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The Arc Wisconsin Honored to Serve on Governor's Task Force on Caregiving

The Arc Wisconsin, along with other disability and older adult advocates, is ready to get to work tackling Wisconsin's family caregiver and direct care workforce crisis as a member of the newly named Governor's Task Force on Caregiving. The Arc Wisconsin Executive Director, Lisa Pugh, was named to the Task Force Monday.

"We estimate there are more than half a million family caregivers in Wisconsin currently,"^[1] says Lisa Pugh, Executive Director of The Arc Wisconsin and co-chair of the Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA). "Family caregivers provide nearly 80 percent of all care to their loved ones with disabilities and older adult family members. When they cannot find paid help, respite or other supports, this affects a lot of people, including our economy."

A recent survey by the WFACSA found that nearly three-quarters of employers said that caregiving increases stress in the workplace, including lost work time. Find full results of the Wisconsin report here: <http://wisconsinicaregiver.org/employer-engagement-workgroup>

The Task Force will also make recommendations to address the paid direct care workforce crisis. The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations has found that more than 85% of Wisconsinites who rely on paid direct care workers for some or all their support needs cannot find enough help to meet their needs

"We know that individual with disabilities and families are stressed," says Pugh, who is also a family caregiver. "The Task Force acknowledges this as a crisis and outlines next steps to find solutions. We are hopeful."

Last year The Arc released results of a national family survey assessing caregiver issues. Like national results, 97% of responding families from Wisconsin reported difficulties finding direct care workers and 98% said they had trouble finding respite. 98% reported some level of stress with more than half indicating they are very or extremely stressed.¹ In Wisconsin 60% of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (of a total of 54,202) live with their family.²

¹ Anderson, L., Hewitt, A., Pettingell, S., Lulinski, A, Taylor, M., & Reagan, J. (2018) Family and Individual Needs for Disability Supports (v.2) Community Report 2017. Minnesota: Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota; The Arc of the United States.

² Source: Braddock et al., Coleman Institute and Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado, 2017. <http://stateofthestates.org>

The Governor’s Executive Order outlines key areas the Task Force will address, including among other things:

- Strategies to attract and retain a strong direct care workforce
- Supports for families providing care
- The need for a registry of home care providers and services that help match people to workers who can help them
- Attention to wages and health benefits for workers to strengthen the workforce.

“These are steps that will help family caregivers,” says Pugh. “A quarter of family caregivers for people with disabilities across the state are over age 60. These families are worried about what happens when they are no longer here.”

The Arc Wisconsin advocates for and serves people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc Wisconsin has 15 local chapters and is connected to a network of more than 650 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.

Editor’s Note: The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC and never ARC. The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.