

Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments (HOME) Project

As part of the [Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments \(HOME\) project](#), the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS) is redesigning its Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver system. The goal is to make services easier to understand, help people stay in their homes and communities, and connect them with the supports that meet their needs.

Overview

Iowa HHS wants to replace six disability-based HCBS waivers—the Intellectual Disability, Brain Injury, Health and Disability, Children’s Mental Health, AIDS/HIV, and Physical Disability waivers—with two new age-based waivers: **the Children and Youth waiver and the Adults with Disabilities waiver**.

Before these waivers can start, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) must approve them. Right now, Iowa is asking the public to share comments on the draft waivers before sending them to CMS.

This document explains the new waivers and how you can share your thoughts.

In short:

- Iowa HHS plans to create two new age-based waivers, while keeping the **Elderly Waiver**.
 - **Children and Youth Waiver:**
 - For children and youth up to age 21 with disabilities, special health care needs, or mental health needs.
 - Helps kids live at home with their family instead of going to a hospital or nursing facility.
- **Adults with Disabilities Waiver:**
 - For adults 21 and older with disabilities.
 - Helps adults live at home instead of going to a hospital or nursing facility.

Iowa HHS is proposing a phased approach for moving people on current HCBS waivers to the new HOME waivers. People who are on a waiver now will not need to re-apply to move onto the new waiver. People who are not on a waitlist now will not be placed on a waitlist.

- Phase 1: Starting later in 2026, all members on the AIDS/HIV, Health and Disability, Physical Disability, and Children's Mental Health waivers will transition to the new HOME waivers. Members on the Brain Injury and Intellectual Disability waivers will remain on their current waivers but will continue to have access to all current services on those waivers.
- Phase 2: In 2027, all members on the Brain Injury and Intellectual Disability waivers will transition to the new HOME waivers.
- See the [HOME webpage](#) for quick guides with more information on eligibility criteria, waitlists, services, and how current HCBS members will access the new HOME waivers.

How will these changes make things better?

- These updates will:
 - Make the system easier to use and understand
 - Help people get services based on their needs
 - Improve the assessment process across the state

What is a public comment period?

The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires states to have a public comment period for changes to waivers. This process makes sure the people who might use the services, and their families and communities, get a chance to share their thoughts and concerns. Anyone can provide a public comment.

How does the public comment period work?

When the waiver applications are ready, Iowa HHS will post them online and let people know. The public will have six weeks to read about the changes and share their opinions.

The waiver documents are very long, so Iowa HHS also made shorter guides, called quick guides, that explain the most important changes.

During the public comment period, anyone can give feedback. This includes people who use HCBS services, their families, service providers, and advocates. Comments can be sent by mail or email.

After the comment period ends, Iowa HHS will review all the feedback. They may make changes to the waivers based on what people say.

Iowa HHS will not reply to each comment individually. Instead, they will write a summary of the comments and explain how they responded. This summary will be sent to the federal government along with the new HOME waiver applications.

A federal agency called the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will then review the waivers. CMS may approve them or ask for changes. If changes are needed, Iowa HHS will update the waivers and send them back to CMS for final approval.

What can my public comment include?

Public comments can suggest changes, point out problems, or highlight things that are good in the proposed new waivers. Comments will be most helpful if the comments are clear and specific. Try to give an example and explain why the change matters to you. Focus on what is most important for you, your family, or your community.

The details you share help Iowa HHS understand your point of view.

What will happen after Iowa HHS sends the HOME waiver applications to CMS?

While CMS is reviewing the new HOME waiver applications, Iowa HHS will keep working on plans to get systems and processes lined up so launching the new HOME waivers goes smoothly.

When is the public comment period?

The public comment period is open from **Monday, January 12, 2026**, through **Friday, February 13, 2026**, at 11:59 P.M. CT. Iowa HHS has extended the public comment from the usual 30 days to six weeks to give Iowans more time to share thoughts.

How can I share comments?

Written comments are to be submitted to the Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Policy Team, Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Medicaid, 312 East 12th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319 or email comments to

HCBS_Public_Comment@hhs.iowa.gov.

Please write “HCBS new HOME Waivers” in the subject line of the email.

Where can I learn more?

Iowa HHS will hold three public comment sessions describing the key updates underway and instructions on how to submit public comments. The sessions are scheduled for the following dates:

- [Monday, January 5 from 12:00–1:00 PM CT](#)
- [Tuesday, January 6 from 4:00–5:00 PM CT](#)
- [Thursday, January 8 from 5:00–6:00 PM CT](#)