



Date: September 15, 2023

DMS Operations Memo 23-34

To: Income Maintenance Supervisors  
Income Maintenance Lead Workers  
Income Maintenance Staff

**Affected Programs:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BadgerCare Plus | <input type="checkbox"/> Caretaker Supplement              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FoodShare                  | <input type="checkbox"/> FoodShare Employment and Training |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medicaid        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SeniorCare                 |  |

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**Telephonic Applications from Residents of Certain DCTS Facilities**

**CROSS REFERENCE**

- BadgerCare Plus Eligibility Handbook, [Chapter 25 Application](#) and [Chapter 45 Inmates](#)
- Medicaid Eligibility Handbook, [Section 27.11 Institutions for Mental Disease \(IMDs\)](#) and [Chapter 13 Inmates](#)

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 29, 2023

**PURPOSE**

This memo introduces new application policies for people who are being discharged from the following facilities operated by the Division of Care and Treatment Services (DCTS):

- Mendota Mental Health Institute (MMHI)
- Winnebago Mental Health Institute (WMHI)
- Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center (SRSTC)

**BACKGROUND**

Under federal law, Medicaid cannot pay for most health care services provided to people ages 21 through 64 residing in an institution for mental disease (IMD). Given this restriction, Wisconsin has had a longstanding policy of terminating BadgerCare Plus and Medicaid eligibility when a member is

admitted to these facilities. Members must wait until they are discharged from an IMD to reapply for BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid.

DCTS operates two IMDs, MMHI and WMHI. DCTS also operates SRSTC, which serves adults civilly committed after they completed their sentence within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) and adults who have been found not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect and are committed to DHS for treatment.

Residents receive intensive health care treatment while in these facilities. As they transition from these facilities to the community, it is important that they continue to have access to health care and prescription medications. To help prevent a gap in coverage upon being discharged, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) will accept telephonic applications for health care from residents nearing their discharge date.

**Note:** DCTS also operates the Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC) in partnership with the DOC. Residents of the WRC are considered to be incarcerated, and they may be eligible for suspended BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid while they are residing in the WRC.

## **POLICY**

Residents of MMHI, WMHI, and SRSTC who have a definitive discharge date may apply for health care benefits by calling their income maintenance (IM) agency on or after the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month before the month of discharge. The application must be processed by the IM agency at the time of the initial call. The applicant must be allowed to sign the application telephonically.

MMHI, WMHI, and SRSTC will allow the applicant up to an hour of telephone time to complete the application process. Facility staff will assist the applicant in preparing for the application and identify the correct IM consortium to call. Contact information for local and tribal IM agencies is available on the [DHS website](#). The applicant should apply with the IM agency serving the area where they expect to live after being discharged, and the applicant should provide the address where they will live if they know it. If they do not know their future address, they may use the address of their local IM agency. Since the applicant may receive correspondence, such as a verification checklist or notice of decision, while still residing in the facility, the applicant should also provide a mailing address where they can receive mail during that time. All applicants and members should report address changes as soon as possible to their IM agency or through ACCESS. When applicants need assistance from facility staff in completing a telephonic application, facility staff will inform the IM worker on the phone call that they are assisting with the application.

If the applicant is eligible for BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid, eligibility will begin the first day of the month in which the applicant is discharged. Since BadgerCare Plus and Medicaid cannot pay for health services provided to this population while they are residing in an IMD, providers are prohibited from billing BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid for any services while the applicant is still residing in the facility. The first day that the member can receive BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid-covered services is the date they are discharged from the facility. If the applicant is discharged from the facility and they move to the community or other non-incarceration living arrangement, the applicant may be eligible for full-benefit BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid. If the applicant is discharged from the facility and incarcerated in a correctional institution, such as jail or prison, the applicant may be eligible for suspended BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid while incarcerated.

As with other applications, applicants must meet the BadgerCare Plus or Medicaid non-financial and financial criteria to be eligible. Applicants may need to provide verification of information to the IM agency. If verification is needed, a verification checklist will be sent to the applicant.

If an applicant is found eligible and has not previously been enrolled in a Wisconsin health care program, they will be mailed a ForwardHealth Card. If an applicant's benefits have been open for any health care program in the past, but the applicant no longer has their ForwardHealth Card, they can request a new card from Member Services at (800) 362-3002 or through their ACCESS account.

## **CONTACTS**

DHS CARES Problem Resolution Team

DHS/DMS/BEEP/CV; RW

DHS/DMS/BEOT/BF