

## Children's Disability Programs Diversity and Equity Conversations Community Agency and Family Input Sessions Summary

### Background

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) wants to improve equity in Wisconsin health care systems for diverse populations and for individuals of all physical and mental abilities. This includes improving programs and experiences for children and families in DHS children's disability programs.

Online input sessions were held with local community agencies, families, and tribes to learn their experiences with children's disability programs and to get ideas to help families of all backgrounds be treated the same.

The goals of these input sessions were to:

- Hear feedback about DHS programs for children with disabilities.
- Learn about experiences of families in programs for children with disabilities.
- Get ideas about how to reach more families.
- Get ideas about how we can better support families.

### Input Sessions

DHS held four input sessions to hear from diverse populations in Wisconsin. A session was held for community agencies on May 5, 2022; families on May 19 and 24; and with Tribal Nations on June 16.

Participants were asked:

- How well current information materials for children's disability programs show different kinds of families and provide important information.
- What it was like participating in the Birth to 3 Program, the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Program, and Katie Beckett Medicaid.
- What helped the family participate in these programs and what made it hard for the family to participate.
- What DHS can do to reach and help more families and make it easier to participate.
- How DHS can better partner with community agencies.

### Feedback

DHS received valuable feedback during the input sessions. These thoughts and ideas will help shape racial health equity activities for children's disability programs.

Participants shared the following:

- **Materials:** Agencies and families shared that they have found the new materials about the Birth to 3 Program helpful and informative. They liked that the updates include a wider representation of different types of families and are translated into Spanish or Hmong. Agencies and families shared that children's disability programs need to continue to improve communication with families whose preferred language is not English. Agencies shared that more visual and video-based resources reflecting diverse families and cultures would be welcomed by their communities.
- **Awareness:** Both agencies and families shared that children's disability programs have had a very positive impact for many families and are an important resource, but families of diverse backgrounds continue to be connected to these programs when their children are older. One family shared that accessing the Katie Beckett program connected them to other programs that have made a big difference for their family.



- **Relationships:** Community agencies and tribal communities shared that supporting families is most effective when children's disability programs have relationships with community resources families already trust and have relationships with, such as doctors and nurses, childcare providers, and other community-based agencies.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Understanding of cultural practices is vital to successfully enrolling and engaging with families. Tribal Nations shared that it is important families do not feel judged and are able to get services in places they feel comfortable if they do not want someone in the home. Knowledge of cultural practices includes local community and individual cultural norms and practices. Community agencies shared the importance of hiring bilingual and multicultural staff and providing all staff with cultural awareness, responsiveness, and competency training to support this understanding.
- **Workforce:** Diversity among support and services coordinators and service providers is important. Community agencies shared the importance of hiring bilingual and multicultural staff.

### Next Steps for DHS

The information shared by participants at these input sessions will be used to inform racial health equity and other program improvement efforts for DHS' children's disability programs.