

Statewide Caregiver Call

May 25, 2021

2021 - 2023 State Budget

The legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) has been meeting weekly as they begin to craft their own version of the next biennial state budget. To date, the JFC has advanced proposals for addressing housing needs, but has postponed any decisions on funding for broadband expansion and has yet to take up the Dept. of Health Services or Dept. of Transportation budget. The committee indicates their plan is to complete the budget by 6/30/21 (the end of the state fiscal year).

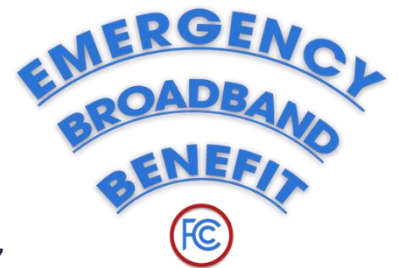
Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) Aging Advocacy Online – 2021 – May 10th & 12th

Overall, the events went very well. Over 175 people participating from nearly all Wisconsin Senate districts and approximately 75% of the Assembly districts.

There were many first-time participants in the 2021 online events. Feedback evaluations include positive comments regarding training and role-play session provided in advance of the legislative meetings. It has been recommended these components continue to be provided in advance of Aging Advocacy Day visits even when in-person visits resume.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced eligible households can begin applying for the new Emergency Broadband Benefit program starting **May 12, 2021**. The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a program of the FCC designed to help families and households struggling to afford internet service during the COVID-19 pandemic. This new benefit will connect eligible households to critical healthcare services, virtual classrooms, essential resources, jobs and much more. For more information about the new program go to: <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>.



Program benefits include:

- Up to \$50/month discount for broadband service;
- Up to \$75/month discount for households on qualifying Tribal lands; and
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet purchased through a participating provider.

Benefits are limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a temporary program developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **The program will end once the program funds are exhausted, or six months after the Department of Health and Human Services declares and end to the pandemic, whichever comes first.**

To assist communities, outreach partners, and grassroots organizers in raising awareness about the Emergency Broadband Benefit, toolkit materials are now available for download at: <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-outreach-toolkit>. The outreach toolkit is a collection of social media, printable materials, and other content.

For additional information, see the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin – Emergency Broadband Benefit Information Sheet – <https://psc.wi.gov/Documents/broadband/EmergencyBroadbandBenefit-Information%20v3.pdf> and Consumer FAQ - <https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-faq-emergency-broadband-benefit>

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)

The Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services (DHS) is beginning the transition to a new statewide manager/broker for NEMT services. Over the next six months NEMT service management will transition from MTM to a Veyo, a broker based in San Diego, CA. DHS has set a target start date of Nov. 1, 2021.

State Legislation

Elections Legislation:

A large package of elections bills introduced earlier this session are continuing to work their way through the process. These bills, introduced to address concerns of voter fraud, could make it harder for older adults and people with disabilities to vote. Voter fraud has not been a significant problem in Wisconsin and recent reports indicate it remains exceptional rare.

"27 possible cases of voter fraud identified," Scott Bauer, Associated Press, May 22, 2021

"Wisconsin election officials identified just over two dozen potential cases of voter fraud out of 3.3 million ballots cast in the November presidential election and forwarded them to local district attorneys for possible prosecution, based on documents obtained Friday by The Associated Press under the state's open records law."

Go here -> <https://wisconsinstatejournal-wi-app.newsmemory.com/?publink=3095dd826>

For more information about election bills of concern to aging and disability advocates and other disability voter rights issues, check out the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition at: <https://disabilityvote.org/>

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Elder Law & Advocacy Center

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