



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Survival Coalition Applauds Department of Health Services Report Declaring Family Care Cost-Effective and Ready for Continued Statewide Expansion

A report released today by the Department of Health Services (DHS) showing the cost-effectiveness of the Family Care/IRIS long-term support program is being applauded by the state's largest cross-disability organization.

The Survival Coalition has been a leader in supporting the expansion of Family Care and IRIS long-term support programs to all counties to meet the needs of people with disabilities. In recent budgets, the administration had chosen not to expand the program, instead choosing to study costs and potential redesign. This DHS report contains clear evidence of cost-savings in the program that demonstrates that the state should move forward in providing the program statewide. Estimates included in the report show Family Care will reduce the growth of long-term care costs by \$37.4 million across all funds over the next 10 years, compared with keeping the existing system in place.

Fifteen counties across Wisconsin still do not have access to Family Care/IRIS supports and the statewide waiting list stands at around 1,600. Some on the waiting list have waited more than a decade for critical supports that can keep them safe at home, instead of having to consider unnecessary and costly nursing home care. Maureen Ryan, Survival co-chair says, "The report underscores the feasibility of providing statewide equity for all residents with disabilities. Currently we are a state of the have and the have-nots for people with disabilities in our long term care system, depending on where you live. People on waiting lists do not have access to reasonable and cost effective services. It is time for equity within our long term care system."

"The report is positive, but does not provide a specific timeline for when new counties can come in. Survival Coalition is hopeful that counties that are ready and want to serve waiting residents can be allowed into program yet in this biennium," says Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Coalition co-chair. "People with disabilities and advocates have watched Milwaukee County end their waiting list for long-term supports; recently Outagamie County celebrated the end to theirs.

These are significant accomplishments because it means people are getting the help they need when they need it.”

Advocates say their work now is to continue to ensure quality in the program and that funding continues to meet the needs across the state. “There are positive indications in the report that the Department understands that high-quality service provision directly links to both better outcomes and long-term cost savings,” says Beth Swedeen, Survival Coalition co-chair. “The report's inclusion of the Department's commitment to best practices, such as prioritizing integrated employment as a preferred outcome of long-term care investments, indicates the Department is taking quality measures into account that simultaneously improve people's lives, lead to long-term cost savings, and responsibly use public dollars.”

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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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