



# **Preparing for Life as an Adult: Transition Planning for Youth**



**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
of HEALTH SERVICES**

**Youth in transition** (also called transition planning) is a process for teens with health care needs or disabilities. It helps you plan for your future and shift from getting youth services to adult services. Transition planning can start as early as age 14.

During transition planning, you share what is important to you. You learn what options are available to you as an adult. You also decide what support will be most helpful. Many changes in services happen by age 18.

## The Youth in Transition Guide

The transition from youth to adult services can be a big change. Your ADRC (aging and disability resource center) or Tribal ADRS (aging and disability resource specialist) is here to help make it easier for you and your family. This guide is a place to start. It has details about these topics:

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## How to get ready for the transition

One way to get ready for the transition is to learn about adult programs. You may need to set up services with some or all these programs. To prepare:

- Get a transition team or support person.
- Gather documents you may need.
- Go to IEP (individualized education program) meetings.

## Your team

Know that you do not have to manage the transition process alone. Try to have a transition team or at least one person who can support you. Your team might start as a parent or caregiver. You can add more people as you work on different parts of your transition plan.

## Documents

### Have these documents ready as you transition to adult services:

Medical records, such as your diagnosis, psychological evaluations, and IQ scores

School records, such as IEPs, 504 plans, testing results, and assessments

Individual service plans (ISPs) from your current support programs, such as CLTS (Children's Long-Term Support), CCS (Comprehensive Community Services), and Wraparound

ID (identification) documents, such as your Social Security card, birth certificate, state ID, or driver's license

## IEP Meetings

At IEP meetings, you may discuss:

- Your current skills and interests.
- What you are doing now to meet your goals.
- New ways you can meet your goals.
- Goals you have for your future. These goals can be part of your postsecondary transition plan.



IEP meetings are also a time to practice communication skills:

Introduce people to each other at the IEP meeting.

Ask questions about life after high school.

Share your interests and thoughts about your future.

## Where to learn more

To learn more about the transition process, please view:

- [Transition Planning for Youth](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/clts/transition.htm) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/clts/transition.htm)
- [Transition Action Guide](https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/policy-guidance/toolkits-guides-manuals/transition-action-guide/) (dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/policy-guidance/toolkits-guides-manuals/transition-action-guide/)
- [WiTransition App](https://witig.org/self-advocacy-tools/witransition-app/) (witig.org/self-advocacy-tools/witransition-app/)

If you have questions, contact:

- [Your local ADRC](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm).
- [Your Tribal ADRS](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/tribes.htm) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/tribes.htm).

**Your ADRC/Tribal ADRS:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

**Hours:**



# Youth in Transition Timeline

## Youth in Transition

Transition planning does not happen all at once. Rather, it happens over time. This timeline gives you tasks to do at each age to help with the transition to adult services. If you miss starting a step at the listed age, that's okay—just start it as soon as you can.

### Start transition

#### Age 14

##### When you are close to 14:

- Start to think about what you hope your life will be like as an adult. Where will you live and with whom? What do you want to do for work? How will you have fun?
- Start to think about what your future needs for support may be when you turn 18. You may need support from family, friends, services, or programs.
- Start to include plans for life as an adult in your IEP (individualized education program).
- Start to look at your options after high school—internships, careers, or technical or four-year college.
- Get help joining volunteer activities to see what you like.

#### Age 16

##### When you are 16:

- Apply for services through DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) if you want to work.
- Start to look for a paid job.



**Learn more:** [Jobs \(page 33\)](#).

*Continued on page 6*

Start

14

16

5



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## Age 17.5

### When you are 17 and 6 months:

- Meet with your case manager if you are in a youth program now, such as CLTS (Children's Long-Term Support), CCS (Comprehensive Community Services), or Wraparound. They can help you plan for changes that happen when you transition from youth services.
- Call or visit your ADRC (aging and disability resource center) or Tribal ADRS (aging and disability resource specialist). They will help you start the transition to adult services:
  - Complete the functional screen for adult long-term care services and the Medicaid application.
  - Learn about and select an adult long-term care program to enroll into if you are eligible.
  - Figure out what supports and services you will need. You will define how to meet those needs if you do not enroll in an adult long-term care program.



**Learn more:** [Your ADRC, Tribal ADRS, and Disability Benefit Specialist \(page 8\).](#)

## Age 18 (birthday month)

### The month when you turn 18:

- Apply for adult Social Security benefits with the Social Security Administration. If you need help with this application process, you can schedule an appointment with a disability benefit specialist. Find them at your local ADRC or Tribal ADRS.
- Enroll in an adult long-term care program if you meet the requirements.



**Learn more:** [Social Security Benefits \(page 24\)](#) and [Adult Long-Term Care Programs \(page 49\).](#)

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17.5

18

## Age 18

### When you are 18:

- Switch to adult health care providers.
- Set up the supported decision-making or advance directives you need.

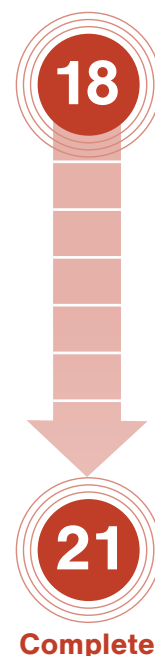


**Learn more:** [How to Make Legal Decisions \(page 15\)](#) and [Your Health Care Transition \(page 21\)](#).

## Age 21

### By 21:

- Complete your transition to adult services.
- Know that it is the last year you can receive:
  - Special education at a public secondary school if you have not already graduated.
  - Services through CLTS if you have not already transitioned.



## Transition complete



# ADRC, Tribal ADRS, and Disability Benefit Specialist

## Youth in Transition

As part of your transition process, you get help as you shift from youth to adult services. Six months before you turn 18, you may start working with your:

- **Local ADRC (aging and disability resource center)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm)).
- **Tribal ADRS (aging and disability resource specialist)** for Native American Tribal members ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/tribes.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/tribes.htm)).
- **Disability Benefit Specialist** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/counties.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/counties.htm)).

## The role of an ADRC and Tribal ADRS

Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS is here to support you during and after the transition process. They give you free, trusted, unbiased information about public programs and services. You can then make choices that fit your needs. The goal is to help you meet your goals as an adult.

You can work with your ADRC or Tribal ADRS by phone, in writing, or in a meeting (in person or video).

## How to work with your ADRC or Tribal ADRS

You can expect your ADRC or Tribal ADRS to follow these steps:

### 1. Get to know you

First, you meet your ADRC or Tribal ADRS. They ask questions to get to know you:

- Who is important in your life, such as family and friends?
- What services do you have now?
- What are your goals? What do you like or dislike?
- What are your needs and health conditions?





## 2. Give you information

Next, you learn about topics, such as:

- Adult services and what agencies offer them.
- Options for living on your own.
- Support for making decisions.

## 3. Plan for what's next

Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS helps you narrow down your choices. They also help you think through your next steps. They include your parents and others in your life, such as your case manager if you are in a youth program. Examples include CLTS (Children's Long-Term Support), CCS (Comprehensive Community Services), and Wraparound.

## 4. Help you start adult programs

To find out if you are eligible for publicly funded adult long-term care programs, you will work with your ADRC or Tribal ADRS to complete a functional screen. The goal of the screen is to measure your level of need for services and if you meet program requirements. The long-term care programs also have different financial requirements. Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS can help you complete the financial application.



**Learn more:** [Adult Long-Term Care Programs \(page 49\)](#).



## What is the role of a disability benefit specialist?

A disability benefit specialist helps you:

Learn about public benefits, such as Medicaid, FoodShare, and Social Security.

Apply for benefits.

Appeal if you are denied benefits.

Work with partner agencies, such as an income maintenance agency and the Social Security Administration.



**Note:** Another type of benefit specialist is a [work incentives benefit specialist](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/work-incentives.htm) (dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/work-incentives.htm). They help people understand how they can benefit from work. They also explain how work and earnings may affect disability benefits.



**Learn more:** [Transition Partners \(page 11\)](#).

**Your ADRC/Tribal ADRS:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

**Hours:**



As you transition from youth to adult services, you start working with your ADRC (aging and disability resource center) or Tribal ADRS (aging and disability resource specialist). They may connect you with other transition partners, or you can contact them on your own. These agencies focus on specific areas, such as jobs, legal support, or benefit programs.



**Learn more:** [Your ADRC, Tribal ADRS, and Disability Benefit Specialist \(page 8\).](#)

## Agencies for support

Many agencies can help as you transition to adult services.

### **Adult protective services (APS)**

(<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/aps/index.htm>)

Adult protective services:

- Is in each county and Tribal nation.
- Responds to concerns of abuse or neglect.
- May help with the guardianship process in some cases.

### **Behavioral health services**

([dhs.wisconsin.gov/mh/dcindex.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/mh/dcindex.htm))

Behavioral health services:

- Are in each county and Tribal nation.
- Offer information and resources for people living with mental and behavioral health concerns.
- Provide treatment services and programs. Examples include CCS (Comprehensive Community Services) and CSP (Community Support Program).



### **Children's Resource Centers**

([dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/resource-centers.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/resource-centers.htm))

Children's Resource Centers:

- Offer support to families with children and youth (ages 0–22) with special health care needs.
- Provide free, private services and information on a range of topics.

### **Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW)**

([disabilityrightswi.org/](https://disabilityrightswi.org/))

Disability Rights Wisconsin:

- Gives legal support for adults to protect your rights.
- Provides help through an ombudsman for people ages 18–59 who have issues with their long-term care program.

### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)**

([dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/job-seekers/](https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/job-seekers/))

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation:

- Helps people with disabilities find, keep, and advance in a job.
- Offers or sets up services that help you work.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation for Native Americans (VRNA)**

([glitc.org/programs/vocational-rehabilitation/vocational-rehabilitation-for-native-americans/overview-vrna/](https://glitc.org/programs/vocational-rehabilitation/vocational-rehabilitation-for-native-americans/overview-vrna/))

Vocational Rehabilitation for Native Americans:

- Helps Native Americans and Alaskan Natives with disabilities who live in the defined region.
- Offers job services that support your needs, strengths, culture, and beliefs.



### **Independent living centers (ILCs)**

([dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/physical/ilcs-contact.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/physical/ilcs-contact.htm))

Independent living centers:

- Help you use services and supports, such as personal care, transportation, and adaptive equipment.
- Make referrals to services that support independent living.
- Offer community education for independent living skills.
- Provide trainings on advocacy and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

### **Income maintenance or economic support agencies**

([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/imagency/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/imagency/index.htm))

An income maintenance agency or economic support agency:

- Answers questions about public benefits and what applies to you.
- Helps you apply for or enroll in public benefits, such as BadgerCare Plus, Medicaid, and FoodShare.
- Processes your application, benefit changes and renewals, and documents.

### **Social Security Administration (SSA)**

([ssa.gov/disability](https://ssa.gov/disability))

The Social Security Administration:

- Confirms your disability status.
- Reviews applications for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Pays your Social Security benefits if they apply to you.



## Agencies for adult long-term care

Medicaid long-term care programs provide services and supports that help you live, work, and join in your community. You may need long-term care if you have a disability or lasting condition. There are agencies that help you with long-term care. These agencies are called managed care organizations and IRIS consultant agencies.



**Learn more:** [Adult Long-Term Care Programs \(page 49\)](#).

### **Managed care organizations (MCOs)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/familycare/mcos.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/familycare/mcos.htm))

Managed care organizations:

- Provide services through one of the following programs: Family Care, Family Care Partnership, and PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly).
- Help you get services in your benefit package and provide case management. Your managed care organization has a provider network and will set up services based on your service plan.

### **IRIS consultant agencies (ICAs)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/iris/ica.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/iris/ica.htm))

IRIS consultant agencies:

- Handle the day-to-day operations for the IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct) program.
- Help IRIS participants:
  - Answer questions.
  - Complete forms.
  - Know what IRIS requires.
  - Self-direct services.
  - Set up a service plan.

### **Fiscal employer agencies (FEAs)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/iris/fea.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/iris/fea.htm))

Fiscal employer agencies help those in IRIS and managed care organization members who self-direct services:

- Complete employer tasks.
- Do background checks on workers.
- Process payroll and pay vendors.





# How to Make Legal Decisions

## Youth in Transition

When you turn 18, you have the right to make your own legal decisions. This right applies to people with and without a disability. You must complete a legal process for others to make decisions for you.

### Your legal options

Some legal options give you more control to make your own decisions. Others give you less control.

The picture shows your options from the most control (left) to least control (right).



### You want to have the most control.

These options apply if you want to make all your own decisions with some help.

#### Release of Information (ROI)

You can sign a ROI form to allow a person to share information about you with other people or groups. You get to decide who can access your information. You also decide what and how much information they can access.

#### ROI Form—[Confidential Information Release Authorization \(F-82009\)](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f8/f82009.pdf)

(<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f8/f82009.pdf>)



**Note:** Your agency or provider may have their own ROI form. You can ask your doctors, clinic or other agencies that you are working with how to complete an ROI.



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### Supported Decision-Making Agreement

Supported decision-making is when you choose trusted people (supporters) to help you make decisions. They can help you look at information, compare options, and let others know about your choice. Supporters might be parents and friends.

You and your chosen supporter must both sign a Supported Decision-Making Agreement. The agreement makes sure banks, schools, and health care providers include your supporter. The agreement does not restrict your power to make decisions. Rather, it is a formal way for supporters to agree to help you.

You may use this type of agreement for different decisions. Examples include decisions about health, money, and housing. You can have more than one agreement if you want different supporters to help you with different decisions.

#### Form—[Supported Decision-Making Agreement \(F-02377\)](#)

(dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f02377.pdf)

### Learn more

- [Supported Decision-Making and Guardianship Alternatives](#)  
(wi-bpdd.org/index.php/supporteddecision-making/)
- Stories from others:
  - [Youth Tell Their Stories About Supported Decision-Making](#)  
(youth-voice.org/stories-of-supported-decision-making/)
  - [Supported Decision-Making Stories](#)  
(supporteddecisions.org/stories-of-supported-decision-making/)



### You want to have medium control.

These options apply if you want to choose who makes decisions for you when you cannot decide for yourself.

#### Living will

A living will is a document that tells doctors what to do when you cannot tell them. You share how and if you want to be kept alive. You also say which treatments are okay, such as a feeding tube.

**Form—[Wisconsin Living Will \(F-00060\)](#)**

([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/f00060.pdf](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/f00060.pdf))

#### Power of attorney for health care

A power of attorney for health care is a legal document. In the document, you choose a person (your agent) to make health decisions for you. They only make these decisions if at least two health care providers say you cannot decide for yourself. At least one of the providers must be a doctor.

Your agent can make health care decisions on your behalf, but they cannot apply for public benefits on your behalf.

Ask your clinic or hospital for a copy of the power of attorney form. Many have staff who can help you complete it.

**Form—[Wisconsin Power of Attorney for Health Care \(F-00085\)](#)**

([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/f00085.pdf](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/f00085.pdf))

#### Power of attorney for finances

A power of attorney for finances is a legal document. In the document, you choose a person (your agent) to make decisions about your money for you. When you sign the document, you do not give up your rights. Instead, both you and your agent can make decisions about your money and property. Your agent can apply for public benefits on your behalf.

**Form—[Wisconsin Power of Attorney for Finances and Property \(F-00036\)](#)**

([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/f00036.pdf](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/f00036.pdf))



### Medicaid authorized representative

An authorized representative is a person who knows your situation. You trust them to act on your behalf. Once appointed, your authorized representative can apply for or renew benefits for you. They can also report changes and file grievances and appeals about your eligibility for programs.

**Form—[Appoint, Change, or Remove an Authorized Representative: Person \(F-10126A\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f10126a.pdf)**  
([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f10126a.pdf](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f10126a.pdf))

### Learn more

- **[Advance Directives](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/index.htm)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/index.htm))
- **[Advance Directives: Forms](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/adformspoa.htm)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/adformspoa.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/adformspoa.htm))
- **[The Arc Center for Future Planning](https://futureplanning.thearc.org/)** ([futureplanning.thearc.org/](https://futureplanning.thearc.org/))
- Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources:
  - **[Do-It-Yourself Consumer Packet for Future Health Care Decision-Making Living Will \(Declaration to Physicians\)](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2004333)** ([gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2004333](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2004333))
  - **[Do-It-Yourself Consumer Packet: Planning for Future Health Care Decision-Making Power of Attorney for Health Care](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2005992)** ([gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2005992](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2005992))
  - **[Do-It-Yourself Consumer Packet: Planning for Future Financial Decision-Making Power of Attorney for Finances and Property](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2004336)** ([gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2004336](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2004336))



### You need more help to make decisions (less control).

These options apply if you need someone to make personal or finance decisions for you.

#### Representative payee

You can choose a representative payee (rep payee) to help you manage Social Security or Supplemental Security Income benefits. The Social Security Administration may also appoint a rep payee if they determine you need this support.

Your rep payee has access to your bank account. They can use your benefits to pay rent, food, medical, and other living costs. They must complete a report each year to show they used your money for your needs.

#### Conservatorship

You can ask a court to appoint a conservator for you if you are unable or unwilling to manage your money or property. You may choose who you want to act for you, or you can ask the court to appoint a professional. You can ask the court to end the conservatorship and allow you to manage your own money again at any time.

A conservator has the same powers and duties as a guardian of the estate. They must write regular reports for the court about how they manage your money for you.

#### Guardianship

A guardian is someone a court appoints to make decisions for you if you cannot. They may be a family member or friend, a volunteer who isn't related to you, or a professional.

You may have a guardian if you meet the legal guidelines for "incompetence." Incompetence means:

- You cannot make decisions.
- You cannot tell others what you decide for some or all your decisions.
- You are at risk of harm if no one is appointed to make decisions for you.

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You can still tell your guardian what you want. Your guardian will consider your wishes when making decisions for you. Guardianship is often permanent.

When you have a guardian, you still have rights they cannot remove. A guardian can only do what the court says. There are two types of guardian roles. You may have one or both types of guardians. They may be the same person or different people.

- **Guardian of the person**—Makes some or all your decisions about personal choices. Examples include medical care, supportive services, or where to live.
- **Guardian of the estate**—Makes some or all your decisions about property or money, contracts, and legal events about property or money. They can apply for public benefits on your behalf.

### Learn more

- [Representative Payee](https://ssa.gov/payee/) (ssa.gov/payee/)
- [Guardianship Support Center](https://gwaar.org/guardianship-resources) (gwaar.org/guardianship-resources)
- [Wisconsin Court System Circuit Court Forms](https://wicourts.gov/forms1/circuit/index.htm) (wicourts.gov/forms1/circuit/index.htm)





Health care is part of the transition from youth to adult services. If you see children's doctors now, you will need to shift to adult or family doctors. If you see adult or family doctors now, you will still shift to an adult approach to care.

In adult health care, you are in charge of your own care. You decide if you want to involve your parents or caregivers. There are other changes as well. The tips in this section can help you with these health care changes.

## Talk to your doctors

If you have a pediatrician (a doctor who works with children), ask them about changing to an adult doctor. If you have pediatric specialists, ask them about adult doctors with the same specialty. For example, you may see a child ear, nose, and throat specialist, or ENT. You will need to change to an ENT specialist for adults.

These tips can help as you change doctors:

- Spend time alone with your current doctor to ask personal questions. Your current doctor often can help you find new doctors who meet your needs.
- Talk with other families who have needs like yours.
- Learn when you need to use the adult hospital and not the children's hospital for emergency and inpatient care. Inpatient care is when you stay in the hospital for your care.

## Set goals

Try to set goals for your health and health care transition. Connect your goals to your individualized education program (IEP) and service plan. Here are a few example goals:

Find trusted people who can help me make health care decisions.

Know about and be able to explain my disability and treatment needs to my health care providers.

Learn how to stay healthy and keep track of my health needs over time.

Schedule my own doctor visits.

Fill, refill, and pick up my own medicine from the pharmacy.

Describe how my health affects my ability to work, go to school, live where I want, and have fun.



### Have a health care summary and checklist

A health care summary and health care checklist are two health care transition tools. They can help you stay organized as you change to adult health care. First, talk to your current doctor or clinic about using their app (such as a MyChart account). Health care apps can store a lot of your health care information. They may replace the need for a health care summary and checklist.

Your health care summary may include:

- Your contact information.
- Your emergency contacts.
- Diagnoses.
- Medicines you take.
- Allergies, such as to food or medicine.
- Insurance coverage.

A health care checklist is a document that helps you confirm what you know about your health. It also helps you define what you want to learn about your health.

For more tools and resources, use these online tools:

- **[Got Transition](https://gottransition.org/youth-and-young-adults/)** (gottransition.org/youth-and-young-adults/)
- **[Health Transition Wisconsin](https://healthtransitionwi.org/families-youth/)** (healthtransitionwi.org/families-youth/)



### Use Wisconsin Wayfinder to find your Children's Resource Center

Wisconsin has five **Children's Resource Centers** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/resource-centers.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/resource-centers.htm)). Each center supports families with children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) (ages 0-22) and the providers who serve them. Children's Resource Centers have parents and professionals available to help you:

- Connect with community resources.
- Find services.
- Get answers.
- Receive trainings and support on your journey.

Wisconsin Wayfinder can help you connect with your Children's Resource Center. To contact Wisconsin Wayfinder, either:

- Call 877-WiscWay (877-947-2929).
- Fill out the **online form** (<https://redcap.wisconsin.gov/surveys/?s=WAMKFW9LW37YEFEF>).



# Social Security Benefits

## Youth in Transition

As you transition from youth to adult life, you may apply to get benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

The SSA:

- **Reviews your disability status.** You will work with disability specialists and doctors from the **Disability Determination Bureau (DDb)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/ddb/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/ddb/index.htm)) to determine your disability status. They will see if you have an illness, injury, or condition that matches how the Social Security Act defines “disability” for adult benefits. Adult and child disability benefit requirements are different.
- **Pays Social Security benefits**, which can include:
  - **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**—This benefit gives you cash and health care coverage through Medicaid. You can get SSI as a child or an adult. You must meet requirements with your disability, income, and resources.
  - **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**—This benefit gives you cash and health care coverage through Medicare. You must meet requirements with your disability and be “insured.” Insured means you’ve paid Social Security taxes on your job earnings.

To get SSI or SSDI benefits, first, you must apply through the SSA.



**Note:** If you get Social Security benefits now (before age 18), you may not need to start an adult application. Your SSA office can confirm if you must reapply as an adult. They also update your contact information as needed.



## Before you apply for adult benefits

It may help to do a few tasks before you apply for Social Security benefits:

### Use the Adult Disability Starter Kit

**The Adult Disability Starter Kit** ([ssa.gov/disability/disability\\_starter\\_kits\\_adult\\_eng.htm](https://ssa.gov/disability/disability_starter_kits_adult_eng.htm)) helps you get ready for your disability interview or online application.

### Set up a My Social Security account online

A **My Social Security account** ([ssa.gov/myaccount/](https://ssa.gov/myaccount/)) is free and secure. It offers tools for all people, even if you don't get Social Security benefits. With your account, you can:

- Request a replacement Social Security card.
- Look at the status of an application.
- Estimate future benefits.
- Manage benefits you have now.

### Open a bank account

You can either receive Social Security benefits as:

- A **direct deposit** ([ssa.gov/deposit/index.htm](https://ssa.gov/deposit/index.htm)) into your bank account.
- A Direct Express® Debit Mastercard®.

The SSA recommends using direct deposit. To use direct deposit, you need a bank account.

### Talk to a disability benefit specialist

If you have questions or need extra help, contact:

- A disability benefit specialist at your **ADRC (aging and disability resource center)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm)).
- A **Tribal disability benefit specialist** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/tribes.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/tribes.htm)), if you are a Native American Tribal member.



## How to apply for benefits

You can apply for Social Security benefits on or after your 18th birthday. You must meet both medical and financial requirements. If you apply before age 18, you may not meet the financial requirement. The SSA looks at your parents' income and assets if you are under 18.

Apply for benefits in one of three ways:



**In person**—Call your local SSA office to make an appointment. Find your SSA with the [\*\*Social Security Office Locator tool\*\*](https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp) (secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp).



**By phone**—Call your local SSA office to make a phone appointment. Find your SSA with the [\*\*Social Security Office Locator tool\*\*](https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp) (secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp).



**Online**—Visit the [\*\*SSI apply page\*\*](https://ssa.gov/apply/ssi) (ssa.gov/apply/ssi). Answer questions to complete the medical part of the application online. You must do the finance part of the application by phone or in person. Your SSA office will call you to set up the appointment for the finance part. You can also contact them if you prefer.





### Your disability status

When you apply for Social Security benefits, your SSA office completes steps to decide if your disability qualifies you for benefits. The process is called **disability determination**.

#### Your SSA office:

1. Receives your application and forms.
2. Confirms that you meet other requirements, such as your age, job status, married status, and insured status.
3. Sends your case to the Disability Determination Bureau (DDB).
  - The DDB gets medical proof of your disability. People called disability examiners review medical information from your doctors, clinics, and hospitals. They also look at information about your condition.
  - The DDB decides if you are disabled or not disabled based on how the law defines disability. This part of the DDB process is called medical disability determination.
4. Gets an update from the DDB about your disability status. If you are found:
  - **Disabled**—Your SSA office completes any other forms. They calculate the benefit amount you will get and then begin paying your benefit to you.
  - **Not disabled**—Your SSA office keeps your information on file in case you choose to challenge their decision (called an appeal). You have the right to appeal a disability determination. Work with a disability benefit specialist or Tribal disability benefit specialist if needed to make the appeal.

### Social Security job support

You can get job support if you receive SSI or SSDI.

Job support helps you:

- Find a job or start a business.
- Protect your cash and health benefits while you work.
- Save money to go to school.

There are many job support programs. A few examples include:

- **Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)** ([ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm](https://ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm))—Helps people with disabilities save money for items or services that help you find and keep a job. Money that you save through PASS does not count as income for SSI or SSDI.
- **Student Earned Income Exclusion for SSI** ([ssa.gov/oact/cola/studentEIE.html](https://ssa.gov/oact/cola/studentEIE.html))—Helps people under age 22 who attend school. The SSA does not count some of your earned income. That means you get more from your SSI payment.
- **SSI and SSDI work incentives** ([ssa.gov/redbook/eng/employment-supports-help.htm?](https://ssa.gov/redbook/eng/employment-supports-help.htm?))—Helps you keep getting SSI checks and Medicaid coverage while you work. You may even get a higher income to help pay for certain costs.
- **Ticket to Work** ([ssa.gov/work/](https://ssa.gov/work/))—Helps with career development for people with disabilities who want to work. This free program connects you with services and supports, so you find and keep the job you want. You choose if you want to be part of Ticket to Work.



Learn more: **Job Options (page 33)**.



Wisconsin has many public programs that can help with living costs, such as food and health care.



### FoodShare

**FoodShare** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/index.htm)) is a state program that helps people pay for groceries. You may have heard it called food stamps or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

FoodShare is for people who:

- Live on a small or fixed income.
- Are retired.
- Have lost their job.
- Have a disability.

You can use FoodShare benefits at most stores and many farmers markets.



### ForwardHealth (Medicaid)

**Wisconsin Medicaid** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid/index.htm)) is a joint federal and state program. It gives health care coverage, long-term care, and other services to people who live in Wisconsin.

There are many types of Medicaid programs. Each program has its own requirements. You can enroll in a program even if you have health insurance. If your health insurance card says, “ForwardHealth,” then you are enrolled in a Medicaid program.

- **BadgerCare Plus** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/badgercareplus/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/badgercareplus/index.htm))— Gives health care coverage to people age 0–64 with low income.

*More examples of Medicaid programs continued on page 30*



### *Examples of Medicaid programs continued*

- **Katie Beckett Medicaid** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/kbp/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/kbp/index.htm))—Gives health care coverage to children under age 19 with a long-term disability or complex health needs. The child must live at home with their family. Some children can get Katie Beckett Medicaid if their parents' income is too high for other Medicaid programs. If you have this benefit now, you have until age 19 to get other coverage.
- **Medicaid Purchase Plan** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid/medicaid-purchase-plan.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid/medicaid-purchase-plan.htm))—Gives health care coverage to people with a disability who are age 18 or older and work or plan to work. The program has higher income and asset limits. It also allows you to save money in a special account that does not count toward the asset limit.

## How to apply for public benefits

You can apply for public benefits by phone, by mail, in person, or **online with ACCESS** ([access.wisconsin.gov/access/](https://access.wisconsin.gov/access/)).

You can also work with county or Tribal agencies. They are called an income maintenance or economic support agency or consortium.

Contact the agency, so they can help you:

Answer questions about requirements and your situation.

Apply for or renew your benefits.

Complete your FoodShare interview.

Process your application, renewal, and information you provide about changes, such as a new address or job.

Find your agency: **Income Maintenance and Tribal Agency Contact Information** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/imagency/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/forwardhealth/imagency/index.htm)).

Learn more: **Guide to Applying for Wisconsin's Health, Nutrition, and Other Programs (P-16091)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-16091](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-16091)).



## Agency details

**My agency:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

**Website:**

**Hours:**



**Note:** For more help with benefits, talk to your disability benefit specialist or Tribal disability benefit specialist.



**Learn more:** [Your ADRC, Tribal ADRS, and Disability Benefit Specialist \(page 8\).](#)



## Public benefits and your assets

An asset is something you own that has value. An example is money in your bank account, a house, or a car. The assets you have affect if you qualify for Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). There are ways to set aside some of your assets, so they do not affect if you qualify for these programs.

### Special needs trust

A special needs trust holds assets for a person who the Social Security Administration defines as “disabled.” Your money or money someone has for you stays in an account. You can spend the money on certain goods and services that benefit you. This money does not count as an asset when you apply for SSI or Medicaid.

You can set up a special needs trust at a bank or financial institute. You will need support from an attorney. There also are two groups in the state that help with special needs trusts:

- [Wispact](http://wispact.org/) (wispact.org/)
- [Life Navigators](http://lif navigators.org/trust-program/) (lif navigators.org/trust-program/)

### ABLE account

An ABLE account is a savings account for a person with a disability. You must have had the disability before age 26. The account lets you save money to use for defined disability costs. The money in the account does not count as an asset when you apply for SSI or Medicaid.

Learn more from the [ABLE National Resource Center](http://ablenrc.org/get-started/) (ablenrc.org/get-started/) and [State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue](http://revenue.wi.gov/Pages/faqs/ise-ABLEAccounts.aspx) (revenue.wi.gov/Pages/faqs/ise-ABLEAccounts.aspx).





You can make employment part of your adult plan. Federal and state laws exist to help youth with disabilities get services to meet their employment goals. Two of the federal laws include:

- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**—Schools and the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) must work together to help students with disabilities reach goals. These goals relate to education after high school (secondary education) and competitive integrated employment.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**—Schools must provide transition services, including services for employment goals. In Wisconsin, school staff should start talking to students about their future goals, such as jobs, starting at age 14.

## Job options

Think about the type of job you want. There are two main job types.

### Competitive integrated employment

Competitive integrated employment means a job in the community. With this type of job:

You work full-time or part-time.

You earn minimum wage or higher.

You can get benefits, the same as people without disabilities who do the same work.

You have the same chance to advance in your job as people without disabilities.

You get paid by the business or organization that employs you.

### Self-employment

Some people choose to be self-employed. With self-employment, you own your own business to earn money. You find your own work based on what you want to do and your talents. You are in charge of your work hours. Learn more about [self-employment for youth with disabilities](https://familyvoiceswi.org/resource-library/exploring-self-employment-for-youth-with-disabilities/?seq_no=2) (familyvoiceswi.org/resource-library/exploring-self-employment-for-youth-with-disabilities/?seq\_no=2).



## Job programs, services and supports

If you want to work, you can use programs, services, and supports that help you learn and try out different jobs. You may hear these options called “prevocational training” or “work experiences.”

### Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a way to train for a new job with help from an expert who has that job. You may study how to do the job and practice doing tasks. Some types of careers require you do an apprenticeship before you can get a required license or certificate. You may or may not be paid during an apprenticeship.

### Internship

An internship is a professional learning experience. It gives people a way to explore or develop in a new career and learn new skills. An internship helps you decide if you like the job. With this type of experience:

- You may or may not get paid.

- The job should focus on what you study or what you like.

- You get to try a career and gain new skills.

### Job shadow

You also can do an informal job shadow to learn about job options. Most of the time, you do not get paid for informal job shadow.

A job shadow is also a type of training you do when you get a job. You follow a worker who does the same tasks you will do. You often get paid during the training to learn your job.



### Project SEARCH

**Project SEARCH** ([dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/programs/project-search/default.htm](https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/programs/project-search/default.htm)) is a training program that allows young adults with disabilities to gain employment skills. They gain these skills through an internship at a community business (host site). The program lasts nine months to a year and helps you prepare for a job. With this program:

- You take classes to learn job skills at the host site.
- You try three or four different jobs at the host site during the program.
- You may be able to start the program in your final year of high school.
- You are not paid wages but get a **Maintenance Payment** (<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/programs/project-search/pdf/ps-payment-fact-sheet.pdf>).

Project SEARCH is not available in all counties. Learn more about **Project SEARCH locations** ([dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/programs/project-search/locations.htm](https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/programs/project-search/locations.htm)). To join the program, you must apply and work with DVR.

### Supported and customized employment programs

Supported and customized employment programs provide you with help to get a job and keep a job. With this type of job:

- You work in competitive integrated employment.
- Your work depends on what you want to do, what you can do, and what your employer needs.
- You earn minimum wage or higher and may get benefits.
- A job coach or co-worker may support you.



### Community rehabilitation program

Community rehabilitation programs provide work training for people with disabilities. With this type of job training:

- A leader or manager is available as you work or volunteer. They review your work as you do it. They can help you if needed.
- Most of your co-workers also have disabilities.
- The community rehabilitation program is your employer and service provider.
- You may earn money based on how many items you make (also known as piece rate). You also may be paid an hourly wage.
- The training work or volunteering you do is meant to be short-term. It helps you build the skills you need to get competitive integrated employment.

### Where to get help

Join programs that help you look for, apply for, and keep a job.

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

**DVR** ([dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/job-seekers/](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/job-seekers/)) is a federal and state program. It helps people with disabilities find work and grow in a career.

You can use DVR services if you have a disability that makes it hard to get or keep a job. Many services may be part of your plan, such as:

- Career guidance and counseling
- Disability and work assessments
- Help with your job search and placement
- Higher education
- Job training (also called vocational training)
- Technology that helps you do a job (also called rehabilitation technology)
- Transition to work services for high school students with disabilities
- Transportation to job activities
- Work incentives benefits counseling



You can make employment part of your adult plan. Federal and state laws exist to help youth with disabilities get services to meet their employment goals. Two of the federal laws include:

- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**—Schools and the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) must work together to help students with disabilities reach goals. These goals relate to education after high school (secondary education) and competitive integrated employment.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**—Schools must provide transition services, including services for employment goals. In Wisconsin, school staff should start talking to students about their future goals, such as jobs, starting at age 14.

### DVR or VRNA contact details

**My office:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

[View DVR office locations](https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/about/locations.htm) (dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/about/locations.htm)



### Job centers

**Job centers** ([wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory/](https://wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory/)) are places in the state that help you:

- Look for a job.
- Write a resume.
- Complete a job application.
- Practice for an interview.

All centers are part of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

### Publicly funded long-term care

Some state programs pay for job support services for people with disabilities. You may get these services if you are part of a long-term care program, such as:

- CLTS (Children's Long-Term Support program).
- Family Care.
- Family Care Partnership.
- IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct).

To learn more about long-term care programs, contact your local **ADRC (aging and disability resource center)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm)) or **Tribal ADRS (aging and disability resource specialist)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/tribes.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/tribes.htm)).



### Behavioral health programs

Some county and Tribal programs pay for job support services for people with mental illness or substance use disorder. They refer to these services as supported education and employment.

County behavioral health departments provide supported education and employment in programs, which include:

- **[Comprehensive Community Services \(CCS\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/ccs/index.htm)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/ccs/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/ccs/index.htm))
- **[Community Recovery Programs \(CRS\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/crs/index.htm)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/crs/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/crs/index.htm))
- **[Community Support Programs \(CSP\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/csp/index.htm)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/csp/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/csp/index.htm))

Some counties offer **[Individual Placement and Support \(IPS\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/ips/index.htm)** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/ips/index.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/ips/index.htm)), which is a specific supported employment service. Not all counties offer IPS.

### Social Security Administration

**[The Social Security Administration](https://ssa.gov/)** ([ssa.gov/](https://ssa.gov/)) has work incentives and job support programs. Work Incentives are special rules that help people work and keep the benefits they need. Examples include **[Student Earned Income Exclusion \(SEIE\)](https://ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-student-earned-income.htm)** ([ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-student-earned-income.htm](https://ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-student-earned-income.htm)) and **[Plan to Achieve Self Support \(PASS\)](https://ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-plans-self-support.htm)** ([ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-plans-self-support.htm](https://ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-plans-self-support.htm)). **[Ticket to Work program](https://choosework.ssa.gov/)** ([choosework.ssa.gov/](https://choosework.ssa.gov/)) may be an option to help you get and keep a job.



Learn more: **[Social Security Benefits \(page 24\)](#)**.





## Job tips

Make the transition to work as easy as you can.

### Before you get a job

**Here are some ways to see what type of work might be good for you:**

Work with your supportive team to make some goals about what you want to do for work.

Ask your teacher to help you find job shadows at a few jobs to see what you like to do.

Try to work or get involved in work programs at your high school before you graduate to gain work experience.

Volunteer to gain job skills.

Apply to DVR or VRNA for help with finding a job that fits what you like and that you can do well.

Contact your ADRC or Tribal ADRS to learn about job support through long-term care services.

Contact your county or Tribal behavioral health department to learn more about job support through programs like IPS.

Do a **Career Exploration** ([bls.gov/k12/students/careers/career-exploration.htm](https://bls.gov/k12/students/careers/career-exploration.htm)) to help you decide the best type of work for you.

Learn about **Social Security Work Incentives** ([beforeage18.org/benefits-and-working/](https://beforeage18.org/benefits-and-working/)) that allow you to work and keep the benefits you need.

Go to a two- or four-year college or technical school to learn a trade.



## After you get a job

Here is what to know after you find a job:

- You must report income to the Social Security Administration if you get Social Security benefits (Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)).



**Learn more: [Social Security Benefits \(page 24\)](#).**

- You can name a person to help manage the money you earn if needed.



**Learn more: [How to Make Legal Decisions \(page 15\)](#).**

- You must tell your income maintenance or economic support agency about a new job or income. They will adjust your public benefits as needed.



**Learn more: [Public Benefits \(page 29\)](#).**

- You may have to file income taxes if you make more than \$12,000 each year before taxes or deductions (gross income).
- You may be eligible for **[Work Incentive Benefit Counseling services](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/work-incentives.htm)** (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/benefit-specialists/work-incentives.htm>) through DVR or your publicly funded long term care program. Counseling services help you understand how the money you earn from your job impacts your financial eligibility for public benefit programs.



As an adult, you can choose where to live and who lives with you. Learn about your housing options. Know how to get the support you need to live the way you want. You can also talk to your ADRC (aging and disability resource center) or Tribal ADRS (aging and disability resource specialist).



**Learn more:** [Your ADRC, Tribal ADRS, and Disability Benefit Specialist \(page 8\).](#)

## Housing options

You have housing options. You can live alone or with others. Your options also depend on the type of support you need at home.

### Independent apartments and homes

Independent apartments and homes are places where people live on their own, with roommates, or with family members.

You can rent or own.

You can have in-home care, but you manage it separately from your housing.

You can have roommates, live with family or friends, or live alone.

You pay rent, food, and utilities, such as electricity and heat, with your income.

Long-term care programs can pay for your supports and services.

If you own your home, you pay for home maintenance with your income.

Find more information in the [Wisconsin Housing Directory](https://chtfwi.org/housingdirectory) (chtfwi.org/housingdirectory).



### Supervised apartments

Supervised apartments (also known as supported living) are living units in a building that has support staff on site. Usually, others who live in the building are adults with disabilities.

You get support from staff, but they may not be available at all hours.

You can live alone or with roommates. You may be able to choose your roommate, or others can help you find a roommate.

You pay rent, utilities, and food with your income.

Long-term care programs can pay for your supports and services.

### Adult family homes (AFH)

**Adult family homes** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/guide/afh.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/guide/afh.htm)) are homes where one to four people with disabilities live. An agency or individual provides supports and services. The home where you live may be where the owner or operator also lives.

You get support from staff, but they may not be available at all hours. They may or may not live in your home with you. They ensure your needs are met.

Others set up your roommate(s) and staff for you.

You pay room and board (rent, utilities, and food) with your income.

Long-term care programs can pay for your supports and services.

### Community-based residential facility (CBRF)

**Community-based residential facilities** ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/regulations/cbrf/introduction.htm](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/regulations/cbrf/introduction.htm)) are homes where five or more people who have disabilities live.

You get support and services from staff who are available 24 hours a day.

Others set up your roommate(s) and staff for you.

You pay for room and board (rent, utilities, and food) with your income.

Long-term care programs can pay for supports and services.



## Help with rent

In Wisconsin, there are a few ways to get help paying your rent through [HUD \(Housing and Urban Development\)](https://www.hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting) ([hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting](https://www.hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting)).

### Subsidized apartments

HUD offers reduced rents (called subsidized apartments). Reduced rents are for people who make less money and qualify. To apply for a subsidized apartment:

1. Find a subsidized apartment where you want to live. These search tools can help:
  - [Rental Help: Wisconsin](https://www.hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting) ([hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting](https://www.hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting))
  - [Wisconsin Housing Search](https://www.wihousingsearch.org/) ([wihousingsearch.org/](https://www.wihousingsearch.org/))
2. Contact or visit the management office at each apartment you like. Ask them about availability of reduced rent through HUD.

### Public housing and housing choice vouchers

Public housing or housing choice vouchers (Section 8) are programs for people who make less money. The voucher lowers the amount of rent you pay. When you have a voucher, you do your own housing search. You can live anywhere that accepts a voucher. To apply, visit your local public housing agency (PHA).

- [Find your PHA](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts) ([hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/pha/contacts](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts)).
- [View Wisconsin PHA websites](https://www.hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting/hawebistes) ([hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting/hawebistes](https://www.hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting/hawebistes)).



### Help with utilities

Housing costs often mean paying for rent and utilities. Your utilities may include water, electricity, gas, and sewage. The **[Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program \(WHEAP\)](https://energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/AgencyResources/energy-assistance.aspx)** ([energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/AgencyResources/energy-assistance.aspx](https://energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/AgencyResources/energy-assistance.aspx)) helps pay heating and electricity bills. You must meet income requirements.

WHEAP also provides other services, such as:

- Copayment plans.
- Counseling on budgeting and money management.
- Emergency fuel for your home.
- Emergency furnace repair (they may also replace your furnace if needed).
- Tips for saving energy to lower utility costs.

Where you live affects who is in charge of WHEAP. You may receive WHEAP services from:

- Your county human services office.
- Your Tribal government.
- A private non-profit or other government group.

**[Use the map](https://energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx)** ([energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx](https://energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/Home.aspx)) to find resources near you.

**[Apply for WHEAP online](https://energybenefit.wi.gov/OnlineApps/OnlineApp/Default#!)** ([energybenefit.wi.gov/OnlineApps/OnlineApp/Default#!](https://energybenefit.wi.gov/OnlineApps/OnlineApp/Default#!)), by phone, by mail, or in person.



## WHEAP contact details

**My agency:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

**Fax number:**

**Hours:**

## Community action agencies

Wisconsin has 16 community action agencies and two single-purpose agencies. Their goal is to help people get and stay out of poverty. To meet this goal, they:

Provide services and direct community resources.

Make housing affordable with housing programs.

Manage programs to help people own and rent homes.

Manage rental property.

**[Find your local agency](http://wiscap.org/find-an-agency-2/)** ([wiscap.org/find-an-agency-2/](http://wiscap.org/find-an-agency-2/)).

## Community action agency contact details

**My agency:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

**Fax number:**

**Hours:**





Advocacy helps people become more involved in important decisions about their lives. Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people in society can:

- Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them.
- Protect and promote their rights.
- Make sure others think about their views and wishes when making decisions about their life.

## Types of advocacy

There are three types of advocacy.

### Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is when you can tell people your thoughts and feelings. You ask for what you want. You know your rights and you speak up about them. You make choices and decisions that affect your life and take responsibility for the choices you make.

Self-advocacy allows a person to control their life as much as possible. Here are a few ways you can practice self-advocacy:

- Explain your disability, strengths, and how you learn.
- Define what you can do with and without help. Ask for help when you need it.
- Know what accommodations and supports you need and how to ask for them. An accommodation is a change that removes a barrier so that you can accomplish a task. The change gives you the same access as others.
- Learn new skills you need to help meet your goals.
- **[People First Wisconsin](http://peoplefirstwisconsin.org/)** ([peoplefirstwisconsin.org/](http://peoplefirstwisconsin.org/))



### Individual advocacy

Individual advocacy is when another person (your advocate) stands with or supports you. Your advocate speaks up for you to help improve your life. They make sure you are receiving fair treatment. Your advocate will support you to share your strengths, needs, and goals. Examples of an individual advocate may be a family member, friend, or guardian who speaks up for you about what you need at school or another place.

### Systems advocacy

Systems advocacy is when a person or group tries to change policies, laws or rules, or systems that impact people's lives. There are advocacy agencies that do this type of advocacy work, but individuals can, too. Self-advocates use their story and what has happened to them to talk to decision-makers about change. The change is meant to create better outcomes for groups of people.

## Advocacy agencies

There are many agencies in Wisconsin that can help you with advocacy:

- **[Children's Resource Centers](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/resource-centers.htm)** (dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/resource-centers.htm)
- **[Disability Rights Wisconsin](https://disabilityrightswi.org/advocate/)** (disabilityrightswi.org/advocate/)
- **[Family Voices of Wisconsin](https://familyvoiceswi.org/)** (familyvoiceswi.org/)
- **[Independent living centers](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/physical/ilcs-contact.htm)** (dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/physical/ilcs-contact.htm)
- **[People First Wisconsin](https://peoplefirstwisconsin.org/)** (peoplefirstwisconsin.org/)
- **[Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities](https://wi-bpdd.org/index.php/individuals-and-families/)** (wi-bpdd.org/index.php/individuals-and-families/)



# Adult Long-Term Care Programs

## Youth in Transition

As you become an adult, you may want to apply for an adult long-term care program if you have a disability or lasting condition. You may be part of youth programs with long-term care services now. An example is CLTS (Children's Long-Term Support) program. Here, we explain your adult long-term care options.

### Terms to know

**Long-term care**—Services and supports that help people live on their own as much as possible.

**Medicaid**—A state and federal government program. The program provides health care coverage to people with limited income and resources.

**Medicaid waiver programs (also called publicly funded long-term care programs)**—Programs that allow states to use Medicaid funds to provide long-term care services in homes and communities.

## Wisconsin's adult long-term care programs

Medicaid long-term care programs (also called Medicaid waiver programs) provide services and supports that help you live, work, and join in your community. Adult programs include:

- **Family Care**—A program for adults with disabilities and older adults. Members get a range of long-term care services through the program. You use your Medicaid card for health and medical services and prescription drugs. You have a care team that sets up your services. You can also choose to self-direct some services. This program is available in every county.
- **Family Care Partnership**—A program for adults with disabilities and older adults. Members get a range of long-term care, health and medical services, and prescription drugs through the program. You have a care team that sets up your services. You can also choose to self-direct some services. This program is not available in all counties. Ask your ADRC (aging and disability resource center) or Tribal ADRS (aging and disability resource specialist) if Family Care Partnership is available in your county.

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- **IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-Direct)**—A fully self-directed program for adults with disabilities and older adults. Participants of IRIS decide what goods, supports, and services will help meet their needs and goals. After you enroll, you get a budget to use for those goods, supports, and services. You use your Medicaid card for health and medical services and prescription drugs. You have an IRIS consultant. They help you understand the program and rules you must follow as you self-direct your supports. This program is available in every county.



**Note:** Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS can tell you more about these programs. You can only enroll in one Medicaid long-term care program at a time. All programs are voluntary. Voluntary means it is your choice to enroll. You can choose to change programs or leave a program at any time.

## Steps to enroll

It often takes one to three months to enroll in a Medicaid long-term care program. For some people, the process can take longer. The process includes these steps:

### 1. Contact your ADRC or Tribal ADRS.

When you are age 17 and 6 months, your ADRC or Tribal ADRS can help you get started. You will learn about your options and the program requirements to enroll. ADRC and Tribal ADRS services are free.



**Learn more:** [Your ADRC, Tribal ADRS, and Disability Benefit Specialist \(page 8\).](#)



## 2. See if you are eligible with the functional screen.

Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS will meet with you to complete a functional screen. They will ask you questions about what you can do by yourself and when you need help. The goal of the screen is to measure your level of need for support and services. The screen also sees if you meet program requirements.



**Note:** The functional screen is different than the screen for CLTS and other youth programs. Adult long-term care programs provide services to people with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities. The programs also help older adults. You must have enough long-term care needs to qualify for the program.

Youth in CLTS with a mental health diagnosis or serious emotional disturbance (SED) may not qualify for adult long-term care programs unless you have other physical or developmental disabilities. Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS can still screen you if you choose. If you do not qualify, they can refer you to behavioral health resources and other services.

## 3. Determine financial eligibility.

Medicaid long-term care programs have financial requirements. They depend on whether you already receive Medicaid benefits and what type of Medicaid it is. You may need to complete a financial application. Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS can help you determine what paperwork you need to fill out.

## 4. Learn about your program options.

Your ADRC or Tribal ADRS will let you know if you meet functional and financial requirements for a Medicaid long-term care program. They will also explain any other program requirements. If you are eligible, they will share which programs are available to you. They will help you learn about these options, so you can make the best decision for you. This process is called enrollment counseling.



### 5. Finalize enrollment.

If you choose to enroll in a Medicaid long-term care program, your ADRC or Tribal ADRS will help you:

- Complete the enrollment or referral paperwork.
- Notify the agency you choose about your enrollment or referral to their program. Within three days of your enrollment or referral date, the agency will call you. They will then schedule a visit to meet you and start working on your plan for the services and supports you need.

### Where to learn more

Learn more about adult long-term care programs:

- **[Family Care Program Overview \(P-00088D\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088D)**  
(dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088D)
- **[Family Care Partnership Program Overview \(P-00088F\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088F)**  
(dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088f)
- **[IRIS Program Overview \(P-00088M\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088M)**  
(dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088M)
- **[Services Included in Adult Long-Term Care Programs: IRIS, Family Care, and Partnership \(P-00088OB\)](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088OB)**  
(dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/p-00088oB)
- **[Self-Directed Supports: Frequently Asked Questions \(P-00088N\)](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00088n.pdf)**  
(https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00088n.pdf)





**My local ADRC or Tribal ADRS:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

**Fax Number:**

**Hours:**

**Website:**

**Email address:**

**Notes:**

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