

Protect Self-Direction In IRIS

Preserve Choice and Autonomy for People Who Direct Their Own Long-Term Care

Self-direction means people with disabilities have a meaningful role in deciding how their long-term care services and supports work in their own lives.

Wisconsin's IRIS program provides a self-directed alternative for people who are eligible for Medicaid long-term care.

At the heart of that model is a simple principle: people with disabilities have valuable expertise about their own lives. Within program requirements and an approved budget, participants should have meaningful flexibility to make decisions about the allowable services and supports they need to live independently.

WILN believes recent restrictions have reduced that flexibility and moved IRIS away from its self-directed purpose.

The Problem

A self-directed program should preserve meaningful decision-making for the person receiving services.

According to WILN, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services has implemented changes that restrict how IRIS participants can use their approved budgets.

WILN believes these restrictions reduce participant autonomy and conflict with the program's emphasis on self-direction and lived experience.

For people who choose IRIS specifically because they want greater responsibility for directing their long-term care, restrictions on how approved resources can be used can undermine an important reason for choosing the program.

WILN's Solution

Restore flexibility and protect the self-directed principles of IRIS.

WILN is calling for Wisconsin to review and reverse restrictions that unnecessarily limit how IRIS participants can use their approved budgets for allowable services and supports.

Specific policy recommendations are still being developed.

Why it Matters

People with disabilities are experts in their own lives.

Two people with similar disabilities may have very different homes, families, jobs, routines, goals and support needs.

Self-direction recognizes those differences.

Rather than designing long-term care around a single approach for everyone, IRIS gives participants greater responsibility for determining how allowable services and supports can best help them live independently.

WILN believes Wisconsin should protect that principle.

The Ask

WILN calls on Wisconsin policymakers and the Department of Health Services to:

Protect the self-directed purpose of IRIS and restore appropriate flexibility for participants to make decisions about allowable services and supports within their approved budgets.

Additional specific policy recommendations are under development.

The Bottom Line

Self-direction should mean self-direction. People with disabilities should have meaningful authority to make decisions about the supports they need to live independently.