

Promise Newsletter January 2018

Happy New Year!

We hope you had a wonderful Holiday!

With the new year upon us, we have an exciting event coming up this month. We are hosting a Promise Family Overnight in Wisconsin Dells! This is a unique opportunity for Promise youth and families to get away, connect with each other, and learn valuable information. The event is only for youth and families who have not completed Self-Advocacy or Family Advocacy trainings. Registration is required by Jan. 8th and you must contact your Promise Counselor to register. Check out our [Flyer](#) and [Facebook](#) event.

Top 6 Skills Employers Look For

Are you looking for a new job or career change? These six skills are what employers are looking for:

- Professional experience
- Communication skills
- Demonstrating a positive attitude
- Networking your way to success
- Problem solving and critical thinking
- Being professional

Contact your [Promise Counselor](#) for help with these skills.

Learn more about [Promise Services!](#)

Join Us. We'll Provide the Hot Chocolate!

This winter we are offering [trainings and services](#) for teens and families:

- Be a better advocate
- Learn about the essential skills employers are looking for
- Increase your financial confidence
- Get an update on your Social Security benefits - This is important if your teen is turning 18 soon!

Contact your [Promise Counselor](#) to get started today.

Promise Services Guide

Over the course of the project, we've all worked together to uncover and gather resources that will help youth and families to succeed when it comes to training for, finding, and keeping a job. Recently, we've compiled all that information into a single resource, so you have everything you need right at your fingertips. You can download your free copy [here](#).

Ellie's Updates

Promise Services Summary

Do you have a Promise Story? Tell us how [Promise has impacted you!](#)

Check out the [Promise Services Summary](#) and find out how Promise is impacting Wisconsin Promise Youth and Families. The more impact we can have with more youth and their family members, the more we will be able to demonstrate how Wisconsin Promise Services and

Supports can help to increase participants' education, employment, and financial self-sufficiency.

Lessons Learned:

Wisconsin Promise's Response to SSA's Request:

Are there any policy "lessons learned" you would like to make sure SSA and Congress are aware of at this time?

- **Case management.** Case management is needed to help youth receiving SSI and their families better navigate SSA benefits and work incentives. This is especially the case when youth and family members start working and monthly income changes. In addition, case management is needed to help connect SSI youth and their families to services and supports that can help increase their education, employment, and financial self-sufficiency.
 - **SSA Navigation.** SSA is a large and complicated system. Existing SSA resources are insufficient to provide the individual consultation required to assist families and youth to understand the work incentives available and how to use these work incentives, and ultimately report monthly earnings to avoid over payments. Something "as simple as" Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE) is not automatic (even when the youth is younger than 18). If a youth or parent/guardian fill out one piece of paper incorrectly or if they miss one call, this can impact their benefits to the point that the youth and family find it's easier not to work at all. Work incentives benefits specialists can help youth and families navigate this system but not everyone receiving SSI is connected to a work incentive benefits specialist. Even with a benefit specialist's help it sometimes takes long periods of time before payment or work incentive implementation issues are resolved. Therefore, case management (either through SSA or a state system) is needed to help SSI youth and their families navigate not only SSI but also other local, state, and federal service supports. Of note: Although many youth receiving SSI may be eligible for services and supports that involve case management, we found many Promise youth and families were disengaged in the services and supports they were eligible for including vocational rehabilitation and even school (due to truancy, suspensions, expulsions, limited day IEPs, home schooling, etc.). So there needs to be a better way to connect youth receiving SSI and their families to case management.
- **Strength-Based.** Case management should be a strength-based, not deficit-based, service. The eligibility for SSI is deficit-based in that youth are eligible for SSI because of their disability and their family's low income. Because eligibility is based on deficits, one may assume the best way to reach employment goals is to "fix" these deficits. Alternatively, the path to self-sufficiency is to find/recognize the value each youth and family member brings to the local community. Every person, no matter their disability or past struggle with poverty, has value to add to the community. This value can be matched with the needs of local employers. The key is to focus on the youth and family member's strengths, abilities, and interests (rather than their deficits) and match these with employer needs and provide accommodations and/or supports as needed.
 - **Employment Focused.** Case management needs to be employment focused and hosting Wisconsin Promise within DVR only serves to heighten this focus. In Wisconsin Promise, case management is driven by asking the following questions: How can services and supports help the youth or family member reach their employment goals and overall self-sufficiency? This focus drives

funding of additional resources and supports. A key component of being employment focused is services and supports should ensure youth have at least one (preferably two) paid jobs in the community (jobs should be integrated, in the community and pay at least minimum wage) before they exit high school.

- **Empowerment.** Case managers empower youth and family members to identify their own education, employment, self-sufficiency goals and their own plan to reach these goals.
 - **Self and Family Advocacy and Motivational Interviewing.** It is very important for case managers to avoid telling youth/families what to do and all the reasons to do these things. Instead services and supports should be youth and family led. It is also important not to fix youth and family member problems, but rather teach youth and family members to problem solve and navigate existing system and supports. Motivational Interviewing is an effective strategy to do this.
- **Trauma Informed.** Wisconsin Promise youth and family members are more likely to actively engage in services and supports when our Wisconsin Promise Case Managers are trauma informed and meet families where they are at. By understanding some youth receiving SSI and their family members may be responding to past trauma, case managers can better provide the support youth and family members need. See Wisconsin's trauma informed initiative, Fostering Futures: <http://www.fosteringfutureswisconsin.org/>.
- **Early, pro-active, and ongoing engagement** is important (e.g., at least every 30 days).
 - **Wisconsin Promise case managers reach out** in multiple ways, times, and modes (texts, email, mail, knock on door, etc.). They keep trying even when youth and family members stop responding to contacts for a period of time. They are there for them when they are ready.
 - **Postcard.** A simple postcard (something they can't help but read on the way to the garbage) has been one of the most effective ways to first enroll and now re-engage Promise youth/families in Promise services
- **Consultation/coaching/mentoring.** Wisconsin Promise youth and families have been more likely to engage in services (benefits counseling, financial literacy, self-advocacy, and family advocacy training) provided through individualized consultation/coaching/mentoring versus group training models. Some participants have benefited from interactive group networking opportunities. But not all youth and family members can consistently attend group trainings, so having individualized follow-up services is needed to ensure everyone has access to the same training and information.

Contact Us

Contact Your DVR Counselor

Family Advocates

Promise Financial Coaches

Benefits Counseling Providers

Promise Research Team

Steering Committee Profile Members and Emails

Project Director

Meredith Dressel

meredith.dressel@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Project Manager

Ellie Hartman

ellie2hartman@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Members

Cayte Anderson

andersoncay@uwstout.edu

Wendy Henderson

wendy.henderson@wisconsin.gov

Suzan VanBeaver

suzan.vanbeaver@dpi.state.wi.us

Aimee Jahnke

aimee.jahnke@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Meredith Dressel

meredith.dressel@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Suzanne Lee

suzanne.lee@dwd.wisconsin.gov

Sam Ninnemann

samantha.ninnemann@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Jessica Thompson

jessica.thompson@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Allison Gordon

allison.gordon@dwd.wisconsin.gov

The contents of this website were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Cooperative Agreement H418P130004. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.