

# Recent Updates & Progress

May 2024



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 everyone has access to high-quality behavioral health, disability, and aging services in their communities.

The purpose of this newsletter is to share updates on progress with the HOME project. We will also highlight ways you can provide feedback to inform our work.

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

- Received preliminary approval from Iowa HHS for a tool to screen and prioritize waitlist members, conducted focus groups on the functional assessment process, and summarized ideas for improving Iowa's HCBS member-facing informational materials.
- Completed over 2,300 Needs On Waitlist (NOW) surveys. The NOW survey collects information about what people who are on the waitlist might need and will help Iowa to make important changes to improve how waivers work in the future.
- Shared a proposed list of waiver services with Iowans and gathered their feedback through listening sessions and a feedback form.
- Shared a [concept paper](#) on waiver redesign and announced listening sessions and a public feedback form for Iowans to provide insights on the proposal.
- Studied tiered budgeting to inform a proposed approach for the redesigned waivers.
- Made a plan for assessing provider capacity to serve children with serious emotional disturbances.
- Notified Managed Care Organizations of proposed case manager ratio requirements for the redesigned waivers.

You can see an [update on our progress here](#).

# HOME In Focus

In each newsletter, we take a closer look at one element of current work on the HOME project. For this issue, we are highlighting the proposed waiver redesign.

As part of the HOME project, Iowa HHS is redesigning its Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver system. The goals are to enhance services, support people to remain in their communities with their loved ones and make it easier for people to access the supports they need. This [concept paper](#) describes the proposed changes to the Iowa Medicaid HCBS waiver system and outlines opportunities for Iowans to provide input for improving HCBS waivers.

Iowa HHS [conducted research](#) and gathered feedback from Iowans to learn about challenges with the current community-based services system, including HCBS waivers. Feedback from Iowans showed opportunities for the waiver system to be more efficient, easier to understand and better at connecting Iowans to the services and supports they need across their lives. For example, findings revealed that waitlists are not timely, efficient or needs based. Services do not consistently align with Iowans needs and services and supports are hard to navigate and access.

In response to this input, Iowa HHS is working towards transitioning to a streamlined system with fewer waivers in which people would have access to a broader range of services to meet their needs across the lifespan. We will be updating FAQs regularly throughout this process. Below are a few FAQs and answers.

## **What changes are proposed? How will these changes make things better?**

Iowa HHS proposes three main changes to help make things better:

- Changing from seven disability-specific waivers to two age-based waivers with wider eligibility. Iowa HHS proposes having one waiver for Children and Youth (up to age 20) and one waiver for Adults & Aging individuals (ages 21 and over) to focus on the person and their needs across the lifespan rather than the person's diagnosis or living situation. More people will be eligible in the future. For example, Iowa HHS also proposes adding people with developmental disabilities as an eligible group for both new waivers.
- Offering more comprehensive service packages with formal and informal supports that meet the needs of Iowans throughout their lives. Changes will keep existing services that Iowans need and broadly use, add a few services to meet Iowans' current unmet needs, and simplify administration. Doing so will promote consistency and fairness across the two proposed waivers.
- Developing "tiered" budgets that allocate resources for eligible people based on their needs. This individualized approach will help ensure that waiver-enrolled Iowans receive the number of services that they need in a way that is efficient, cost-effective, and equitable for all Iowans on waivers.

In addition to redesigning HCBS waivers, Iowa HHS is working on other Medicaid-related changes to address challenges and improve the CBS system. This includes improvements to processes for assessment, waitlists, and service navigation. Changes also involve establishing case management ratios and training and improving quality management.

### **Will I lose my existing waiver slot or waiver funding?**

Iowans currently on waivers will stay on waivers, continue accessing their services and be able to work toward their person-centered goals. Iowa HHS will transition members to new waivers in phases, which will include an assessment of eligibility. When the new waivers begin, future waitlists would include a prioritization system to ensure that people with the highest needs can access services timely.

### **How will I know when I transition to a new waiver?**

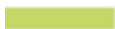
Iowa HHS will share detailed communications about transitions. Changes will not happen all at once. Iowa HHS will provide a plan for the transition to the new waivers, balancing a variety of considerations to maximize the outcomes for people who need waiver services, their caregivers, and providers.

### **Will waitlists go away? What will happen to Iowans who are currently on a waitlist?**

There will be waitlists in the future. Iowans currently on a waitlist will stay on the waitlist during the transition to redesigned waivers. HHS is looking for ways to improve the waitlist system including: using one screening tool for everyone joining the waitlist so HHS can understand everyone's needs; creating a system to prioritize those with the most urgent needs for waivers; and finding ways to offer support to people on the waitlist while they wait for services.

### **What changes are happening and when?**

Iowa HHS plans to implement gradual and careful changes so transitions will not happen all at once. Changes to improve service definitions are already underway, while the change from seven waivers to two waivers will roll out over the next several years. After the Iowa legislature approves changes, Iowa HHS will submit the new waivers to the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for their approval. Iowa HHS estimates that CMS might approve the waivers to start as early as July 2025. Iowa HHS will put systems and processes in place to prepare for the new waivers and support providers to remain enrolled throughout the transition. Iowa HHS will create and implement a plan to enroll members in the new waivers. Throughout, Iowa HHS will give Iowans regular updates to help them understand and plan for this transition.



# What's Next

The HOME Project is using Iowans' input to improve CBS to help Iowans with disabilities to stay independent in their communities.

Iowa HHS would like your feedback on the recently released [concept paper](#) describing proposed changes to the Iowa Medicaid HCBS waiver system. Please read the concept paper about current plans for changes to Iowa's HCBS waiver system and share your input. We want to hear from people who need or use CBS, caregivers, service providers, case managers, advocates, and community members.

To share your thoughts and suggestions on the HCBS changes detailed in the concept paper, please email [iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com), or fill out this [feedback form](#) by Friday, May 17, 2024.

Additionally, Iowa HHS is excited to host three listening sessions to gather feedback on the proposed changes to the Iowa Medicaid HCBS waiver system: two for HCBS waiver members and one for HCBS waiver providers. Please register for the listening sessions below:

## Members Listening Session 1 Details

- Date: Monday, May 6
- Time: 1:30-3 PM CST
- [Register here by May 2](#)

## Members Listening Session 2 Details

- Date: Thursday, May 9
- Time: 5-6:30 PM CST
- [Register here by May 7](#)

## Providers Listening Session

- Date: Tuesday, May 7
- Time: 10:30-12 PM CST
- [Register here by May 3](#)

Another way to participate in the HOME project and stay informed is to fill out the [Interest Form](#).

We will use responses from this form to recruit people for upcoming feedback opportunities to share your experience. Your feedback is important. We appreciate your dedication and look forward to hearing from you!

# Partner Spotlight

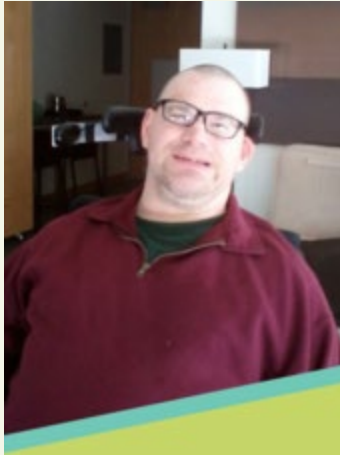
## *M.J. (Matt) Conaway, Ph.D.*

We couldn't do this work without essential partnerships and contributions from people with lived experience. M.J. (Matt) Conaway, Ph.D., has been an active member of the HOME steering committee since 2022. He was born with severe cerebral palsy over 50 years ago. He broke down the Special Education barriers in Georgia in the '70s and '80s before being the first one in his condition to go through Georgia Tech, where he graduated on the Dean's List in Engineering AND Pi Mu Epsilon in Applied Mathematics. Dr. Conaway first came to Iowa in 2002 for graduate studies in Iowa City. With roots in the state and experience living across the U.S., including six years in Chicago, Dr. Conaway considers Iowa City his hometown.

Dr. Conaway is a third-generation Doctor, holding multiple degrees from institutions such as Georgia Tech, The University of Michigan, and The University of Iowa (including a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering). His interests span medical science, rehabilitation, alternative healthcare, bioethics, and health professions education. As Matt pursued a Doctor of Bioethics through Loyola University Chicago and a non-Bar-eligible E.J.D. in Health Law degree through Purdue Global Law School, he determined that a career integrating expert witness work in legal cases, healthcare policy, health professions education, technology criticism, research enterprise, and disability studies scholarship would best utilize his knowledge in biomedical science and engineering. This path also aligns with his writing, administrative skills, passion for teaching, and life experience of growing up disabled in a family of healthcare professionals.

Dr. Conaway has reflected extensively on the HOME project and federal efforts. He believes he now comprehends his purpose and the reasons for enduring hardships. Among other things, he feels destined to advocate for long-term care for those in need.

Beyond scholarly pursuits, Dr. Conaway finds fulfillment as a Volunteer Patient at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, educating health profession students on disability issues. This role has revealed a niche for Dr. Conaway; he would like to design similar training programs across the health profession spectrum.



## Resources

- [Iowa HHS Home Website](#)
- [HOME Project Timeline](#)
- Fill out the [Feedback Interest Form](#)
- Email the HOME Project at [iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com)