

Invest in Transition Services

Help Wisconsinites Leave Institutions and Return Home

Wisconsinites with disabilities and older adults should have the opportunity to live in their own homes and communities whenever possible.

But leaving a hospital or nursing facility can be complicated. A person may need accessible housing, personal care, transportation, assistive technology, independent living skills or other supports before returning home safely and successfully.

Wisconsin's Independent Living Centers can help bridge that gap. With adequate investment in transition services, more people can receive the support they need to move from institutional settings back into the community *and remain there*.

The Problem

Wisconsin's eight Independent Living Centers (ILCs) provide services that help people with disabilities transition from hospitals and skilled nursing facilities into community-based settings.

However, Wisconsin's Independent Living Center network has never been fully funded to meet this responsibility. Federal law expanded the responsibilities of ILCs to include institutional transition and diversion services, but that expansion did not come with additional funding.

As a result, Wisconsin's ILCs do not currently have the capacity to provide intensive transition assistance to everyone who could benefit from it.

There is also a missed opportunity within Wisconsin's existing discharge system. Skilled nursing facilities currently make Minimum Data Set (MDS) referrals to Aging and Disability Resource Centers when someone indicates that they want to leave a facility for a less restrictive setting. ADRCs provide information, options counseling and connections to programs such as Family Care and IRIS.

Independent Living Centers, however, specialize in helping people with disabilities overcome the practical barriers that can stand between wanting to return home and successfully doing so.

WILN's Solution

Invest in Wisconsin's Independent Living Centers and make them a stronger part of the state's institutional transition system.

WILN recommends:

1. Invest an additional \$2.6 million in General Purpose Revenue in the 2027–2029 biennial budget for Wisconsin's network of Independent Living Centers.

This investment would increase ILC capacity to provide institutional transition services to people with disabilities, including many Wisconsinites who receive Medicaid.

2. Revise Wisconsin's MDS referral policies to better incorporate Independent Living Centers into the transition process.

Connecting people who want to leave skilled nursing facilities with ILC transition expertise can help address the practical supports necessary for successful community living.

3. Strengthen the community infrastructure people need after they return home.

Successful transitions depend on more than discharge paperwork. Wisconsin also needs adequate accessible and affordable housing, transportation, caregivers, assistive technology, home accessibility services, skills training and other community-based supports.

Why it Matters

Where someone receives care can shape the rest of their life.

A hospitalization, injury, illness or change in disability should not automatically become a one-way path toward long-term institutional living.

Transition services can help people navigate the complicated process of returning home and connect them with the supports they need to remain there.

For Wisconsin, investing in transition services also represents an opportunity to use resources earlier and more effectively. WILN's position is that upfront investment in transition services can reduce long-term Medicaid costs by helping people move from institutional care into community settings when appropriate.

The Ask

WILN calls on Wisconsin policymakers to:

Include an additional \$2.6 million in General Purpose Revenue for Wisconsin's Independent Living Center network in the 2027–2029 state budget, revise MDS referral policies to strengthen the role of ILCs in institutional transitions and invest in the community supports necessary to help people successfully return home.

The Bottom Line

When Wisconsinites are able and want to return home, Wisconsin should have a system designed to help them get there and stay there.