

Wisconsin Opportunity Act

Comprehensive legislation designed to aid communities in the fight against poverty

Findings



The Wisconsin Opportunity Act aims to provide the transformational investments that reduce poverty and fundamentally improve people's economic circumstances.

Wisconsin Community Services Block Grant

WOA creates:

Wisconsin state supplement CSBG program (25% State Match)

Housing Stability

WOA calls for an additional:

\$5 million for the
Housing Assistance Program



WOA also:

- Increases funding to the Critical Assistance Program to defray housing costs for low-to-moderate income households.
- Establishes a pilot program in WHEDA for homeless families & children.
- Requires DPI to issue a report to the legislature on the number of homeless children & youth identified in the public-school system
- Directs the Interagency Council on Homelessness to review programs & identify ways to better serve homeless children & youth
- Authorizes a rental assistance program
- Requires WHEDA to annually issue a report on households with 'worst case scenario housing' needs

Civil Legal Services

Expands civil legal services for low-income individuals

Workforce Development & Job and Income Supports

WOA calls for an additional:



\$799,400 in the
**Job & Business
Development Program**

\$500,000 for the
Skills Enhancement Program



WOA also:

Increases the earned income threshold for SEP eligibility to 200% of the poverty line

Calls for the inclusion of homeless populations within Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) strategic plans

Calls for a pilot program by DWD to offer job & employment services for individuals receiving housing vouchers or receiving services from state-funded homeless shelters

Transportation Services & Coordination

WOA calls for an additional:

\$249,450 for the
**Transportation Employment
Mobility Program**

10% of the total amount of state aid
payments for
**Mass transit serving areas with
population <50,000**

WOA also:

Requires DHS to determine and implement a reimbursement rate for nonemergency medical transportation services for certain Medical Assistance recipients

Health Supports

WOA calls for:



\$848,000 to DHS to
develop & expand
Sober Living Residences



WOA also:

Increases funding for lead abatement services

Authorizes a grant program within DHS to provide CAAs with support to respond to the needs of communities and low-income families & individuals in crisis resulting from opioid addiction-related issues

Research

WOA calls for:

\$50,000 to DATCP for
Mental Health Research on Farmer Suicide

\$50,000 to support the annual
Wisconsin Poverty Report

Support the Wisconsin Opportunity Act

Visit wiscap.org/woa for information on:

Calling your State
Representatives &
Senator

Accessing a template for a
Local Government/State Board
Resolution

Adding your
organization to our list
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The Wisconsin Opportunity Act

The Wisconsin Opportunity Act is a comprehensive initiative to address the root causes of poverty while fundamentally improving the current economic circumstances of our neighbors. This act furthers the goal of addressing barriers to achieving economic stability by providing housing, health, job training, and income supports.

INTRODUCED BY: Rep. Lisa Subeck, Sen. Jeff Smith, and Sen. LaTonya Johnson

BILL SUMMARY:

Wisconsin Community Services Block Grant

- Creates a Wisconsin state supplement to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to provide services such as employment or housing assistance, financial planning, or educational services to low-income individuals [25% State Match].
- Increases the income cap for receiving services from a community action agency from 125% to 200% of federal poverty line.

Improving Housing Stability and Addressing Homelessness

- Increases funding to the Critical Assistance Program to defray housing costs of households of low-to-moderate income.
- Provides \$5,000,000 in additional funding to counties, municipalities, and community organizations through the Housing Assistance Program to facilitate the independent living of homeless persons.
- Creates a rental assistance program for individuals and families who have suffered an economic hardship with household income up to 80% of County Median Income.
- Establishes a pilot program to give priority to homeless children and their families within the WHEDA Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- Directs the Interagency Council on Homelessness to review the state's housing and homelessness-related programs and identify ways to better serve homeless children and youth.
- This bill requires the Department of Public Instruction to issue a report to the legislature on the number of homeless children and youth identified in the public-school system.
- The bill requires WHEDA to annually issue a report on households with "worst case housing needs" in this state.

Workforce Development & Job and Income Supports

- Increase funding for the job creation and development for individuals with low incomes, known as the Job and Business Development Program (DWD).
- Increases funding to provide skills enhancement services, including access to transportation, childcare, career counseling, job placement assistance, and financial support for education and training. Expands eligibility into said program by raising the earned income threshold eligibility to 200 percent of the federal poverty line.
- Requires the inclusion of homeless populations within Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) strategic plans to provide employment and training activities for job seekers and workers.
- Establishes a pilot, through the Department of Workforce Development to offer job and employment services for individuals receiving housing vouchers or receiving services from state-funded homeless shelters. Pilot funded at \$500,000 in each fiscal year of the 2021-2023 biennium.

- The bill provides funding to expand the Transitional Jobs Program outside of Milwaukee County, which provides wage subsidies to employers of certain low-income parents or primary caregivers of a child and low-income young adults.
- Expands the Wisconsin Shares childcare subsidy for low-income parents with infants and toddlers: Increases program eligibility from 185% FPL to 200% FPL to help working parents with very young children stay in the workforce.
- Establishes an internet assistance program for low-income individuals and families up to 200% of federal poverty rate.

Health Supports

- The bill would authorize a grant to address the needs of communities and low-income families and individuals in crisis resulting from opioid addiction-related issues.
- The bill would provide \$848,000 to encourage the development and expansion of sober living residences.
- Ensures early intervention services for children with lead in their blood (Birth to 3).
- Increases state funding for Lead-Safe Homes Program by \$28,400,000 over the fiscal biennium to repair owner-occupied and rental properties to make them lead-safe for low-income children.
- Authorizes one General Purpose Revenue position within DHS and increases funding to increase the Windows Plus lead exposure program to renovate homes that are inhabited or frequently visited by low-income families with children.
- Increases the state bonding authority for the Safe Drinking Water Loan Program, allowing the replacement of lead service lines.

Transportation Services and Coordination

- Increase the funding by \$249,450 for the transportation employment mobility program.
- Increases the total amount of state aid payments for mass transit systems serving areas having a population of less than 50,000 by 10%.
- Requires DHS to determine and implement a reimbursement rate for nonemergency medical transportation services for Medical Assistance recipients who are nursing home residents that is the same as the prevalent brokerage reimbursement rate applied to other nonemergency medical transportation services for Medical Assistance recipients.

Civil Legal Services for People with Low Income

- Directs the Department of Children and Families to provide matching funds in each fiscal year to the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation for the provision of civil legal services to eligible individuals and to programs that provide legal services to income eligible individuals.

Advancement of Research on Poverty and Mental Health

- Requires grants to perform research on mental health issues and access to mental health services in rural areas of the state.
- Requires the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System to allocate \$50,000 to support for the Institute of Research on Poverty to provide the annual Wisconsin Poverty Report.