

Children's Long-Term Support Waiver Application Renewal – Concept Paper

The Waiver Renewal Process

Every five years, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) must submit a renewal application to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to continue to administer the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Program through a federal Medicaid waiver. The waiver renewal is an opportunity to assess current program operations, adjust any policies, and make changes to program benefits for the next five years.

To kick off the renewal planning process, DHS gathers input from internal and external partners to help shape the next waiver application. Feedback can be incorporated into the final waiver renewal application to be submitted in 2026. The new waiver, once approved by CMS, would go into effect January 1, 2027, and remain in place through the end of 2031.

Significant Changes to CLTS Since the Last Waiver Renewal:

Since the last waiver renewal in 2022, CLTS has experienced significant changes. Our new waiver application will consider the effects of these changes and seek to ensure a high-quality CLTS experience for all participants.

- CLTS enrollment grew from 20,000 in 2022 to 27,000 in 2025, a 35% increase in enrollment.
- We've achieved faster referrals and enrollment due to the CLTS enrollment timeliness initiative. Over the last year, the average statewide time from referral to CLTS enrollment has dropped from 91 days to 72 days.
- We supported participants and families through the unwinding of the temporary policies put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to regular policies once it was over.
- Centralized contracting with CLTS service providers has made it easier for providers to serve Medicaid members.

What Changes Can be Made to the Waiver?

DHS wants to use this CLTS Program waiver renewal to build on our strong foundation of robust enrollment and a strong service package, while also ensuring program sustainability. The waiver renewal is a great opportunity to consider changes that best support participants and their families, county waiver agencies (CWAs), support and service coordinators (SSCs), and CLTS service providers.

The waiver application covers many different parts of the CLTS Program. This allows DHS to make changes to things like eligibility, services offered, the service planning process, or program self-direction. DHS is identifying possible changes to the waiver that will build and improve the CLTS program in three important ways:

- Increasing consistency in the CLTS experience.
- Improving timely access and benefits coordination.
- Creating greater program and operational efficiency.

Consistency in CLTS Experience

Identify changes that make the CLTS experience more consistent for families across Wisconsin's 72 counties, so that there is less confusion about what is covered under the CLTS service package, and SSCs are better supported in addressing participants' needs.

Possible waiver changes:

- Revisit the CLTS benefit package to make sure each service is clearly defined, and the scope is easy to understand.
- Explore ways to provide professional development to SSCs to improve their abilities to serve participants.
- Explore ways to add more structure to Deciding Together, such as unit limits for certain services.

Timely Access and Coordination of Benefits

Identify changes to ensure that participants can easily access all Medicaid services when they need them.

Possible waiver changes:

- Explore options to better serve different target groups or children with complex medical care needs.
- Improve coordination with other children's disability programs, benefits that are a part of a member's Medicaid healthcare coverage, and Health Check Other services.
- Consider contracting with other agencies for eligibility and enrollment processes to get children into the program more quickly.

Program Administration and Operational Efficiency

Identify changes to create a more efficient and effective program for participants, counties, and providers. DHS wants to ensure that our waiver policies align with their intended purpose and promote the program goals.

Possible waiver changes:

- Revisit SSC requirements for opportunities to lessen unnecessary administrative processes. This could include changes to incident reporting or participant contact requirements.
- Revise provider qualifications for certain services.
- Add outcome-based rate incentives or supplemental payments for providers.
- Review and revise CLTS annual performance measure reporting.
- Explore options to improve the model for participant-hired caregivers.

Project Scope – What Cannot be Changed?

While the waiver renewal is an opportunity to make changes to the CLTS Program, some larger changes are not within the scope of the project. See the table below. Things like services and eligibility can be changed, but fundamental parts of the program, like the payment model or operational structure will remain in place.

In scope	Out of scope
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Service provider requirements▪ Benefit changes, including services and fee schedule▪ Changes to self-direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Payment model (fee-for-service vs. managed care)▪ Operational structure (counties and contractors)

The Waiver Renewal Timeline

The waiver renewal application must be approved by CMS before January 1, 2027. The initial stage of the project involves discussing possible waiver changes with councils, county waiver agencies, DHS offices, and other partners.

Summer 2025	DHS gathers feedback on potential changes from internal and external partners
Fall 2025	DHS drafts the renewal application using community and partner suggestions
Spring 2026	Public comment period for the updated CLTS waiver application
Summer 2026	DHS submits the CLTS waiver application using public comment feedback
Fall 2026	CMS reviews and approves application
January 2027	New CLTS waiver goes into effect on January 1

How can I get involved?

DHS want your feedback on the waiver renewal. There are multiple ways you can get involved:

- **Send ideas and thoughts to DHSCLTSWaiverRenewal@dhs.wisconsin.gov.** We welcome your input at any time about any CLTS topic.
- **Be ready to take a survey or attend an input session in the next few months.** We will share these opportunities to give us your input about the CLTS Program. We'll use it to consider changes to the waiver so we can make the program the best it can be from 2027 to 2031.
- **Read and comment on the draft waiver application in 2026.** You'll be able to see what's changing and share feedback during a 30-day public comment period and Tribal consultation before the application is submitted to CMS.

You can learn more about the CLTS waiver renewal and get updates about the project on our [website](#).