

Protect Home and Community-Based Services

Make Community Living a Guaranteed Choice in Wisconsin Medicaid

People who need long-term care should not have to enter an institution simply because services in their own home or community are not guaranteed.

Wisconsin has made significant investments in Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) that allow people with disabilities and older adults to receive long-term care while living in their homes and communities.

But there is an important difference in how Medicaid treats those services.

Federal Medicaid law requires states to provide eligible individuals with access to nursing facility services. Home and Community-Based Services do not have that same guarantee.

WILN believes Wisconsin should change that.

THE PROBLEM

For people with disabilities and older adults who need long-term care, **where that care is provided matters.**

Home and Community-Based Services can provide the assistance people need while allowing them to remain in their homes, maintain relationships with family and friends, and continue participating in their communities.

Yet federal Medicaid requirements treat institutional and community-based long-term care differently.

Eligible Medicaid recipients are guaranteed access to nursing facility services. States are not federally required to provide those same individuals with access to Home and Community-Based Services.

Wisconsin currently invests in community-based long-term care, but WILN is concerned that services that are not federally required could be vulnerable to future federal policy changes, funding reductions or cost shifts to states.

Without a state-level guarantee, access to the services that make community living possible could be at risk.

WILN'S SOLUTION

Wisconsin should make Home and Community-Based Services a required part of its Medicaid long-term care system.

WILN recommends that Wisconsin:

1. Enact legislation guaranteeing Medicaid coverage of Home and Community-Based Services.

Eligible Wisconsinites who need long-term care should have access to community-based services, not only institutional care.

2. Develop a comprehensive community integration plan.

Wisconsin should establish a statewide plan for implementing this commitment and ensuring that people with disabilities and older adults have meaningful opportunities to receive services in the least restrictive setting appropriate to their needs.

3. Protect Wisconsin's existing investment in community living.

Putting this commitment into state policy would help safeguard Wisconsin's Home and Community-Based Services infrastructure as federal Medicaid policies and funding responsibilities change.

WHY IT MATTERS

The availability of services can determine where a person is able to live.

Someone may need help bathing, dressing, preparing meals, managing daily activities or completing other tasks while still being capable of living successfully in their own home.

For people with disabilities, access to community-based supports can mean greater independence, self-determination and participation in everyday community life.

For older adults, those same supports can make it possible to remain in a familiar home and community as their needs change with age.

WILN believes Wisconsin's long-term care system should preserve that choice rather than make institutional care the only guaranteed option.

THE ASK

WILN calls on Wisconsin policymakers to:

Pass legislation making Home and Community-Based Services a required component of Wisconsin's Medicaid program and develop a comprehensive community integration plan that protects access to long-term care in the least restrictive setting.

The Bottom Line

If Medicaid guarantees care in an institution, Wisconsinites should also have a meaningful opportunity to receive the care they need in their homes and communities.