

OPEN MEETING MINUTES

Name of Governmental Body: Council for Children with Long-Term Support Needs (CLTS)			Attending: Wendy Heyn, Chair; Patti Becker, Parent; Kelly Blaschko, Provider, Genesee Community Services; Kerry Blondheim, Provider, Innovative Services, Inc.; Anouvong “Toto” Chanthavixay, Milwaukee County Children Youth & Family Services; Christina Courtney, Brown County, LTC PAC Representative; Anne Dent, Parent; Lisa Hankes, WI Dept of Children & Families; Pamela Hencke, Parent; Michelle Mattox, Parent; David McGinley, Parent; Angela Milne, Provider, Encompass Family Solutions; Katy Morgan-Davies, Parent; Cherie Purdy, Parent; Angela Radloff, Dane County Human Services; Jessica Seawright, Parent; Lisa Stephan, Manitowoc County; Beth Swedeen, WI BPDD; Sandra Tierney, Parent; Danielle Tolzmann, Family Voices of WI; Jamie Willett, Parent; Elizabeth (Liz) Williams, Parent; Windsor Wrolstad, Disability Rights Wisconsin Excused: Marianne Novella, Parent State and Presenting Members: Deb Rathermel, BCS; David Sorenson, BCS; Zach Bauer, BCS; Melissa Skenandore, DHS Public Health; Kaycee Kienast, BCS; Tara Sommersberger, BCS; Rachel Lettner, BCS; Andrea Warman, BCS; Tip Pom, BCS; Chris Bonds, BCS; Taylor Johnson, BCS; Sarah Ybarra, BCS; Nancy Bills, BCS; Tiffany Schanno, BCS Representative Public Members: Samantha Smothers, Parent; Dani Bauer; Chelsea Cannon, Parent; Autumn J., Portage County; Jenny Geiken; Lisa Reindl; Melissa Havermann, ABC for Health; Tonya Christner; Vicky Gunderson
Date: 2/4/2026	Time Started: 9:00 AM	Time Ended: 2:56 PM	
Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting			Presiding Officer: Wendy Heyn, Chair

Minutes

Welcome

- Call to Order, Greetings, and Introduction
- Council Member Updates and Announcements
- Members: CLTS Council: Members | Wisconsin Department of Health Services: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/cltsCouncil/members.htm>

Public Comments

- Chelsea Cannon highlighted a lack of inclusivity for deaf and hard of hearing children who are denied CLTS enrollment if they can communicate using American Sign Language (ASL) during the functional screen, stating that the screen does not take into account the supports these children often require to be safe and communicate in contexts outside of the screen itself.
- Samantha Smothers has been contacted by over 500 families about not being able to get care for children who are “too disabled” to find providers and said that more parents would like compensation for the level of care they are providing to their children.

General Business

- **Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 5, 2025:** [November 5, 2025, Governor's CLTS Council Minutes](#)
 - MOTION TO APPROVE: Michelle Mattox; SECONDED: Kerry Blondheim at 9:18 AM

Council Input, presenter Wendy Heyn

- **Overview of Waiver Renewal Recommendations**

A few members of the CLTS executive committee drafted recommendations for consideration by the full council, including:

- Develop an ombudsman program for children's programs similar to the Wisconsin Adult Systems.
 - Create a category for waiver covered services that allows for individualized comprehensive transition navigation coaching for families.
 - Training for support and service coordinators.
 - Prioritize parental pay for minor children.
- **Council Input**
 - Kerry Blondheim suggested the council consider addressing Chelsea Cannon's concerns regarding deaf and hard of hearing children.
 - Kelly Blaschko recommended rethinking the unpaid caregiver training benefit and looking into whether there is parent coaching or a different service that can be used to work with parents and youth on a consistent basis.
 - Beth Swedeen recommended putting in the open that the items are in no particular order and are all priority items to avoid confusion. She also seconded Kelly Blaschko's thoughts on peer mentoring and family support benefit.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS Status), presenter Zach Bauer

- Review of the CLTS Waiver Renewal process and timeline.
- The first draft of the waiver is expected to be posted for public comment in May 2026 and the final draft will be submitted to federal partners in July.
- Pending federal approval, implementation of updates to the waiver would begin in 2027.
- There are three areas of focus for the waiver:
 - To improve consistency in the CLTS experience, clearly defining what's in the service package, as well as clarifying when certain items are covered and supporting service coordinators through professional development.
 - Improving access to coordination of benefits through better coordination between CLTS and other Medicaid programs.
 - Improving operational efficiency by reviewing program requirements and making sure they're in line with what they are intended to accomplish.
- Feedback from parents and counties included wanting more clarity and awareness about what is covered.
- They are looking at making the following changes:
 - Adding guidelines about what is covered and when a service should or should not be used.
 - Exploring a potentially new service for family coaching.
 - Aligning the self-direction service to include removing the budget authority option
 - Keeping the employer authority option for respite, personal supports, childcare, transportation, and daily living skills.
 - Propose creation of a professional development system to support care coordinators
 - Propose creation of an ombuds role for CLTS program.
 - Lastly, they are working on a readiness review for counties to ensure they meet standards set by DHS.

Medicaid Budget and CLTS Program, presenter Deb Rathermel

- Overview of the projected 200 million budget shortfall.
- Drivers of the shortfall include long-term care programs and family care partnerships experiencing larger enrollments than anticipated.

- DHS and the Division of Medicaid Services is tracking cost and needs across all areas.

Wisconsin Wayfinder, presenter Melissa Skenandore

- Updates on Wisconsin Wayfinder:
- The five children's resource centers just completed their data entry and are now going through quality checks.
- 2026 starts a new cycle for the Title 5 maternal and health block grant.
- They were awarded about 4 million in competitive funding opportunities and had 26 different projects with 12 of them focused on children and youth with special health care needs.
- Future projects they are looking at include improving medical home practices, access to genomic testing, access to rural health care coverage, and health benefits coordination.

CLTS Program Data: 2025 Summary Enrollment and Disenrollment & 2025 Appeals Data, presenter Kaycee Kienast

- **2025 Summary Enrollment and Disenrollment**
 - Overview of enrollment growth year over year for the past three years, with more than 29,000 kids enrolled in CLTS as of December 2025, up from 25,477 at the end of 2024.
 - There is a downward trend in kids who are funded but not enrolled, which they attribute to efforts around enrollment compliance.
 - Disenrollment trends and reasons have remained stable throughout 2025.
- **2025 Appeals Data**
 - In 2025, there were 125 petitions filed in January to December, with 45% of appeals dismissed.
 - Overview of the appeals categories, with home modifications being the most common category.
 - There has been an 11% decrease in remands compared to 2024.
- **Discussion**
 - Sandra Tierney asked whether any of the petitions reflect lack of clarity for families or service coordinators.
 - Kaycee said they are looking at this issue, particularly in the category of service dogs.
 - Windsor Wrolstad echoed Danielle Tolzmann's suggestion that there might be an opportunity to use the percentage of dismissed decisions as a supporting argument for the ombuds position because dismissed decisions take up county resources.

BCS Word of the Year and Key Initiatives Briefing, 2026 Word of the Year is Inclusion, presenter Deb Rathermel

- Establishing the key initiatives for the Word of the Year helps the bureau coalesce as a single unit and have a shared foundation to work from. This year, we are asking questions about inclusion to elevate our work and program operations in ways that support inclusivity.
- The team is planning the following to operationalize the word of the year:
 - Elevate the voices of the participants and families that we serve in our programs and specifically in CLTS.
 - This will start with a landscape analysis of where and who we get information from, including families and participants information from councils, surveys, appeals, listening sessions, etc.
- **Discussion**
 - Jamie Willett echoed earlier concerns about functional screen and the deaf and hard of hearing population and asked whether the council can have someone come in to speak about why these populations aren't receiving services.
 - Angela Milne suggested the council look at making it easier for parents with mental health challenges to file appeals via email or online rather than printing out documents. There are also some concerns around getting negative feedback for parents filing appeals. She also mentioned including providers more in the deciding together process.
 - Sandra Tierney recommended having families be a part of the drafting process when considering creating more family facing information and documentation, for example, looking at the website and getting feedback on what's helpful and what's not helpful. This could go along with developing the additional pieces for ongoing training for service and support coordinators to help families feel more comfortable filing appeals and understanding what is actually appealable.
 - Jessica Seawright recommended clarifying what is happening with budget changes and Medicaid to make sure people understand the reasoning behind why certain services might be changing.
 - Windsor Wrolstad said a way to help parents feel that they have some ownership over the decisions being made as you're discussing training for support and service coordinators is to ensure families have written notices to understand what is happening and when.
 - Angela Milne reiterated having a time to go over the functional screen so everybody better understands how the process works.
 - Jamie Willett expressed that often her family has trouble understanding why they are being pushed to

Medicaid for services they would get through CLTS and if this can be better explained.

2026-2027 Council Planning Discussion: Priorities and Focus-Access, Choice, Coordination, Quality and Financing, presenters Wendy Heyn and Deb Rathermel

• Overview of the five key functions of the CLTS Council

- (1) Access: access to the program and access to services. (2) Choice: choice of deciding to enroll and choice in services once you enroll. (3) Coordination: coordination across the program and across other systems of care. (4) Quality: quality of the program and quality of the services from service coordination to service provider quality. (5) Financing and funding of the program.
- Common themes of interest the council has brought up include clarifying understanding of coordination between different programs and between Medicaid and other programs, and quality of services.
- Patti Becker recommended looking at whether people have put in requests for outliers in light of the workforce crisis.
- Windsor Wrolstad expressed a concern about whether counties with an exponential growth in access to the program would have enough providers in those areas, especially for in-person services. This would fall under both coordination and quality.
- Jamie Willett said that it's often hard to find support when the parents also have medical needs.
- Christina Courtney recommended better education for county waiver agencies and families on what is in scope of the waiver and what is not, what is the responsibility of other entities like DPI or Medicaid. She would also like to see improved quality through better support for the provider pool.
- Sandra recommended simplifying the coordination process because it can be inefficient and time consuming.

Council Member Sharing and Discussion on the CLTS Waiver Renewal Recommendations

- Danielle Tolzmann reiterated the importance of having an ombuds program and having someone for families to connect with. She also recommended looking into data on possible programs savings or offsets, or perhaps a shared funding model between CWAs and the state as the program continues to grow.
- Jamie Willett recommended considering revisiting the functional screen language to ensure it is inclusive of children who need access to services.
- Jessica Seawright mentioned prioritizing parental pay for minor children and having more information on what states have done this successfully, as well as building consistency across the state with training requirements while not losing employees.
- Kerry Blondheim reiterated that we should prioritize the items discussed in the meeting.
- Kerry said if there is not currently the ability to create a new waiver covered service for the transition navigation coaching or entities skilled enough to do that, that it can be a part of the training for SSCs.
- Pamela Hencke expressed concerns about getting rid of the entire category related to the transition and navigation code chain and getting more feedback from counties so as not to overwhelm them.
 - Sandra Tierney said this should be its own category or funded under some other category rather than through the service coordinator because we need someone who can help us understand how transitioning to the adult health care system and other pieces fit together with long-term care supports. Service and support coordinators do not have much time to address these issues.
 - Lisa Stephan reiterated getting more training for service coordinators.
- Kerry said transitions would be a great topic for the main meeting in addition to the functional screen.
- Patti Becker asked whether it is possible to craft the recommendations that talk about the themes expressed by families and others, so that the council makes recommendations to enhance access through the renewal to additional supports around transition coordination and training.
- Deb recommended polishing the recommendations and emailing the draft to all council members to get any last comments.

Project Updates: Deciding Together, presenter Tara Sommersberger

- They are updating the Deciding Together materials to be more concise, enhancing specifically what should be accomplished in all 5 steps of Deciding Together. They are also clarifying how cost-effectiveness is factored into decision-making and service planning.
- Overview of project deliverables with Deciding Together discussion meetings to be held in March along with a family newsletter. The updates will be live by April 1.
- Deciding Together steps have been renamed and retitled but the framework remains the same. Step one now focuses on identifying outcomes. Step three, weighing options, has enhanced guidance on what each team member contributes. There is also increased guidance on funding, cost effectiveness, and supports and services.

Service Alignment, presenter Rachel Lettner

- Updates on the service alignment project center around family unpaid caregiver supports and services and empowerment and self-determination supports within the CLTS program benefit package.
- DHS is working with counties and providers on aligning these services with policy.
- Outline of the transition phases, which kicked off October 2025 and are set to conclude by June 2026.
- Misalignments being addressed include when services are being delivered by a provider who is meeting on a regular and direct basis with the program participant and when authorized services are a better fit under a different CLTS program service category. Additional misalignments include when CLTS is funding services that are the funding responsibility of another program or system of care.
- In Phase 3, all authorizations will be aligned and families will be sent notice of actions if necessary.
- Family and other unpaid caregiver coaching services not specifically prohibited by policy will remain authorized in this alignment project.

Timely Enrollment, presenter Andrea Warman

- Background on the timely enrollment effort and initiation of action with CWAs that were out of compliance with timely enrollment standards.
- Overview of the data dashboard for counties on a corrective action plan.
- Counties have done the following to be successful in meeting enrollment timeliness:
 - Implemented changes to onboarding and training processes to retain case managers, made internal evaluations of their comprehensive community services dual eligible model, some did a single case manager model and looked at evaluating how that worked within their operational structure and if that could be modified. Some counties advocated to their county boards to increase staff or fill vacant positions. Some counties brought in external agencies to help with case management.
- Five counties have completed the corrective action plan and those who have not completed are being continually monitored each month.
- Jessica Seawright recommended sending letters to counties to express gratitude for their efforts in meeting the requirements and serving the families in their counties, and to continue to learn what counties are doing that is working to help resolve lags in enrollment timeline.

CLTS Provider Handbook, presenter Chris Bonds

- A CLTS Provider Handbook is being developed to help educate providers and simplify the complexities of understanding how to be a provider in the CLTS program.
- The handbook will contain general knowledge about the program, technical assistance information, and service quality and standards for enrolled providers.
- The project was launched in October 2025 with the handbook scheduled to be published by June 2026.
- DHS has created an industry review forum to collect feedback on topics that will be added to the handbook. The handbook will be sent out to all providers and CWAs once it is published.
 - Additional council members interested in joining are invited to the next session.

Children's Community Options Program (CCOP) Plans Revitalization

- Overview of the CCOP and the revitalization requirement.
- In 2026, BCS will be reviewing the CCOP plan requirements and making any updates deemed necessary. Updates may include information included in the plans or changes to the cycle as needed.
- Counties will be required to submit a new CCOP plan for 2027 and throughout the year, there will be education and support to counties in order to update their plans successfully.
- BCS will be implementing a review and approval process for each county's submission and offering technical assistance as needed.

Cross Program/Enrollment Discussion, Co-enrollment in multiple programs opportunities and experiences, CLTS and Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), CLTS and CCOP – Council Discussion & Christina Courtney, Brown County

- Overview of the program differences between the “three Cs.”
- For every C program, there is one door referral process because the served populations have a lot of crossover.
- While CLTS is broader in eligibility and benefits, CCS focuses on mental health but the same screening is used for both programs.
- Overview of similarities in the delivery model across programs, including all programs being family oriented.
- Overview of enrollment exclusions and service limitations.

- Christina shared the resource Brown County has developed to help explain these resources and offered to share with others and welcomed anyone to revise and edit for their own uses in our communities.

Council Vote on the Documents Recommendations and Modification

- MOTION: Jessica Seawright; SECONDED: Angela Milne at 2:52 PM.

Wrap-Up & Action Items

Future Meetings: May 6 (on-site in Madison), August 5 and November 4

Next Meeting: May 6, 2026

- MOTION TO ADJOURN: Pamela Hencke; SECONDED: Jessica Seawright at 2:56 PM.

Prepared by: Sarah Ybarra on 2/4/2026.

These minutes are in draft form. They will be presented for approval by the governmental body on: 5/6/2026

