

What are Home and Community Based Services?

Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) are for people with disabilities and older Iowans who need services to allow them to stay in their home and community instead of going to an institution.

Iowa currently has seven HCBS waivers in the waiver program. These waivers provide service funding and individualized supports to allow eligible members to remain in their own homes or communities. The HCBS waiver programs are:

- Health and Disability (HD) waiver
- Brain Injury (BI) waiver
- Intellectual Disability (ID) waiver
- Children's Mental Health (CMH) waiver
- Physical Disability (PD) waiver
- AIDS/HIV (AH) waiver
- Elderly (E) waiver

In addition to HCBS services, members enrolled in a waiver have access to Medicaid covered services and benefits. For this reason, HCBS waivers are sometimes referred to as Medicaid waiver programs. In addition the services provided by the waiver, Medicaid covers a broad array of health services and limits out-of-pocket costs.

NOTE: There are changes being proposed for Home and Community Based Services waiver programs in the state of Iowa. These changes will likely occur in July 2025. Please check askresource.org for updated information after that time. It is possible this information will change.

What services could be available through HCBS waivers?

- Respite (individualized, group or specialized)

- Supported Community Living (SCL)
- Consumer Directed Attendance Care (CDAC)
- Prevocational Services
- Supported Employment
- Transportation

*Services covered vary depending on the type of waiver.

These services could be provided either through an agency or any individual that you choose. You can find more information about services available in the different waiver packets through Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Who can apply for a HCBS waiver?

In Iowa, if you have a physical, mental or emotional health condition, you may apply for a HCBS waiver. Eligibility requirements vary by each waiver program. Each waiver offers different services that the individual can access. To determine which waiver program might be most appropriate for your child, you can review the LTSS Program Comparison Chart on the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services website.

When can I apply for a HCBS waiver?

You can apply for a HCBS waiver at any time. There are wait lists (typically several years long) for each of the waivers in Iowa so it is best to apply as soon as you begin considering that your child could possibly be benefit from a waiver program.

How do I apply for a HCBS waiver?

First, you will want to consider which waivers your child might be eligible for. You can apply for waivers several different ways:

- Apply online at the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services;
- Access the application here: [Application for Health Coverage | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#) ;

- Or visit the ASK Resource Center website to obtain an electronic or hard copy.

It is necessary to complete the full Application for Health Coverage and Help Paying Costs form unless you or your child are already on Medicaid. An application is considered valid if it includes a name, address and signature. Applications completed online are sent directly to HHS. Paper applications can be sent via email, dropped off at any HHS office or mailed to your HHS Imaging Center.

Can I apply for more than one HCBS waiver?

Yes, families can apply for more than one waiver. However, a child can only be on one waiver at a time. Since there are typically years long wait lists for each of the waivers, it is recommended that you apply for each waiver that your child might be eligible for. You can then accept the waiver slot that first becomes available. Your child will remain on the wait list for the other waivers applied for and when a slot comes open for a different waiver you can determine if it is advantageous to switch.

What are some helpful tips when applying for a waiver?

Below are some helpful tips to remember when applying for a waiver program:

- You only need to complete one application for Health Coverage and Help Paying Costs, even if you are applying for multiple waivers.
- In Step 2: Each person in the household must be included on the application. You only need to mark YES for the individual that needs health coverage (waiver applicant).
- In Step 4: Fill out as directed but only for those who are applying for Medicaid.
- The head of household or caretaker must sign at the bottom of page 16 on the application or it is not considered valid.
- If you are completing an application for an individual under 18 years of age, you do not need to complete Appendix A.
- There is not a specific area on the application to indicate which waivers you are applying for. It is recommended that you write the names of each waiver you are applying for on page 1 of the application, near the top.
- If your child is currently Medicaid eligible, you may not need to complete the full application.
- A disability determination is needed in order to be

placed on the wait list for the HD waiver. Once your application for waiver services is received, HHS will mail out a form titled Disability Report for Children. This paperwork must be completed by the date noted in the letter. For all other waivers, you do not have to prove eligibility until a waiver slot is available.

- There may be age restrictions depending on the which waiver the individual is seeking enrollment. Refer to the LTSS Program Comparison Chart.
- An Emergent Needs form can be completed if the caregiver or individual's safety is at risk because they are not able to access waiver services. This may allow the individual to access waiver services more quickly.
- Children who are discharged from a Psychiatric Medical Institution for Children (PMIC) are eligible for CMH waiver services upon discharge.
- Record the date that you complete the application. When checking the waiting list, HHS will indicate which application dates they are currently reviewing. You can check waiting list information by visiting the HCBS Waiver Waiting List Information chart on the HHS website.
- If your family moves any time after initially completing the waiver application, you must update your new address with HHS.

How will I know if my child is accepted or denied for waiver services?

Due to the waiting list for each of the waiver programs, you will likely receive a "Notice of Decision" or a letter of denial by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Keep this letter. This does not mean that your child is not eligible. It simply means that there is not an available slot open for that waiver currently. Your child will be moved to the waiting list for the specific waiver(s) you applied for. Once a slot opens up, HHS will notify the family. At that time the family will be required to prove eligibility. Families only have 30 days after receiving notification that they are off the waiting list to respond, or the entire application process must be started over.

Related Resources

Look for the following resources on the ASK website:

- ASK an Expert: Home and Community Based Services—Webinar