



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Survival Coalition Applauds Department of Health Services Initiative to Suspend not Terminate Medicaid Enrollment for Criminal-Justice Involved Individuals

(Madison) – The Survival Coalition of more than 30 disability organizations applauds Department of Health Services and Governor Evers for their decision to suspend rather than terminate Medicaid eligibility for incarcerated individuals. Federal law does not allow the use of Medicaid funds for services provided to inmates of public institutions, so this change is necessary for these individuals to begin receiving healthcare in the community quickly upon their release. “Simply re-enrolling individuals upon their release should be a much easier process than starting all over with a new application” said Lisa Pugh, Survival Co-Chair, “this will mean a much quicker connection to care in the community.”

This change will also allow Medicaid to be billed for allowable inpatient expenses when an incarcerated individual receives care outside the institution. There has been a lot of effort by the Department of Health Services to make this change happen and will require continuing communication between the institutions and benefits determination system to be successful.

“Having Medicaid services resume seamlessly for individuals returning to the community is especially important during Wisconsin’s current public health emergency” says Survival Co-Chair Beth Swedeen. “This important change could not have come at a more critical time.”

Resuming Medicaid eligibility immediately upon release will help lower health care costs, hospitalizations and emergency room visits as well as decrease mortality and recidivism for justice-involved individuals. “This immediate access to health care, substance use and mental health services without the time delays of reapplication can greatly improve the odds that an individual can successfully return to their communities,” says Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Co-Chair.