



COMMUNITY ADVOCATES
Public Policy Institute

Community Advocates Public Policy Institute 2010 Year in Review

The Community Advocates Public Policy Institute has clear and simple goals: To explain why so many Milwaukeeans are poor, and to develop and implement a practical strategy to reduce poverty throughout Wisconsin. For more information about our work, visit www.ca-ppi.org.

Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative

In 2010 Public Policy Institute staff:

- **Worked closely with Rep. Sandy Pasch and members of the New Day Coalition to pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act (2009 Wisconsin Act 218)*, a law which will require most group health plans—typically purchased by smaller employers not covered by the federal *Wellstone-Domenici Act*—to provide mental health and substance use disorder benefits at parity levels. Upon implementation on Dec. 1, the *Wisconsin Parity Act* increased treatment levels for more than 200,000 Wisconsinites. Read more at www.ParityForWisconsin.org.**
- **Held Making Parity Real symposia in seven cities** to assess the major state policy challenges facing addiction and mental health services in Wisconsin. At each symposium, moderated dialogue among local stakeholders and state policymakers explored the changes that can be made to state laws, budgets, rules and regulations, and standards to increase access to mental health/addiction treatment. Symposia also featured updates on national health insurance reform, and federal and state parity laws and regulations. Making Parity Real symposia were held in late 2009 in Milwaukee, and in 2010 in Green Bay, Wausau, Janesville, La Crosse, Racine/Kenosha, Eau Claire and Polk County. Read more at www.MakingParityReal.org.
- **Led efforts both in Wisconsin and nationally to implement the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* by helping to design a model state health insurance exchange**, the marketplaces created under federal law that pool the uninsured and participating employees, and let them choose among competing private insurance companies.

- In July David R. Riemer, Public Policy Institute Executive Director, was chosen to serve on the [Wisconsin Legislative Council Special Committee on Health Care Reform Implementation](#). The 21-member committee, made up of seven legislators and 14 public members, is charged with making recommendations to the State Legislature on which changes Wisconsin should make in response to federal health care reform legislation, including coverage for uninsured persons, preventive care, quality improvement, insurance market reforms and the development of a Wisconsin health insurance exchange.
- In September Riemer was named by the [National Academy of Social Insurance \(NASI\)](#) to a select panel of health insurance experts to assist states with the creation of health insurance exchanges. The 21-member panel will develop a model state statute for health insurance exchanges, and will help federal and state leaders to establish exchanges that operate efficiently and maximize access to affordable coverage, outcomes crucial to the success of national health insurance reform.

In 2011 the Public Policy Institute plans to complete the Making Parity Real series by holding a ninth symposium in Dane County, as well as a final, statewide conference to present our findings, translate data into actionable recommendations and set a course for implementing a policy strategy. Staff will also work with health care advocates from around the state to protect BadgerCare Plus from potential cutbacks, and continue to implement national health care reform in Wisconsin, ensuring that a robust addiction benefit is a feature of health care plans offered on the state's health insurance exchange.

Milwaukee Tobacco Prevention & Control Program

In 2010 Public Policy Institute staff:

- **Provided key information to City of Milwaukee policymakers** as they fashioned the city's own [smoke-free air ordinance](#).
- **Helped to implement the *Wisconsin Smoke-Free Act in Milwaukee***, including coordinating enforcement activity between the Milwaukee Health Department and Milwaukee Police Department.
- **Coordinated checks at more than 300 Milwaukee-area tobacco retailers** to limit underage tobacco sales.
- **Educated local elected officials and policymakers on the effects of tobacco use** and why continued anti-tobacco funding is necessary.

In 2011 our efforts will include building a Milwaukee-area coalition of smoke-free air advocates and ensuring the sustainability of Wisconsin's tobacco prevention funding. We also plan to launch a new initiative to limit marketing and exposure in Milwaukee of non-traditional tobacco products such as candy-flavored cigars and blunt wraps.

Supportive Housing

In 2010 Public Policy Institute staff:

- Assisted the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development as part of a core internal workgroup in the development of City of Milwaukee zoning ordinance changes to create a land use category for permanent supportive housing and to revise the current land use category for transitional housing. These proposed ordinance changes will remove impediments to the development and operation of transitional and permanent supportive housing units by quality supportive housing providers through the creation of a more straight-forward regulatory process.

The proposed regulations are undergoing review before the Common Council and its Committees. If passed by the Common Council, many people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who have mental health conditions or other disabilities will have the opportunity to benefit from safe and affordable housing and services that will assist them to live independently.

Justice 2000

In January the Public Policy Institute merged with Justice 2000, an agency founded in 2002 which provides services for the safe release, community integration and alternatives to prosecution of people in the justice system in Milwaukee's circuit and municipal courts. Through this partnership, the Public Policy Institute and Justice 2000 will collaborate on the Community Justice Project, an initiative to strengthen the quality and efficiency of the criminal justice system, both in Milwaukee County and statewide. Read more at www.justice-2000.org.

Pathways to Ending Poverty

In 2010 Public Policy Institute staff:

- Provided input and suggestions to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) for their "[Wisconsin Poverty Report: New Measure, Broader View](#)," a report which presents a Wisconsin-specific poverty measure based on standards developed by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Taken in conjunction with "[Poverty Measurement Options](#)," a similar study of the poverty line prepared by Steve Holt for the Public Policy Institute in 2009, the IRP report will help create a more realistic poverty line to guide future policymaking in Wisconsin.
- Finalized its proposed "policy package" for reducing poverty in Wisconsin from more than 10 percent to under 5 percent, and entered into a contract with the Urban Institute (UI) to analyze the "policy package" using UI's highly regarded [TRIM-3 program](#). As the year ended, UI was more than halfway through its analysis.

In 2011 the Public Policy Institute will complete its work with the Urban Institute and begin to communicate to local, state and national audiences the capacity of the proposed "policy package" to drive down poverty in Wisconsin to a residual level.

Transitional Jobs

In 2010 Public Policy Institute staff:

- **Helped to found the [Milwaukee Transitional Jobs Collaborative](#)**, a coalition of area advocacy, religious and employment organizations working to increase the availability of transitional jobs in Wisconsin for unemployed men and women.
- **Worked closely with Sen. Spencer Coggs and Rep. Tamara Grigsby on passing the [Wisconsin Family Jobs Act](#)**. Under this law, employers that hire an eligible participant in the Trial Jobs component of the state's W-2 program receive a 100 percent wage subsidy at the minimum wage for the hours worked for that employee, up to 40 hours per week for a maximum of six months. The law would also remove the participant and geographical limit of the Transitional Jobs demonstration project, which the Public Policy Institute helped to craft in 2009 and that offers minimum-wage jobs to non-W2 adults who have incomes below 150 percent of the poverty line, have been unemployed over four weeks, and don't qualify for Unemployment Insurance.

In the future we'll maintain our efforts to expand funding for transitional jobs programs and secure passage of future programs which help get unemployed men and women back to work.