

## PRESERVING DISABILITY SUPPORTS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN AFTER COVID

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations is a cross-disability coalition of nearly 30 state and local organizations and groups. For more than 20 years, Survival has focused on changing and improving policies and practices that support people with disabilities of all ages to be full participants in community life. People with disabilities and their families have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. In a recent Survival survey of more than 300 people with disabilities and their families, we can see the full impact of COVID-19 on the disability community and the significant needs that must be addressed in the biennial budget.

**Summary:** 26% of the respondents were people with disabilities, 47% were family members, and 27% Support persons. 65% indicated they use some form of Long-Term Care, 25% Children's Long-Term Support or other children's services, and 32% indicated using special education services. All respondents indicated they have experienced some changes in services that have had a negative impact on their or their loved one during the pandemic. Families' concerns over the direct care workforce crisis have been elevated during this pandemic. Loss of skills, deteriorating emotional health, and financial instability were predominant themes throughout the survey responses.

### Here are some of the results:

## EMPLOYMENT

**24% of working people with disabilities** have experienced barriers to employment supports, and nearly **more than one in four** are worried they will lose their jobs.



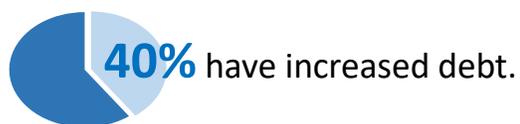
The pandemic has also taken a toll on working families supporting a loved one with a disability who now may be more disconnected from their services or prior activities: More than a third of responding family members are worried they will lose their own jobs.

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## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Many families of children experienced a lasting impact as a result of the pandemic.

**1 in 3** lost their jobs.



**1 in 8** lost their home



**1 in 5** lost health insurance.

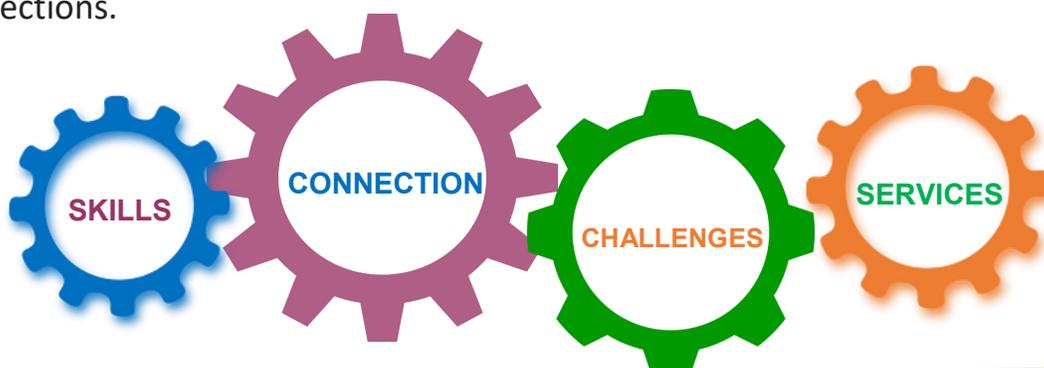


**1 in 2** experienced severe depression, isolation, loss of services and direct care staff.



## SPECIAL EDUCATION

**9 in 10** report a negative change in special education services. **3 in 4** families expect their child to experience skill regression. **2 in 3** expect or are experiencing increased behavior challenges. Over **2 in 3** say they expect their child to lose friendships and critical social connections.



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## WORKFORCE



**NEARLY HALF** of respondents indicated that if funding for direct care workers does not change they will need to continue to rely on their family members to meet their unmet care needs.

**47%** of family caregivers who completed the survey stated their main concerns about the lasting impacts of COVID on their family will be experiencing permanent loss of direct care or respite workers they rely on every day.

## MENTAL HEALTH



While only slightly more than **1 in 10** identified themselves as having a mental health condition, concerns about the negative impact of the pandemic on mental health was shared by many of the respondents. **OVER HALF** expressed concerns about a lasting increase in depression, social isolation and need for behavioral and mental health supports to address them. It must be recognized that we need to plan for continuing increased access to mental health services long after many other elements have returned to pre-pandemic levels.

