

Medicaid cuts hurt unpaid caregivers.

More will be forced to leave Wisconsin's workforce.

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Today, Wisconsin disability and aging organizations are releasing a [new factsheet](#) showing the impact on workers, cost to employers, and loss to Wisconsin's workforce that occurs when unpaid caregivers must leave jobs to provide care for loved ones.

Disability and aging advocates fear the current trend of unpaid caregivers being forced to leave the workforce will increase if cuts to federal Medicaid spending happen.

Congress is considering [at least \\$880 Billion](#) in federal Medicaid cuts, as part of a bill that would cut \$2 Trillion in federal spending to extend existing tax cuts.

Medicaid pays for most long-term care in Wisconsin and the nation, including the salaries for paid care workers who help people with disabilities and older adults live independently in their homes, and who care for them in nursing homes.

"Working, unpaid family caregivers—many of whom are aging themselves—are already stretched to the limit filling in care gaps for aging parents, children and adults with disabilities, and relatives and spouses who get hurt, ill, or are living with dementia," said Janet Zander, Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network. "Any less help will push many families into immediate crisis that has its own long-term effects."

When people are forced to sit out their prime working years, they lose income and purchasing power, decrease overall lifetime earnings, employer sponsored health care coverage, and are unable to save for retirement.

"Skilled workers are disappearing. Retiring early. Leaving the workforce entirely, for years. Cutting hours. Or are unable to advance their careers because they provide care that keeps people out of nursing homes," said Patti Becker, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. "The long-term cost to financial futures puts unpaid caregivers and their families at risk as they age with less of a nest egg to fall back on."

"People are organizing their lives around providing the care their loved ones need," said Lisa Schneider, Executive Director of the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin. "That pressure forces people out of the workforce. It's so hard to find a break once you've committed to being an unpaid caregiver."

"We see people of all ages walking through the door looking for help," says Beth Swedeen, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. "Mom or Dad had a fall. There's been an Alzheimer's diagnosis. They were hoping to avoid a care crisis, and didn't get lucky. Many times, Medicaid funded programs or long-term care facilities is the only place families can get the help they need."

“Some families are reaching out in crisis, only to find there are few or no resources to help them. The supply of providers and workers will decrease even further if federal Medicaid funding is cut,” said Cindy Piotrowski, Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin board member. “Four years ago, Wisconsin [eliminated its waitlist](#) for long-term care services for Medicaid-eligible adults. Now, workforce shortages result in some older adults and people living with disabilities finding themselves eligible for programs but without the care they need. These unmet needs force unpaid family caregivers to further reduce their work hours or leave employment altogether.”

Medicaid-funded programs like Family Care, IRIS, and CLTS are a lifeline for families when a person they love needs help to stay in their home, and they are the reason why many family members can continue working.

Designed as institution diversion programs, these programs save Medicaid dollars by keeping children and adults with disabilities and low-income older adults out of more expensive Medicaid funded institutional settings, like nursing homes.

Signatories:

Aging & Disability Resource Center of Eagle Country, Richland County
Advocates for Healthy Transitional Living, LLC
Aging and Disability Professionals of Wisconsin (ADPAW)
Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin
Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC)
Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Community Advocates
Community Living Alliance
Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW)
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR)
NAMI Northwoods
NAMI Wisconsin
People First of Wisconsin
Respite Care Association of Wisconsin
Survival Coalition
Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN)
Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS)
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD)
Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers (WCILC)
Wisconsin Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA)
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