

Montana Healthcare Programs MESSENGER

Big Sky Waiver (BSW) Care from a Family Member or Spouse

Did you know with BSW your family member or spouse may be able to provide care for you in your own home?

BSW members can get some types of in-home care from a relative or a legally responsible individual (LRI). An LRI is a person who has a legal duty to care for another person. Legal responsibility is defined by state law. This can include the parents (natural, adoptive, or step) of minor children, legally assigned caretaker relatives of minor children (guardians), and spouses.

LRIs must be employed as a BSW personal care worker of a provider agency, or by the member if using self-directed services. This ensures that the LRI meets the same standards for service delivery. It also prevents abuse, neglect, and exploitation as non-relative caregivers.

BSW Members may receive services provided by an LRI for many reasons. The program can pay an LRI when a member needs care that is beyond the LRI's usual responsibilities. A qualified professional must determine that this extra type of care serves the member's best interest.

What are the BSW services that an LRI can provide?

The LRI caregiver is responsible for meeting the needs of the member for the specific services below. The LRI caregiver reviews and provides services that match the member's Service Plan.



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Poison Control

Every year in Montana, many people are exposed to poisons. Poisons can come from things like chemicals or medicines that are swallowed, breathed in, or absorbed through the skin. It's important to recognize the signs of poisoning and get help right away. To learn more, visit [Poison Control and Prevention](#).

Big Sky Waiver Care from a Family Member or Spouse Continued

An LRI is allowed to provide the following BSW service if provider qualification criteria have been met:

- Personal Assistance Services (PAS)
- Specially Trained Attendant (STA)
- Homemaker
- Homemaker Chore
- Nurse Supervision for Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) (if the LRI is employed by an agency and licensed to deliver this service)

LRI Limitations

- BSW's PAS provided by an LRI cannot be more than 40 hours within a 7-day period.
- An LRI who is also the member's representative may not be reimbursed to deliver BSW services.

Where can I find more information?

For more information on LRIs and BSW services and for details about exclusions and limitations, please contact the BSW Policy and Program Manager, Christina Rees at Christina.Rees@mt.gov or (406) 852-0322.

Nutrition for your Noggin!

We have all heard about how heart healthy habits can lower the risk of issues with the heart. But did you know that by living a heart healthy lifestyle, you are also helping your brain health? More research is showing by adding healthy habits such as addressing hearing loss, eating healthy, good sleep, and increasing exercise, the risk of getting dementia is lowered by up to 40%. If you do have concerns about memory loss, talk to your doctor. See the links below for tips to plan for the talk and information on memory screenings.

Click here for more healthy brain suggestions!

- [Communicating with Your Health Care Team](#)
- [10 Healthy Habits for Your Brain | Alzheimer's Association](#)
- [About AFA's National Memory Screening Program | Alzheimer's Foundation of America](#)



Falls Prevention

Did you know that one out of three Montanans over the age of 65 fall each year?

Falls are the leading cause of injuries in older adults. Falls are costly in dollars and quality of life. The most common injuries from a fall are hip fractures, broken bones, and head injuries.

In Montana, accidental falls are the third most common cause of injury related deaths. Falling is not a normal part of aging and most falls can be prevented by making routine changes.

Some routine changes to help stop falls can include exercising, managing medications, yearly checkups on hearing and vision, and making your surroundings safer.

The most effective way to prevent falls is exercise. Performing strength and balance exercises at least three times per week will reduce your chances of falling.

You can assess your risk of falls by taking the following quiz: [Falls Free Check-Up](#).



What is the Home and Community Based (HCBS) Settings Rule?

What should you know?

The HCBS Settings Rule is a rule made by the government. The HCBS Settings Rule says seniors and people with disabilities should not be limited on where they live. This includes living in institutions or places made just for seniors and people with disabilities.

Also, the rule says seniors and people with disabilities have certain rights when they receive services in the community. It says what these rights are. The rule also says what the people who provide services to seniors and/or people with disabilities must do to follow these rights.

What is the difference between institutionalization and community living?

Institutionalization means you are living in a place with more rules. It is a place where only seniors and/or people with disabilities live. Most people prefer community living instead of living in an institution. Community living means getting to make more of your own choices about your life.

This means making choices, like those living in your community, such as:

- Where you want to work or go to school
- When and what you want to eat
- How you want to spend your free time
- Who you choose to spend time with
- How you decorate your room
- Who helps take care of you if you need help

What other rights does the HCBS Settings Rule give you?

The HCBS Settings Rule gives you a lot of rights. These include:

- The right to privacy and respect
- The right to person-centered planning
- The right to have freedoms
- The right to not be restrained or secluded

If you have any questions or feel like your rights aren't being respected, please reach out to your HCBS case manager. They're here to help!

Montana Expands the Clean Indoor Air Act

Using e-cigarettes, or vapes, is no longer allowed in Montana's public indoor spaces. This is the result of Senate Bill 390. This bill was passed by the Montana Legislature and was signed into law by Governor Greg Gianforte on May 8, 2025. The new law went into effect immediately.

The Clean Indoor Air Act now outlaws smoking or vaping nicotine, marijuana, or anything else in workplaces or indoor public places in Montana. The goal of the Montana Clean Indoor Air Act is to protect the health of Montanans. This is done by outlawing smoking in enclosed public places and places of work. The Act recognizes the right for nonsmokers to breathe smoke-free air. It also recognizes that the need for clean air takes priority over the desire to smoke.

[Report a possible violation](#), or contact us with questions at infotobaccofree@mt.gov.



Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP)

The RHTP was authorized by H.R. 1: One Big Beautiful Bill Act. It was established by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). RHTP provides \$50 billion in federal funding to states over five budget periods (2026-2030). The funds will be divided among states that submit applications. The funding is for stabilizing and transforming rural health care delivery systems. This can include hospitals and other providers.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) held a public webinar and comment session to gather ideas and input on October 2, 2025.

Initiatives must impact five core areas: population health, partnerships and emergency medical services (EMS), workforce, payment and duals, and technology and data. Scoring will be based on five factors: financial sustainability, strategy, work plan, outcomes, and projected impact.

Montana must apply to CMS by November 5, 2025.

Please review the [RHTP CMS document](#) for more details.

Breast Cancer in Montana

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed among women in Montana. It accounts for 33 percent of all new cancers each year. On average, 966 new cases are diagnosed in Montana annually.

The cost of screening mammograms is covered by most health insurance plans. For women who don't have adequate insurance, the Montana Cancer Control Program (MCCP) offers free breast and cervical cancer screenings (mammograms and Pap tests) and diagnostic services.

Over the past five years, the MCCP has provided free breast cancer screening and diagnostic services to 5,318 Montana women who lacked adequate insurance.

Ask your provider about breast and cervical cancer screenings. To be connected to free screenings in your community, women who meet income guidelines are encouraged to:

- Call the toll-free number: 1-888-803-9343
- Visit the program website: cancer.mt.gov



Medicaid Enrollment for Ordering, Referring, and Prescribing Providers

Federal regulation, [42 C.F.R. 455.410](#), requires all providers who order, refer, or prescribe (ORP) services for Montana Healthcare Program (Medicaid) members to be signed up with Medicaid. This is required even if the ORP provider does not bill Medicaid for their services. They can continue to provide services for enrolled members without billing.

Please note if your doctor has not signed up with Montana Medicaid, and orders or refers you for services, tests, or supplies, these services are not covered, and claims may not be paid.



Key Contacts

Montana Health Care Programs/Medicaid/HMK *Plus* Member Help Line

For questions regarding benefits or Passport to Health:

1-800-362-8312

MT Health Care Programs

Montana Relay Service

For the deaf or hard of hearing:

1-800-253-4091 or 711

Montana Public Assistance Help Line

For eligibility questions:

1-888-706-1535

MT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Transportation Center

For questions regarding travel or approval:

1-800-292-7114.

Call before you travel, or you may not be reimbursed.