disability

The Council had four Council vacancies as of June 30, 2021. If you are interested in becoming a member, please visit the [Council's website](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/cpd) for more information.

Liaison Member Name	Agency	Council Role
Jody Ullman	Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Insurance	Liaison Member
Heather Bruemmer	Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long-Term Care	Liaison Member
Eva Kubinski	Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction	Liaison Member
Taqwanya Smith	Wisconsin Department of Transportation	Liaison Member
Craig Wehner	Division of Vocation Rehabilitation, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development	Liaison Member
Nicholas Zouski	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource	Liaison Member
Eric Cormany	Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Insurance	Liaison Member