



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Impact of Proposed July, 2011 Cap on Enrollment for Wisconsin's Home & Community-based Long Term Care Programs

Governor Walker's proposed 2011 – 2013 biennial budget includes a cap on all of Wisconsin's major long term care (LTC) programs for children and adults with disabilities, and for frail elderly people. This means no new eligible individuals 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 started (in 1999) when any governor has proposed a "hard cap" on new enrollment in Family Care.

This will have the immediate effect of causing LTC wait lists to start growing again, after many years of reducing the number of people and the length of time waiting for services. It is important to note that a large proportion of people on the wait lists are receiving no services at all (through the Medicaid card or any other source) and would be unlikely to receive any services during the upcoming biennium.

Specific Detrimental Effects include:

1. 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.
2. Re-creating new wait lists in 7 "No Wait" counties, several of which ended wait lists several years ago.
3. Putting several thousand people in limbo who are on wait lists in the 50 counties which are partway through the 3 year countdown to end 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.
4. 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.
5. Forcing a substantial number of people (elders and adults with disabilities) into inappropriate and expensive nursing home admissions from July, 2011 into the future.
6. Removing the primary funding source for relocation of elders and people with disabilities from nursing homes and other institutions.

Note: The combined impact of #5 and #6 will be a reversal of the recent trend reducing Wisconsin's utilization of institutions (which was bringing us closer to the national average).

7. 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.
8. Creating a crisis for older families and aging 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.