

State Budget Action Alert – Take Action Today!
Keep the Community Promise:
Lift the Caps on Community Long Term Care Services

April 28, 2011

If you are concerned about the impact of a freeze on community-based long term care in your county, **now is the time to act**. The Joint Finance Committee has completed public hearings on the budget and will vote on the proposed budget over the next few weeks - then the budget will move to the Legislature. Legislators must hear a strong message NOW about lifting the cap on community long term care services.

Background

Governor Walker's proposed 2011 – 2013 biennial budget caps all of Wisconsin's major long term care (LTC) programs for children and adults with disabilities, and for older adults, except for nursing homes which are more expensive than community care. This means no new eligible people will receive services in Family Care, IRIS, Partnership or the Children's Waiver programs unless a current recipient dies or leaves the program. There is no sunset date for this cap nor any funding set aside to lift the cap, so the cap will be in effect during the entire biennium and beyond, unless the legislature takes action to lift it. This is the first budget since the Family Care program was started by Governor Thompson (in 1999), that has proposed a "hard cap" on new enrollment.

This will cause LTC wait lists to start growing again, after years of reducing the number of people and the length of time waiting. There are no other comparable options for LTC services in the community for those on the waiting lists. Although community based care will be frozen, more expensive institutional care will not be and we will see an increase in preventable, inappropriate, and expensive admissions to nursing homes and other institutions.

The Family Care audit released this week confirms that the program has increased access to supportive services that enable older adults and people with disabilities to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes, instead of being forced into more expensive institutional care. The audit also confirms that Family Care has provided thorough care planning, and has offered participants a range of choices to meet their needs.

The Impact on People:

- Reversal of many years of bipartisan efforts (and progress) to eliminate wait lists, change the "institutional bias", and establish a basic right to LTC for elders and people with disabilities.
- Re-creating new wait lists in 7 "No Wait" counties, several of which ended wait lists several years ago. Milwaukee will have a wait list for older adults for the first time since 2002.
- Putting thousands of people in limbo who are on wait lists in the 50 counties which have begun serving their wait lists. This amounts to breaking a promise to people of all ages and families who planned their lives counting on getting help on this timeline. In Milwaukee, over 2000 people with disabilities will continue to wait.
- Creating tremendous uncertainty in the 15 counties which have not started Family Care or IRIS regarding when/if they can expect more state/federal funding for LTC services in their counties.
- Forcing a substantial number of people (older adults and adults with disabilities) into inappropriate and expensive admissions to nursing homes, or other institutions such as the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex, from July, 2011 into the future. This will be *a reversal of the recent trend reducing Wisconsin's utilization of institutions which was bringing us closer to the national average.*
- Costs to serve someone in Family Care range from \$1,800 to \$2,800 per participant for those with physical disabilities and older adults and from \$2,900 to \$4,600 per participant for individuals with developmental disabilities. The average monthly cost of serving someone in a nursing home is over \$5000 a month. The rate at Milwaukee's Mental Health Complex where many people with developmental disabilities currently live and are waiting to relocate to the community ranges from \$550 to \$1,364 **a day** depending on the setting. The care rate at Central Wisconsin Center is \$830 per day
- Removing the primary funding source for relocation of older adults and people with disabilities from nursing homes and other institutions.
- Creating a hardship for families and a grim situation for new graduates with disabilities who will leave high school and now face a wait list of an unspecified number of years with no services to secure and retain gainful employment or receive community-based supports.
- Create a crisis for older families and baby-boomers who have middle-aged adult children with developmental disabilities currently waiting for services or looking to the promise of community-based long-term care.
- Loss of potential federal funding, leaving millions of federal dollars in match on the table, and miss the opportunity to create hundreds of additional jobs.

Action Requested

- Contact your legislators and Joint Finance Committee members this week. Ask them to Keep the Community Promise and lift the caps on community long term care services. See sample message below.
- Sign the petition we are circulating to lift the caps. Circulate the attached petition and return completed to Independent Living Resources, 149 East Mill Street, Richland Center, WI 53581 OR
Sign the petition online at
<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/keepthecommunitypromise/>
- Write a letter to the editor about the importance of funding these vital programs. Check your local paper for letter to the editor guidelines.
- Collect stories about people on the waiting list who need services, or people already enrolled in Family Care, IRIS, or the Children's Long Term Support waiver who need continued funding and send to cathryn.scott@ilresources.org.

Following is a sample letter to get you started. We strongly recommend telling your own story about how caps on services will affect you, a family member or friend. Personalized letters grab the attention of legislators more quickly than simply adding your name to a form letter.

Sample Message

Dear _____,

Older adults and people with disabilities are counting on you to keep the community promise and lift the cap on community long term care services in the budget. People and families of young children will go without essential services unless this cap is lifted. The budget freezes for two years all major long term care programs except nursing homes (which are more expensive than in-home care). This includes programs like Family Care, IRIS, Partnership, PACE, and the Children's Waivers. These programs fund services that are essential to people's daily lives and provide help with things like bathing, dressing, medications, work, health care and transportation.

The cap on community based care will not save money because it will lead to an increased use of more expensive and preventable institutional care including nursing homes, the Milwaukee Mental Health Complex, and hospitalization. Community services mean people with disabilities and elders can stay in their homes and community and maintain their independence. These programs also bring in millions in federal dollars and create thousands of jobs in our states.

The Family Care audit released April 27 confirms that Family Care has increased access to supportive services that enable older adults and people with disabilities to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes, instead of being forced into more expensive institutional care.

Lift the cap and continue Wisconsin's long proud bipartisan tradition of supporting community based services because they are more cost effective and better for people. Remember – there's no place like home.

Sign with your full name and home address

Who to Contact

Contact members of the Joint Finance Committee

- Email your comments to the committee at: budgetcomments@legis.wisconsin.gov or
- Send by US mail to: Joe Malkasian, Room 305 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53703.

Contact your state senator and assembly representative

- Independent Living Resources area legislators are listed below. If you do not know who your state legislators are, see "Who Are My Legislators?" at <http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/w3asp/waml/waml.aspx>

ILR Area Representatives

Mail to: PO Box 8952 (Reps A-L) PO Box 8953 (Reps M-Z) Madison, WI 53708

District Number/ Name	Phone	E-mail
#49 Travis Tranel	608-226-1170	Rep.Tranel@legis.wisconsin.gov
#50 Ed Brooks	608-226-8531	Rep.Brooks@legis.wisconsin.gov
#51 Howard Marklein	608-226-7502	Rep.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov
#91 Chris Danou	608-226-7015	Rep.Danou@legis.wisconsin.gov
#92 Mark Radcliffe	608-226-7461	Rep.Radcliffe@legis.wisconsin.gov
#94 Open	608-226	Open
#95 Jennifer Shilling	608-226-5780	Rep.shilling@legis.wisconsin.gov
#96 Lee Nerison	608-226-3534	Rep.nerison@legis.wisconsin.gov

ILR Area State Senators

Mail Senate correspondence to P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882

District #/Name	Phone	E-mail
#17 Dale Schultz	608-266-0703	Sen.schultz@legis.wisconsin.gov
#31 Kathleen Vinehout	608-266-8546	Sen.Vinehout@legis.wisconsin.gov
#32 Dan Kapanke	608-266-5490	Sen.kapanke@legis.wisconsin.gov