

Recent Updates & Progress

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

This newsletter provides updates on the HOME project progress and highlights ways you can provide feedback to inform our work.

HOMEwork Updates

Over the last few months, the HOME Project team has made progress on key items.

- Continued planning efforts for systems changes, including:
 - Conducted interviews with Iowa navigation organizations to help improve materials used to understand HCBS eligibility and services available.
 - Completed analyses to identify factors that predict the risk of institutionalization, which will help prioritize the new waiver waitlists based on individuals' needs.
 - Evaluated the new interRAI tools through an optional assessment with members on the intellectual disability waiver to make sure that the new tools show the same needs for help and services as the current tools.
- Continued working on key components of the new waivers:
 - Outlined the transition process from the Children and Youth Waiver to the Adult and Aging Waiver.
 - Launched new MCO case management ratios and requirements.

- Developed and finalized certification and refresher toolkits for case managers.
- Conducted interviews with Integrated Health Home (IHH) care coordinators.

Based on feedback from Iowans, the HOME project proposes to keep the current Elderly Waiver for members age 65+ who are not otherwise disabled. Services in the Elderly Waiver will not change at this time. Members on the Adult and Aging Waiver who have a disability will stay on that waiver after age 65.

A Closer Look

In each newsletter, we take a closer look at one element of current work on the HOME project. For this issue, we are looking at the key steps for transitioning to a new waiver structure in Iowa.

The goal of the waiver redesign is to create new waivers that are easier to understand and help Iowans access the services they need throughout their lives. This includes deciding who is eligible and what services are available.

The HOME team has worked for over two years to thoroughly understand the challenges with the current CBS and HCBS waiver systems. People across Iowa who use and provide HCBS have shared input that has shaped recommendations. While this newsletter highlights some recent activities, many other activities take place to ensure a smooth transition to the new waiver structure. A list of our current and future activities can be found below.

Current Activities:

Finalizing New Waivers

We're getting ready to present the new Children and Youth and Adult and Aging waivers for public comment. Before any changes can happen, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires the state to share the proposed changes and gather public feedback.

Creating a Uniform Assessment Tool

We're working on a tool that will create individualized budgets based on a person's needs.

Prioritizing the Waitlist

We're developing a plan to prioritize the waitlist based on risk of institutionalization and time spent on the waitlist.

Budget Analysis

We're crunching the numbers to understand how the new waivers will impact the state budget.

Updating IT Systems

We're identifying the system upgrades needed to be ready to handle new eligibility, waitlist, and enrollment processes.

Smooth Transitions

We're planning to ensure seamless transitions from the Children and Youth waiver to the Adult and Aging waiver.

Future Activities

Public Comment and Finalization

We'll collect feedback on the draft waivers, make needed adjustments, and submit the applications and transition plan to CMS.

Legislative Review

We'll present the budget package to the Iowa legislature for review and approval.

Updating Contracts

We'll update agreements with MCOs, providers, and vendors.

Informational Materials

We'll create materials to help providers, MCOs, and the public navigate the new waivers.

Training for Case Managers

We'll develop training programs to support case managers with changes.

We're thrilled to continue this important work and look forward to keeping you informed as we make progress!

We want to hear from you!

This fall, HHS will post draft waiver materials (including waiver applications and a transition plan) to HHS's site.

- HHS will provide instructions on how to share your feedback through written comments.
- HHS will also hold listening sessions.

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

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

HOMEteam Partner Spotlight

Garret Frey

We couldn't do this work without essential partnerships and contributions from people with lived experience.

Garret Frey is one of our important partners. Garret is a lifelong (and proud) resident of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Since age 4, Garret has been a ventilator-dependent quadriplegic, requiring 24/7 care. Throughout his journey, Garret has experienced significant challenges with services and supports, including denials and pushbacks that have impacted him and his family. Consumer-Directed Attendant Care (CDAC) services have helped him hire and train direct service professionals, but he continues to struggle with finding consistent and dependable caregivers. Garret aims to show that living in one's own home with proper supports is not only beneficial for people with disabilities but also cost-effective for taxpayers.

Garret appreciates the genuine care shown by the Director of Iowa Medicaid and he remains hopeful for future improvements. He is dedicated to advocating for better services, including through his work with the HOME Project Steering Committee. In his own words, Garret states, "We're here, we're not going away, we're not settling, we deserve the rights that everybody deserves, and we're happier and healthier living in the homes and communities of our choice."

Outside of his advocacy work, Garret enjoys various activities, such as trying different types of food (except sushi), spending time in nature, reading, staying active, exploring new places in Iowa, and connecting with friends who share similar experiences. He believes that Iowa is a special place with the potential to create a bright future; he feels more encouraged and motivated than ever, saying, "I know we can and will get there." He looks forward to making a meaningful impact and fostering positive changes in healthcare and home and community-based services for Iowans through HOME. #DisabilityRights