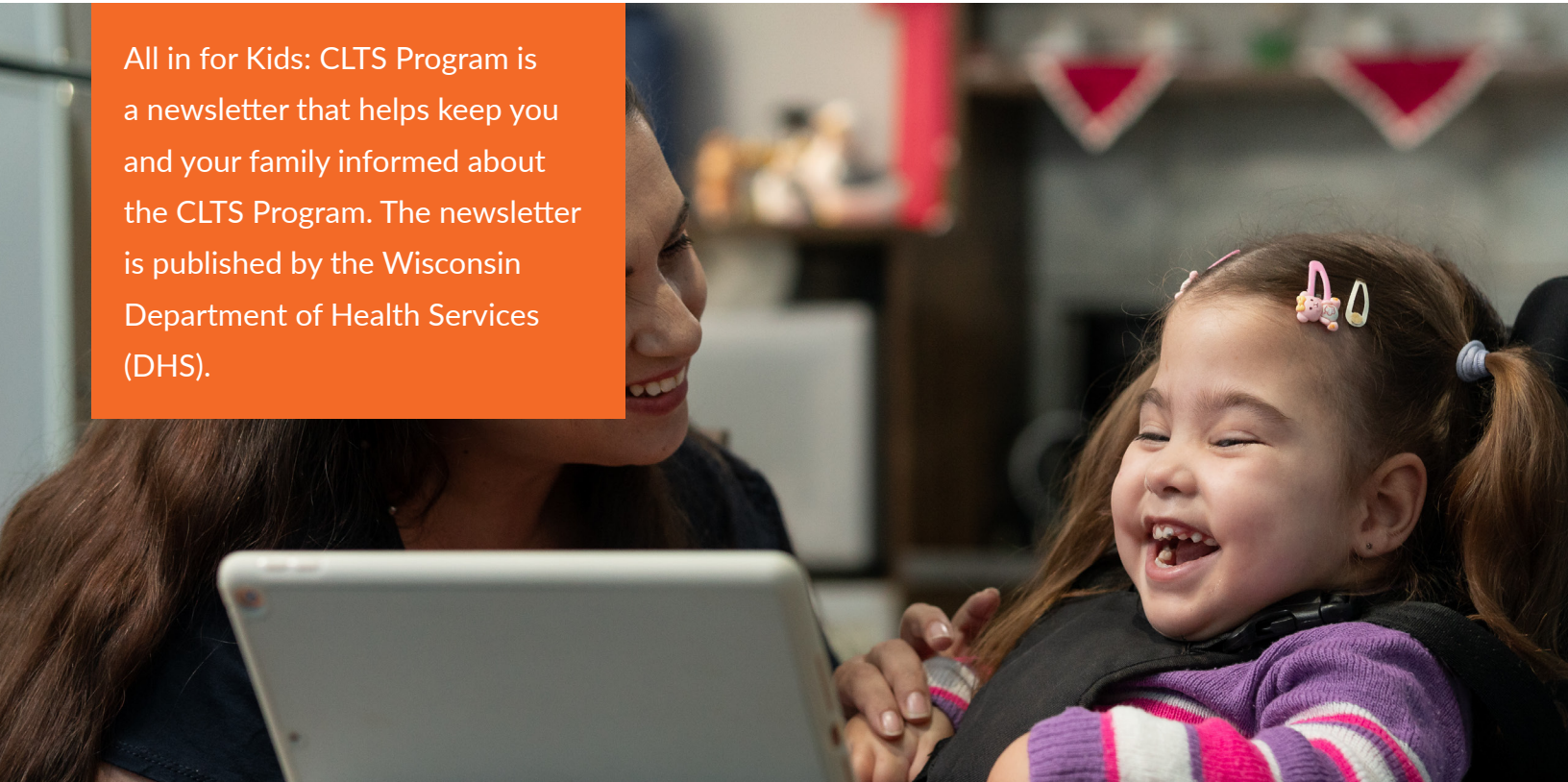


All in for Kids

A Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Program Family Newsletter

All in for Kids: CLTS Program is a newsletter that helps keep you and your family informed about the CLTS Program. The newsletter is published by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS).



Updates to Deciding Together: What families can expect

The CLTS Program uses a process called Deciding Together that brings your family and support teams together to create service plans that reflect what matters most to you and your child.

Based on feedback from families, support and service coordinators (SSCs), and partners across the state, the CLTS Program is making updates to strengthen Deciding Together. The goal of these updates is simple: provide clearer guidance on choosing the most cost-effective options, strengthen the

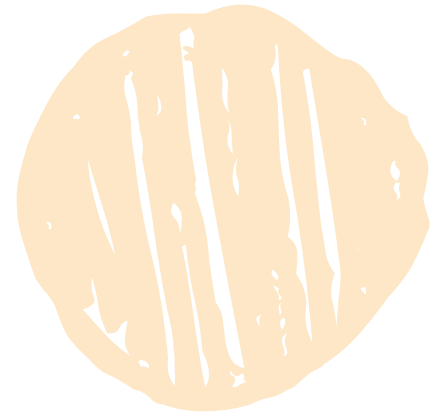
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whole team through improved clarity, and build on the expertise of all team members.

All team members—including you, your child, SSC and others—bring important knowledge and perspectives to inform service planning. All team members contribute to understanding your child and family as a whole and developing outcomes.

Who is part of the team?

- Your child (participant)
- Family members
- Support and Service Coordinator (SSC)
- Service providers and health care professionals
- Other important people included by your family



You and your child are experts on your own lives. You and your child explain your needs, routines, preferences, and outcomes. Your SSC offers knowledge of the CLTS Program rules, benefits, and other available resources. They can share how other families have worked through similar challenges.

What’s changing in Deciding Together?

The five steps of Deciding Together remain the same, but the CLTS Program updated the language and guidance to make each step more action-oriented and easier to understand. The steps now focus on what the team does together, from identifying outcomes that your child and family want to achieve to evaluating whether supports and services are working.

Before the team begins the Deciding Together process, you, your child, and your SSC will work together to complete an assessment. The assessment forms the basis for service planning. It captures the strengths, challenges, interests, dreams, and priorities for the CLTS Program participant. It’s also a time for your child, family, and SSC to review records and related information from medical, educational, and other service providers.

Step 1: Issues and Goal	→	Step 1: Identifying Outcomes
Step 2: Creative Thinking	→	Step 2: Thinking Creatively
Step 3: Weigh Options	→	Step 3: Weighing Options
Step 4: Develop the Plan	→	Step 4: Developing the Plan
Step 5: Evaluate Effectiveness	→	Step 5: Evaluating the Plan

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- **Step 1: Identifying Outcomes**

The team starts by clearly identifying what your child and family want to achieve. This step focuses on outcomes and helps guide every decision that follows. Outcomes are the specific steps that help you and your child meet their overall goals and the results you would like to see. The team will talk with you and your child to understand your child's needs, strengths and preferences. You and your child will think about what your child wants to achieve and make outcomes. For example, let's say your child wants to increase independence. An outcome might be by the end of the school year, your child will use a checklist to independently complete their morning routine to get ready for school. All supports and services selected must have an outcome identified first.

- **Step 2: Thinking Creatively**

The team explores a wide range of ideas to support those outcomes. The process is respectful of different cultures and beliefs and encourages creativity and open discussion.

- **Step 3: Weighing Options**

This step received the most updates. The team looks closely at how each option supports your child's outcomes the team identified, what funding sources are available, and how to use CLTS Program funds responsibly. Families share what works best in their daily lives, while your SSC help explain program options, which providers are available, and cost effectiveness.

The goal of steps 1-3 is to select the option that best meets your child's current needs and outcomes in a cost-effective way. Not all suggested options will be the appropriate fit. When multiple options could meet the outcome or goals, the team is expected to choose the most cost-effective choice. Your SSC will verify funding responsibilities, including Medicaid coverage, and coordinate benefits to ensure CLTS Program funding is used appropriately. Learn more about cost effectiveness and coordination of benefits in the Deciding Together materials here: dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/p-02246



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When the team is considering cost effectiveness, some areas you will discuss will be:

- **Determine what support or service has the best value by considering:**
 - Overall cost and benefits of the different options
 - Comparison of costs and benefits over time: this means that if your child's needs can be met with a lower priced support or service, then the team should consider that to be the most appropriate and cost-effective fit.
- **Determine if the cost of the support or service is reasonable by asking:**
 - Is the cost comparable to other similar supports or services?
 - Does the support or service meet your child's needs without adding costs that don't improve how it meets your child's needs? For example, the team would not choose a support or service that is more expensive because of a brand name or optional features that do not specifically address your child's outcomes and goals.
- **Step 4: Developing the Plan**

Once the options are decided, the team creates a clear, outcome-based service plan which is called the Individual Service Plan (ISP). Supports and services are confirmed in scope, quality, and cost. The team decides which supports and services will be in the plan based on what you discussed in steps 1,2 and 3. The supports and services must follow CLTS Program rules and be a responsible use of CLTS Program funding.
- **Step 5: Evaluating the Plan**

The team makes sure the supports and services in the plan are helping your child meet their outcomes. Your SSC checks in and talks with you, your child, and your CLTS Program providers at required monthly, quarterly, six-month, and annual contacts. They'll get feedback, check on progress and learn about problems and challenges. The team checks whether supports are helping and continues to look for the most appropriate and cost-effective options as needs change.



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What does this mean for families?

Conversations with your SSC will be more focused and transparent, with a shared understanding of outcomes, options, cost effectiveness and decisions. Service plans will remain centered on your child's needs, strengths, and family priorities.

Deciding Together continues to be exactly what its name promises: a process where families and teams work together to support children in meaningful, effective ways.

Where can I find information about Deciding Together?

Families will receive updated Deciding Together guides and instructions from your SSC. You can also find them online. The CLTS Program Participant and Family Handbook will be updated online. ❖

Family spotlight: Ryan finds his confidence



Ryan practices swimming during adaptive lessons supported by the CLTS Program.

Ryan has always been bright, curious, and full of determination, but day after day of "peopling" (as Ryan likes to call it) in elementary school often left him feeling drained and distressed. He lives with his family in Milwaukee County, and when he was

diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and ADHD as a young child, his family knew his path might look different, but they also knew he had so much potential. What they didn't know was how much the CLTS Program would help Ryan build confidence in ways that would stay with him for life.

For years, Ryan struggled with swimming. Group lessons never worked for him, and as he got older, he felt embarrassed taking lessons alongside much younger children. Each trip to the pool ended the same way: another failed swim test and another reminder that he couldn't join his cousins in the deep water. Ryan told himself he didn't need lessons anymore, even though he wished he could pass the test required in his Scout program.

Helpful resources

[Deciding Together Resources](#)

[CLTS Program Participant and Family Handbook](#)



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That changed when Ryan’s family learned about the CLTS Program while he was in fifth grade. Through the CLTS Program, Ryan began private adaptive swim lessons with an instructor who understood his learning style. With one-on-one support and lessons paced just for him, Ryan started to believe in himself. He discovered he was great at treading water. Soon, he learned backstroke and then the front crawl.

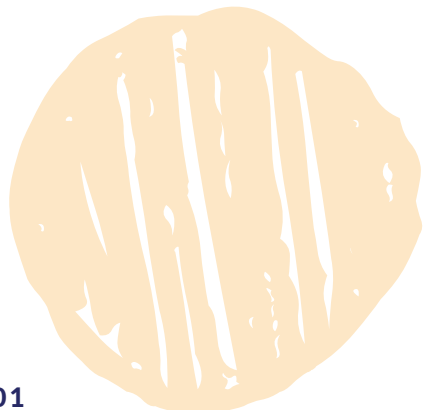
When it came time to take the swim test for Scout camp, Ryan felt ready. He swam four full lengths of the pool without stopping. Exhausted but proud, he passed. That summer, Ryan attended camp as a confident swimmer, joining his peers in activities he once thought were out of reach.

The CLTS Program also opened other doors. Ryan took part in an Islands of Brilliance workshop, where he explored digital design and created a poster that reflected his creativity and interests. With the right environment and support, he thrived.

Today, Ryan is a high school freshman who no longer worries about swim tests, or about making it through each school day. In gym class, he passed the required high school swim test with ease, and he is currently having fun designing a robot in his engineering class. His family says the CLTS Program didn’t just help Ryan gain skills; it gave him confidence, independence, and the freedom to discover what he can do. ❖



Ryan shows a poster he created through a CLTS Program-supported activity.



The CLTS Program wants your family stories and photos!

The All in for Kids newsletter is for families. We want to feature your photos and experiences for other readers to enjoy! You can share things like:

- A positive interaction with the CLTS Program.
- An example of how the CLTS Program has helped your family or child.
- A photo or story of an activity you did with your child.
- A photo of artwork or something else your child has made.

Email your family story or photo to dhsclts@dhs.wi.gov with “All in for Kids” in the subject line. You can also send ideas for stories you would like to read in the newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you! ❖

Staying up to date on childhood vaccines

DHS wants families to know that Wisconsin’s childhood vaccine recommendations have not changed. DHS continues to encourage families to follow the vaccine schedule based on research and recommended by pediatricians.

Earlier this year, federal agencies made updates to the national childhood vaccine schedule. In response, DHS reviewed those changes and stood by its recommendation for families in Wisconsin to continue following the schedule supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). This schedule is widely used by health care providers and is based on long-standing scientific evidence that shows vaccines protect children from serious, preventable diseases.

What this means for families

- Talk with your child’s health care provider about vaccines and follow the recommended schedule.
- Wisconsin’s school and child care immunization requirements remain the same.

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- Recommended vaccines continue to be covered through Wisconsin Medicaid and the Vaccines for Children program for eligible children.

Vaccines have helped keep children healthy for generations, and DHS continues to support their safe and effective use to protect children, families, and communities across Wisconsin.

Families who want to learn more can:

- Read the DHS news release about Wisconsin's current vaccine guidance: dhs.wi.gov/news/releases/010826.htm
- Check their child's vaccination record through the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR) or ask their health care provider for help accessing it: dhs.wi.gov/immunization/wir.htm
- Review Wisconsin's recommended childhood vaccination schedule: dhs.wi.gov/immunization/recommended-schedules.htm ❖

Share your feedback on the CLTS Program waiver

DHS is planning to renew the CLTS Program waiver, and we want to hear from families.

Waivers allow DHS to have Medicaid programs like the CLTS Program. The CLTS Program provides children with disabilities and their families access to long-term supports and services at home and in the community.

The waiver needs to be renewed and approved by the federal government every five years. The CLTS Program waiver is due for renewal by January 1, 2027. This is a chance for us to make the CLTS Program better between 2027 and 2031.

Last year, DHS worked on a draft of a new waiver application. Throughout 2025, families, counties, and CLTS Program providers shared input on possible improvements to the program. Much of that input focused on increasing consistency across counties and strengthening supports and services for families. DHS used that input to shape this new draft.



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In May 2026, the waiver will move to the next step: **public review and comment**. DHS will provide updates about the public comment period and how to submit input on our CLTS Program Waiver Renewal webpage at dhs.wi.gov/clts/renewal.htm.

After the public comment period ends, DHS will review all input, make final updates, and submit the waiver to federal partners for approval. ❖

The 2026 Circles of Life Conference: a time to learn, connect, and grow

The Circles of Life Conference is an annual conference for Wisconsin's families who have children of any age with disabilities. Providers and other professionals who support families also attend, creating a shared space to learn, connect, and grow together.

In its 40th year, Circles of Life continues to offer a welcoming, family-focused experience. Over the course of the conference, families can connect with one another, attend educational sessions, and learn about new resources that support children, youth, and families across Wisconsin.

Many of the conference speakers are both parents of children with disabilities and professionals. Sessions focus on practical ideas and strategies for partnering together to support positive outcomes for children. Topics include self-care, life after high school, advocacy, financial planning, and more.

Activities for the whole family include:

- 30 family-focused workshops
- Gathering of Youth, a dynamic program for youth ages 10–18 with disabilities
- Sibshop Kids and Sibshop Teens, half-day sessions for siblings
- Family Fun Night
- More than 45 resource vendors
- Spanish and ASL interpreters, if requested



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Conference details

The 2026 Circles of Life Conference will take place on **Thursday and Friday, May 14–15, 2026**, at the **Holiday Inn Stevens Point-Convention Center in Stevens Point, Wisconsin**. This family-friendly location offers easy parking, an on-site restaurant, and a pool.

Room blocks at the Holiday Inn Stevens Point-Convention Center and the Holiday Inn Express and Suites Stevens Point are available at a discounted rate. Families are encouraged to make hotel reservations early.

Registration and CLTS Program funding

For conference information and registration, visit familyvoiceswi.org/circles-of-life-conference.

If you would like to use CLTS Program funds to cover conference registration fees, work with your SSC to add the conference to your service plan. The coordinator will complete a prior authorization (PA) before the conference. Once approved, you will receive a confirmation email with next steps.

The Circles of Life Conference offers families and professionals a meaningful opportunity to learn together, share experiences, and strengthen connections that last well beyond the conference. ❖



Reminder: The CLTS Program Participant and Family Handbook

Families enrolled in the CLTS Program receive a Participant and Family Handbook that explains how the program works and what to expect.

The handbook includes helpful information about:

- The CLTS Program and available supports
- The Deciding Together service planning process
- Roles and responsibilities of families and teams
- Rights, appeals, and how to get help

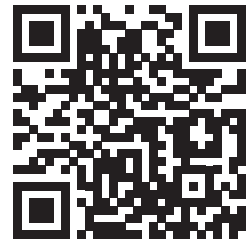
Whether you are brand new to the CLTS Program or have been enrolled for years, the handbook is a useful tool you can return to again and again.

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Families receive the Participant and Family Handbook within the first month of enrollment. DHS mails a copy to you, and the handbook is also available online at any time.

If you are new to the CLTS Program, the Participant and Family Handbook is a great place to start. If you have been enrolled for a while, it can be a helpful reference whenever questions come up.

To view the handbook online or request another copy, visit dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/p-03689 or talk with your SSC. ❖



Scan me for
CLTS handbook

If you disagree with a decision in the CLTS Program

It's normal to have differences of opinion from time to time. If you disagree with a decision about your child's support or service in the CLTS Program, their eligibility, or a chosen provider, you have the right to appeal. This means you can formally request that the decision be reviewed by a judge.

If you believe something was denied but you did not receive a Notice of Adverse Action (NOA), you still have the right to receive one. The NOA explains the decision and gives you the right to appeal. If you think you should have received one but didn't, ask your SSC or the agency providing CLTS Program services to send it to you.

To start the appeal process:

Submit a request form or write a letter. Fill out a form to request a hearing or write a letter explaining why you disagree with the decision. Make sure to sign and date the request.

Send that form or letter to the Division of Hearings and Appeals.

The address is:

Division of Hearings and Appeals
P.O. Box 7875
Madison, WI 53707-7875

The Division of Hearings and Appeals will notify you when a date for your fair hearing has been set.

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For more information about appeals or to find the form, visit: doa.wi.gov/RequestAHearing

It's important to know that filing an appeal is not a bad thing. It's simply a way to work through differences and make sure your child's needs are fully considered. The appeal process is here to support you if you feel a decision about your child's supports and services is not right for your situation. ❖

Helpful resources for families

Free school readiness for four-year-olds

Governor Evers, together with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), launched Get Kids Ready, Wisconsin's first-ever state-funded school readiness program for children who will be four years old on or before September 1, 2026. Through this new initiative, child care providers who offer approved school readiness instruction will receive state payments, and participating families will not pay for that part of the day. The program helps children build skills they need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond, including academic, physical, social-emotional, and self-help skills.

Learn more at the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Get Kids Ready page: dcf.wisconsin.gov/getkidsready

Mental health and school attendance

The Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) released a fact sheet explaining how mental health challenges can lead to school absences, and how chronic absenteeism can increase anxiety, isolation, and academic stress. Regular attendance supports learning, relationships, and long-term well-being, and schools with strong student services can help families address attendance concerns.

Read the fact sheet here: children.wi.gov/Documents/ResearchData/OCMH%20Fact%20Sheet_October%202025_Attendance%20Absenteeism%20and%20Mental%20Health.pdf



Wisconsin Wayfinder
Children's Resource Network

Wisconsin Wayfinder helps connect you to resources

Families often have many questions after learning their child has one or more delays, disabilities, special health care needs, or mental health conditions. Wisconsin has five regional Children's Resource Centers that are devoted to supporting these families. The centers help both families and providers:

- Connect to community resources.
- Learn about and find supports and services.
- Get answers to questions.

You can call the toll-free phone number 877-WiscWay (877-947-2929) to talk to a real person who will connect you with your children's resource guide.

You can go online at dhs.wi.gov/wiscway for more information.

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Office of Children's Mental Health: Supporting Kids with Disabilities Fact Sheet

The Office of Children's Mental Health issued a fact sheet talking about what our state is doing to support children with disabilities. It includes a list of things that policymakers, providers, communities, schools, and parents/caregivers can do to help kids and their families.

Download it here: children.wi.gov/Documents/ResearchData/OCMH%20Fact%20Sheet_July%202024_Supporting%20Kids%20with%20Disabilities.pdf ❖


Join our email list

Sign up to receive the electronic version of this newsletter and other emails about the CLTS Program.

1. Go to dhs.wi.gov/dms/ltc-email-signup.htm.
2. Scroll down to the Children's Long-Term Care Subscription List Topics section.
3. Select CLTS Information for Families and Participants.

Tell your family and friends in the program to sign up as well!

Previous 2025 issues of the All in for Kids: CLTS Program are available at: dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/AKids25. ❖



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All in for Kids: CLTS Program is a newsletter published by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services for children and families in the CLTS Program.

The CLTS Program makes Medicaid funding available to support children with substantial limitations due to developmental, physical, or severe emotional disabilities who are living at home or in the community. Funding may be used to support a range of services based on an assessment of the child's and family's specific needs and identified goals or outcomes. For more information, visit dhs.wi.gov/children/index.htm.

Para leer este boletín en español, visite dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/AKids26.

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For other languages (繁體中文, 简体中文, Deutsch, العربية, русский, 한국어, Tiếng Việt, Deutsch, ພາສາລາວ, Français, Polski, हिंदी, Shqip, Tagalog, Soomaali): 608-266-5508.