



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Treating the Northeast equally: Family Care brings fairness to county residents

Survival Coalition welcomes Governor Walker's announcement that Family Care/IRIS will expand into seven of the fifteen remaining counties currently waiting for the program.

When these seven Northeastern counties transition to Family Care/IRIS, two-thirds of the people waiting statewide for access to help will finally get the support they need.

Survival Coalition sees the Governor's commitment to expanding this cost-effective program as an important step forward towards statewide community-based support for all Wisconsin residents.

"All people with disabilities and elderly citizens deserve to have the same community-based supports regardless of where they live," says co-chair Kit Kerschensteiner. "Access to supports that enable people to stay in their homes and communities should be available statewide, not dependent on the county in which a person lives."

Family Care provides people with disabilities and the elderly with assistance with daily tasks—like dressing, bathing, meals, household chores and tasks, getting ready for work, transportation—and management of chronic health conditions.

In the 57 counties that currently have Family Care, residents with disabilities and older adults can access supports in their homes and communities when they need them, which keeps them out of costly nursing homes.

The story is much different for residents in the remaining fifteen counties still waiting for Family Care; people can wait years—sometimes a decade or longer—for help.

While Northeast Wisconsin taxpayers have helped fund Family Care for residents elsewhere in the state, they have been unable to access the services it provides in their own counties. Currently, over 900 Northeast Wisconsin residents are on waiting lists to receive long-term care.

Today's announcement guarantees that the wait is over for residents in seven of the remaining counties—Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Shawano, Oconto, Menomonee and Marinette.

"Wisconsin's system of Long Term Supports helps people with disabilities and elderly residents maintain better health and independence through personal care and support services in individual homes, and other community-based settings," said co-chair Maureen Ryan. "Nursing homes and other institutional settings are a more costly way to provide care. "

A recent report by the Department of Health Services found once again that statewide expansion of Family Care would reduce the burden on Wisconsin taxpayers by saving the state \$34.7 million over the next 10 years.

“Family Care expansion creates equity in long-term care supports while saving taxpayer dollars,” said Beth Swedeen. “Each county that transitions to Family Care brings Wisconsin closer to cost-effective home based care for all residents.”

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

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Survival Coalition Issue Teams: education, employment, housing, long term care for Adults, long term care for children, mental health, transportation, workforce, voting, Medicaid and health care.

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