



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Wisconsin State Agency 101

A SERIES
PREPARED BY



INSTITUTE FOR
REFORMING GOVERNMENT

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STATE AGENCY FAST FACTS

- The Department of Health Services (DHS) is a sprawling state agency with a total annual budget of **\$15 billion** (over **\$4 billion funded by state taxpayers**) and over **6,300 employees**, with multiple, major functions:
 - managing the state's Medicaid (safety net health insurance) program;
 - operating state facilities for the mentally ill and severely disabled;
 - planning for, and managing, public health situations, such as COVID.
- DHS both delivers health care for certain populations and oversees the care delivery of **over 1.3 million Medicaid** recipients through managed care organizations and health systems across the State.
- While the DHS budget has been generally static from a GPR perspective, this is largely due to federal resources in the various COVID legislation. However, the DHS budget has seen rapid growth largely due to Medicaid: each budget typically requires approximately **\$500,000,000** in new GPR resources simply to maintain the program.

DID YOU KNOW?

As a result of conservative reforms enacted by the Legislature in 2017, recipients of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program ("SNAP", or food stamps) are required to participate in the Foodshare Employment and Training program. This means they must be screened for drugs and routed into treatment if the screenings and subsequent testing indicate a substance abuse disorder. Governor Evers **proposed eliminating** these requirements in his last budget. The Legislature rejected his proposal.

TAXPAYER ALERT!

BadgerCare Plus enrollment totaled 774,027 in January 2020, just before the start of the pandemic. Due to federal legislation and regulations enacted during the pandemic that prohibit states from removing people from Medicaid – even if they could gain coverage elsewhere – 1,128,101 Wisconsinites are enrolled in BadgerCare Plus as of August 2022. This high number will remain until the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) formally ends the public health emergency. Such action is not expected until after the election, and even then DHHS can implement new policies making it difficult to reduce Medicaid rolls.



**\$15 BILLION:
ALL-FUNDS
MANAGED BY
DHS**

6,300 EMPLOYEES

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REFORM HISTORY

In 2011, after federal passage of the Affordable Care Act ("ObamaCare"), Governor Walker and the Legislature carved a Wisconsin path to health care reform. Rather than accepting federal money – and federal mandates – our State created **a national model of 100% access** to health insurance coverage by providing a true Medicaid safety net combined with the insurance exchange.

This conservative approach reduces the dependence and permanence of federal entitlement programs and protects Wisconsin's private insurance market by keeping premiums lower.

CLOSE CALL

Since taking office in 2019, Governor Evers has proposed on multiple occasions to expand Medicaid and add approximately **90,000 enrollees** to the government assistance rolls, likely on a near-permanent basis.



ABOUT IRG



INSTITUTE FOR
REFORMING GOVERNMENT

The Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) is a 501 (c) 3 and Wisconsin-based think tank established to help remove the onerous barriers and red tape separating the individual from an efficient and functioning government.

Find out more about IRG and view additional state agency briefing materials by visiting ReformingGovernment.org

DHS LEADERSHIP



The Department of Health Services is headed by (featured left-to-right): Secretary-designee **Karen Timberlake**, Deputy Secretary **Deb Standbridge**, and Assistant Deputy Secretary **T.R. Williams**.

**#DYK THAT THE STATE OF WISCONSIN
ESTABLISHED A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND
MODEL OF PROVIDING HEALTH
INSURANCE UNDER GOV. WALKER -
PROVIDING 100% ACCESS IN COVERAGE?**

IRG WANTS TO KNOW...

**WHAT WOULD
YOU DO??**

If you were in charge for a day, what reforms would you make to the Department? Email Alex Ignatowski, IRG's Director of State Budget and Government Reform, at ai@reforminggovernment.org.