

# *Western Wisconsin Cares*

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## **Long-Term Care District Starts Service in Monroe County** *Western Wisconsin Cares Continues Family Care Expansion in New Year*

A program that provides a wider array of long-term care options to seniors and adults with disabilities officially began operating in Monroe County on New Year's Day. The Western Wisconsin Cares Long-Term Care District assumed responsibility Jan. 1 for providing services to nearly 250 county residents through expansion of the state's Family Care program.

Expansion into Monroe County represents another progression in local efforts to help more adults in need of assistance with everyday tasks remain at home or in the community, noted WWC Executive Director Tim Garrity.

"It is exciting to receive the opportunity to help improve the quality of life in a practical way for so many individuals in Monroe County," Garrity said. "In light of the current economic climate, it also is gratifying to know that the home- and community-based services so many people want tend to be more cost-effective than more traditional institutional care."

Monroe County was one of eight counties that approved creation of the long-term care district, a new type of public organization formed specifically for the purpose of operating an independent managed long-term care program. Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, La Crosse, Pepin, Trempealeau and Vernon counties also participated in creation of the district.

WWC took over operation of the former La Crosse County Family Care program on Oct. 1 and will continue to expand into at least one new county each month through April. The organization first will begin serving consumers already receiving home- and community-based services in a county and then start enrolling individuals on wait lists for those services in that county.

Over the next two years, WWC expects to begin serving close to 130 other Monroe County residents who currently remain on wait lists for home- and community-based services. More than 500 individuals in the eight-county region await such options as home care, respite and assisted living. Two years after enrollment begins in a county, any individual who meets functional, financial and other eligibility requirements may choose to join the program.

Family Care seeks to maximize the health and independence of enrolled members through a flexible benefit package that combines traditional Medicaid services with the home- and community-based programs administered by counties. Each county will cease to operate the latter "waiver" programs once Family Care enrollment begins in the county.

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