



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Andrea Palm, Secretary

April 11, 2020

By Electronic Mail Only

Lisa Pugh (pugh@thearc.org)
Beth Swedeen (beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov)
Kristin M. Kerschensteiner (kitk@drwi.org)
Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations
PO Box 72222
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Dear Ms. Pugh, Ms. Swedeen, and Ms. Kerchensteiner:

I am writing in response to a letter that you sent on Thursday to the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee (SDMAC). The SDMAC was created to advise the Department of Health Services (DHS) on issues related to the public health emergency. Most recently, the SDMAC has been working on potential guidelines on the allocation of ventilators if there is a shortage. In your letter, you raise several concerns and provide several suggestions:

- (1) You expressed concern about any use of "quality of life" as a criterion to determine the allocation of ventilators. This criterion has been used in the past to discriminate against persons with disabilities and other historically marginalized groups.
- (2) You asked for greater transparency and the opportunity for public comment on any potential guidelines developed by the SDMAC or one of its workgroups.
- (3) You asked that someone with expertise in the treatment of patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) be appointed to the SDMAC.

I appreciate your concerns and suggestions for how this process should move forward. DHS will be taking the following actions to address your concerns and ensure that the process is fully transparent.


First, I reiterated in writing my position to SDMAC that the State will not approve, recommend, or support any allocation guidelines that – either implicitly or explicitly – discriminate against persons with disabilities or other historically marginalized groups.

Second, I directed SDMAC to develop and approve a stakeholder engagement process before any further action occurs on reviewing or approving guidelines. Due to the importance of this conversation, it is important that input is solicited from a broad range of individuals and communities.

Third, I will be appointing to the SDMAC at least one person with expertise in treating patients with I/DD. It is important that this appointment occurs before any further action is taken by SDMAC on this topic.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and concerns regarding this topic. By addressing your concerns and implementing your recommendations, I believe the State of Wisconsin will have a more robust and collaborative conversation about how to make these difficult decisions.

Sincerely,



Andrea Palm
Secretary-Designee
Department of Health Services

C: Jeanne Ayers
Jon Meiman
Ryan Westergaard