



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Frequently Asked Questions about Wisconsin Medicaid Changes

1. I am on Family Care/IRIS. Will my Family Care/IRIS services go away if the Governor's budget is passed?

No. The budget does not indicate that benefits or programming for current Family Care or IRIS participants will change.

Leadership in the Department of Health Services (DHS) have indicated that the Administration does not plan on changing eligibility guidelines or services for individuals currently using long-term care programs like IRIS/Family Care.

2. What does a "freeze" on Family Care mean?

The Governor's budget calls for a freeze on Family Care/Partnership/PACE/IRIS. This means the counties that have not yet implemented the program are not scheduled to add Family Care/IRIS in this budget cycle. It also means that no new slots will be created in existing counties, which affects individuals who are moving to that county, youth in transition who would be going into the adult care system, people on waiting lists who are not enrolled before June 2011, and others who become eligible for long-term care in that county. If you are currently in one of these programs in a county, you could still switch to the other program choice (i.e. move from Family Care to IRIS).

All individuals who currently qualify for long-term care programs but will now be waiting for a Family Care/IRIS slot should still be able to use Medicaid card services, including personal care, certain equipment and prescription drugs, regardless of whether they are in a Family Care county. In addition to people currently on a waiting list, Family Care counties that no longer have waiting lists will need to establish them. (Nursing home care will continue to be an entitlement but community-based care will not.) DHS has pledged to put provisions in place to address people who are at risk of institutionalization.

The budget bill indicates the future of Family Care will be determined by the results of an audit of the program, which is expected to be released soon. DHS has not said how long a freeze will last. However, the budget does not include any new money for IRIS or Family Care in the next two years.

3. When will the Family Care/Medicaid audit occur? What will happen as a result of the audit?

Two audits currently are underway - one for Family Care and one for Medicaid. The Family Care audit results are expected soon. The budget bill says DHS will make decisions about the future of Family Care based upon the results of the audit. The budget bill indicates that the Family Care audit results would help determine how Family Care is cost-effective and would identify strategies that could result in improved outcomes.

The Medicaid Audit is much more complex since it involves all the state's Medicaid programs - including children's waivers, Family Care, IRIS, BadgerCare, SeniorCare and more. There has been no timeline announced for the results of the Medicaid audit.

4. My county does not have an Aging and Disability Resource Center. Will we still get one in spite of the “freeze” on Family Care?

Yes, money is included in this budget cycle for expansion of Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) to all counties in Wisconsin.

5. What do the Medicaid changes in the passed Budget Repair Bill mean?

The Budget Repair Bill - which is separate from the budget - gives DHS broad authority to make changes to Medicaid programs. Some of the changes can alter current state law and could happen quickly. Other changes would require approval of a federal waiver, which DHS plans to apply for. The legislature will not vote on these changes.

The bill says the state must find \$500 million in savings in Medicaid. DHS will likely make many changes to find these savings. One major expected change is more cost-sharing and higher premiums in BadgerCare. Other changes are not known at this time.

6. Will I lose some of my current Medicaid services (mental health, personal care, prescription drugs)?

Nothing in the Governor's budget or in information provided from DHS indicates that optional Medicaid card services, such as mental health, personal care, or prescription drugs, are slated for elimination or cuts. However, the proposed budget does cut funding to counties, which may ultimately result in cuts to mental health and other disability services at the county level.

DHS has indicated that the Administration is considering higher premium costs and/or additional co-pays for some the BadgerCare and BadgerCare Plus groups. However, there has been no discussion of additional costs for people with disabilities who have long-term care needs.

7. My child receives Medicaid through Katie Beckett/Children's Waiver/Family Support. Are there changes to those programs?

The Governor's budget has no reductions or increases for these programs. If your child is on any of these children's programs, he/she will continue under the proposed budget. If your child is on a waiting list, there are no plans to increase the number of slots for these programs.

8. Is the Governor's budget taking away insurance mandates for any private insurance coverage for my child's autism services/cochlear implants/hearing aids?

The Governor's budget does not address insurance mandates specific to disability issues. There is a separate legislative proposal that deals with insurances mandates, but this is not part of the budget.

9. I heard the state is moving Birth to 3/Children's Waiver services out of my county. Is this true?

No, Birth to 3 and the Children's Waiver services will remain in all counties.

10. I heard that the budget cuts BadgerCare. Will I lose my coverage?

The BadgerCare program includes many different types of plans; some that are affected by the budget, and others that are not. The biennial budget says nothing specifically about how BadgerCare, which serves 775,000 Wisconsinites, will be changed because that is no longer for the legislature to decide. A previous bill – the budget repair bill – gave DHS broad authority to make changes in Medicaid and BadgerCare without legislative approval. DHS has said they will ask the federal government for permission to go around certain federal Medicaid rules. If the federal government agrees, DHS would be allowed to issue rules to reduce eligibility for BadgerCare and other Medicaid programs, increase premiums and co-pays, apply cost-sharing to more families, charge deductibles, reduce benefits, and increase the frequency of reviews of eligibility. If DHS does not get this special permission from the federal government, it has said it will lower the income ceiling for BadgerCare from 200% of the poverty level to 133% for parents and childless adults, effective July 1, 2012.

DHS announced recently that it plans to freeze enrollment and increase premiums for the BadgerCare Basic program. BadgerCare Basic was initiated by DHS in 2010 to be a non-subsidized option for coverage of childless adults on the waiting list for the BadgerCare Core plan.

11. Will I still be able to get help from my county with obtaining Medicaid and other benefits?

The Governor's budget does describe the centralization of income maintenance – the program responsible for assisting people who apply for benefits. This proposal would move eligibility determinations for income-based Medicaid and Foodshare from the county to the state level, where it is then distributed back out to local and regional sites. The state is currently in the planning stages to determine how this might work.

Financial eligibility for Medicaid Long-Term Care Programs (like Family Care and IRIS) will be part of the centralization of Income Maintenance. County Economic Support offices are currently responsible for determining financial eligibility for long-term care, while the ADRCs do the functional eligibility piece. Therefore, under the budget proposal, the eligibility process for long-term care services will change, but we don't yet know how.

12. I am hearing a lot about changes to BadgerCare and Medicaid. I am a person with a disability who uses services, but I am unsure what programs I am on. How do I know what changes are happening to my services?

Wisconsin's Medicaid program is very complex and goes by many different names – including BadgerCare. However, BadgerCare is not the entire Medicaid program. Sometimes the media, legislators and even people who use Medicaid programs get confused by all the different names for Medicaid programs. If you use Children's Waivers, Katie Beckett, any form of BadgerCare, Family Care, Partnership, Pace, IRIS, COP, CIP or SeniorCare you are using a Medicaid-funded program.

13. How do I share my concerns about potential changes to Medicaid with policy makers?

DHS plans to hold at least two more Town Hall meetings to hear from consumers and providers about ideas to improve efficiencies and effectiveness of Medicaid programs. As the Town Hall meetings are announced, you can learn more at the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities' DAWN website, http://www.dawninfo.org/co/sc/survival_coalition.cfm. You also may send your ideas and concerns to DHS at DHSDeputySecretaryKittyRhoades@dhs.wisconsin.gov or via U.S. mail to Secretary Dennis Smith, Room 650, 1 W. Wilson St., Madison, WI, 53703.

You also can testify at one of the upcoming Joint Finance Committee hearings about any topic related to the Governor's budget:

- **April 7:** Stevens Point (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, Lee S. Dreyfus University Center, Melvin R. Laird Room (Room 230), 1015 Reserve St., Stevens Point, WI 54481.
- **April 8:** Minong (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), Northwood School Richard's Auditorium, N14463 Highway 63, Minong, WI 54859.
- **April 11:** Milwaukee (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), Wisconsin State Fair Park Expo Center, Hall A, 8200 W. Greenfield Ave. West Allis, WI 53214.
- **April 13:** Arcadia (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), Arcadia High School Auditorium, 756 Raider Dr., Arcadia, WI 54612.

If you have additional questions or would like more information, contact the Survival Coalition Co-Chairs:

- Lynn Breedlove, Disability Rights Wisconsin: lynnb@drwi.org
- Maureen Ryan, Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers: moryan@charter.net
- Beth Swedeen, Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities: beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov