
Recent Updates & Progress

March 2024 (ARCHIVED)

Iowa Medicaid is redesigning its community-based services (CBS) to improve how Medicaid members find hope and opportunity in many environments (HOME). Through HOME, Iowa Medicaid recognizes the hope that comes with being able to choose where you live and the services you receive that make maintaining health, social connection and quality of life possible. The goal is to ensure that people who need help with behavioral health, disability and aging needs can access high-quality supports in their communities.

The purpose of this newsletter is to share updates on work and progress with HOME and highlight ways you can provide feedback.

So far in 2024, the HOME team has completed the following:

- Gathered small working groups to talk through waitlist policy options, including how to assess and prioritize individuals on the waitlist.
- Kicked off the NOW survey! More details about what members can expect for the NOW survey below.
- Gathered feedback on proposed waiver services from a variety of partners, including the HOME steering committee and CMS.
- Analyzed the cost of proposed 2024 waiver policy changes.
- Developed new case manager-to-enrollee ratios and reporting requirements.
- Created a business plan to support the proposed changes to IT systems.
- Started making a plan for quality and performance management.

You can view [the progress with HOME](#) here as well.

HOME In Focus

Each newsletter will take a closer look at one element of current work on HOME. This issue highlights the Needs on Waitlist (NOW) survey.

Why is Iowa HHS doing the NOW survey?

Iowa is conducting the NOW Survey to inform changes to improve access to CBS as part of the larger HOME project. Currently, around 15,000 Iowans are on waitlists for five home and community-based services (HCBS) waivers, with some waiting 2-5 years for a slot. Iowa HHS does a full HCBS placement assessment when an HCBS waiver slot opens up for a person on the waitlist. To learn more about people's needs while they wait for a waiver slot, HHS is working with Mathematica to do the NOW survey.

The NOW survey will collect information about what people who are on the waitlist might need and will equip Iowa to make important changes to improve how waivers work in the future. HHS will also use the NOW survey to help connect people on the waitlist with services and supports they can access while they wait for a waiver slot. The voices of Iowans and their families and caregivers are critical to our success! The more people who participate in the NOW survey, the better the information that Iowa will have to redesign the community-based service system.

Things for people who are on the waitlist to know about the survey:

- The survey is only available over the phone. There are no print or online options.
- Spanish translation and accommodations for those who are deaf or hard of hearing are available.
- The NOW survey team includes people from Mathematica, Iowa Medicaid's Targeted Case Managers and Iowa's Area Agencies on Aging. The NOW survey team will call people who are on a waitlist some time between February and May to complete the NOW Survey.
- People on the waitlist will receive a letter one week before the NOW survey team calls. This letter is on Iowa HHS letterhead that includes background information, an FAQ and a flyer on non-waiver services in Iowa. It also includes a toll-free phone number that you can call to schedule a time to do the survey, if you would prefer.
- The NOW survey team will call people on the waitlist to participate in the survey and may call a few times to reach those people.
- The survey should take about 45 minutes to complete. Some people may take more time and others less. The survey does not need to be completed in one phone call if shorter calls would work better for you.
- The survey includes questions about health, living and caregiver arrangements and functional and support needs.
- People who are on the waitlist are welcome to have a caregiver or relative complete the survey with them. Family members or caregivers may do the survey for children or they may do it for adults who would like someone else to respond to the questions for them.
- Doing the survey will not change a person's status or place on the waitlist.

- Participation is optional.
- People who take the survey will not receive any payment for completing it.
- The NOW survey team will share responses with Iowa HHS, its divisions and Medicaid health plans (when applicable). These organizations may follow-up to connect people on the waitlist to resources while they wait for a waiver slot.

What's Next

The HOME Project is using input from Iowans to improve community-based services. CBS are services that help Iowans with disabilities to stay independent in their communities.

Mathematica has helped Iowa HHS develop ideas for how to improve HOME. As part of this effort, **you have an opportunity to provide feedback on the services offered in the new waivers until March 15, 2024**. We want to hear from people who need or use CBS, caregivers, service providers, case managers, advocates and community members.

We created [a brief form](#) to gather your ideas. Please share this opportunity to provide input with your networks. Thank you for your help with this important work.

Partner Spotlight

Kay Marcel

Iowa couldn't do this work without essential partnerships and contributions from people with lived experience. Kay Marcel is one of our important partners.

Kay has served on the HOME steering committee since it started in 2022. The steering committee meets monthly to provide feedback to the HOME team on potential waiver changes. She and her family moved to Iowa ten years ago. Kay's son Joel was on the waiting list for 2 years after they moved, before he received a slot on the ID waiver. Polk County provided Joel with supported employment and case management while he waited for a waiver slot. Joel has now been on the waiver for eight years.

For three years, Joel has had a job he loves at Coffee Cats, the first cat café in Iowa. Joel works in the cat lounge, socializing the rescue cats. He also helps keep

the coffee shop tidy. For an extroverted cat-lover like Joel, this job is a perfect fit! Supported employment with job development and a job coach works well for Joel.

Kay wanted to be involved with HOME because she believes that the waiver service packages need to be more comprehensive and flexible. Kay hopes that changes to HOME will result in a more simplified system, with better communication between Medicaid and people who use its services.

In her free time, Kay enjoys reading, using the bike trails throughout the Des Moines metro area and spending time with her two beautiful grandchildren.



Resources

- [Iowa HHS Home Website](#)
- [HOME Project Timeline](#)
- Email the HOME Project at iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com