



Reframing Aging and Disability in Wisconsin

A collaborative movement to end ageism and ableism

Overview

Last Revision: 12/19/2025

Vision

Our vision is a Wisconsin where everyone, at every age and ability, is respected, valued, supported, and belongs.

Mission

We are committed to ending ageism and ableism in Wisconsin. Our mission is to advance a fair and complete story about aging and disability: one that values every person, at every stage of life, and every ability. Through reframing our communication and expanding our mindsets, we improve quality of life for all of us.

We do this by:

- Advancing proven communication strategies and education
- Working across systems to build awareness, transforming how people think and communicate
- Advocating for programs and services that promote health and well-being across the lifespan
- Facilitating conversations which create space for learning and practicing reframing
- Creating community to sustain momentum and cultivate resources

Definitions:

- **Ageism:** a form of discrimination where people are mistreated based on their age. It is rooted in a lack of knowledge, prejudice, and stereotypes. Despite being a form of discrimination, ageism is often not taken seriously, and it is even considered one of the last socially acceptable prejudices. (Source: National Institute on Health, 2024)
- **Ableism:** the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability. Ableism classifies entire groups of people as 'less than,' and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities. (Source: Access Living, <https://www.accessliving.org/>)
- **Reframing** is a communications approach that promotes mindful and positive messaging. Our words are powerful and impactful. If misused, they can foster misperceptions and cause harm. Reframing can help us engage in constructive and accurate conversations about a range of topics. (Source: [National Center on Elder Justice](#))

As communicators, we decide how we frame our message: how to introduce a topic, what to emphasize or leave out, and whether and how to explain an issue. Our framing choices have the power to influence people's understanding of an issue — and to shape how the public responds. Communication experts know that repetition matters – consistent repetition of the proven strategies and narratives to reframe aging is needed to shift the dialogue among influencers and thought leaders and to shift the opinions of those who trust them. (Source: [National Center to Reframe Aging](#))

History

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Division of Public Health (DPH), Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR), began working with the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) in 2024. Together, they looked more closely at why services for older adults and people with disabilities were often underfunded and why some policies were creating unintended harm or weren't making the impact they should. After many conversations, one common thread became clear: ageism and ableism sit at the root of many of these challenges.

With that understanding, DHS and WAAN set out to find ways to shift the conversation. A project management team was established in October 2024 with representatives from BADR and WAAN. Options were researched and the [National Center to Reframe Aging](#) (NCRA) was identified as an evidence-based resource to bring proven communication strategies and training to Wisconsin.

We established a Reframing Advisory Committee and Champions List in February 2025. Then we contracted with NCRA to provide an array of training opportunities for professionals and advocates across aging, disability, health, and education systems. A community of practice was launched in July of 2025.

Participation continued to grow through the Advisory Committee sharing with their networks, the Champions List, other collaborations, and word of mouth.

General Introductory Training

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 from 9 – 10 am

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TFO4fZzFSI081sEKhjRaeQ

Introductory session tailored for health care professionals:

- Thursday, January 15, 2026 from 12 – 1 pm

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FzVArKUXSISUw0LZUn0HHw