

2003 Proposed Dane County Department of Human Services Budget  
Developmental Disabilities Coalition Statement

My name is Jean Robertson. I am the Vice Chair of the Developmental Disabilities Coalition and the Area Director for Dungarvin, WI.

I am here tonight on behalf of the DD Coalition. Formed over 18 years ago, the purpose of the Coalition is to promote and deliver quality human services for over 2000 residents of Dane County with developmental disabilities. This is accomplished through advocacy, communication and collaboration among provider agencies, public education, and creative problem solving regarding limited resources.

For years the Coalition has worked collaboratively with the Department of Human Services staff to achieve efficiencies. In 2002, together we implemented several strategic initiatives to achieve savings. In addressing the Roommate Openings initiative, we have accomplished interagency roommate matching that has resulted in the closing of some homes. We will continue to work on interagency roommate matching of people in 2003. There are now several people who are able to be alone during the night which has reduced residential staff costs. They are able to be alone because of a Safe at Home/Sound Response system that uses technology for the monitoring of people during the night and dispatches a person to help if necessary. Agencies are continuing to come together in cooperation with County staff to more widely implement this system. We will continue to work collaboratively to implement these and other cost effective strategies.

Despite all of our attempts to live within an eroding funding environment, we are sinking and desperately need your help. Providers of community based services for people with developmental disabilities have received 10% less than inflation in the last decade. Along with the funding for the \$8.70 Living Wage Ordinance, we must receive a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment and a separate health insurance increase of 1.5%. The funding for the \$8.70 living wage only addresses the wages for newly hired people. If we do not receive the 3% COLA, we will not have the money to increase the wages of existing workers. Would you work 2,3,4 years for an employer who was only able to pay you the same rate as a newly hired employee? People we support and their families are very concerned about employee turnover. Health Insurance premiums have increased an average of 12% a year in the past 3 years and are expected to continue to climb. Some agencies are experiencing 20 % plus increases this year. We need a separate 1.5% increase for health insurance.

We believe that people with disabilities deserve fair treatment in the budget process. If you want us to continue the quality supports that we have provided in the past for individuals in Dane County with developmental disabilities, please support a 3% COLA, funding for the \$8.70 Living Wage Ordinance, and a separate 1.5% increase for health insurance for providers of community based services for people with developmental disabilities.