



Human Services
Research Institute



The Consensus Definition

HCBS Definition Project

Preamble: Purpose of This Definition of HCBS

The goal of this project is to create a definition of HCBS that can support:

- Policy development
- Legislative drafting
- Advocacy efforts

This definition should be:

- Payer-neutral (not tied to Medicaid or any one program)
- Relevant across populations who have needs for functional supports – this includes all ages and disability groups
- Practical and usable in real policy settings

The definition is intentionally grounded in the values of choice, autonomy, and self-direction, recognizing that while people experience “home” in many ways, policy must clearly distinguish community-based supports from models that replicate institutional control.

Final Definition of HCBS V5 (May 2026 Consensus Panel Meeting)

Home- and community-based services (HCBS) are a range of supports provided to people in their home and local communities.

HCBS assist people of all ages who need help to live or remain at home and engage in community life. HCBS may be short-term, long-term, or intermittent. They help people to exercise their right to have choice and control over their lives, including where and with whom they live and their day-to-day activities, including work, school, or other meaningful ways they engage in their community.

HCBS may include supports such as:

- Help with everyday activities, including personal care and other services in people's homes.
- Health-related and behavioral health supports.
- Assistance to do things outside their home, including transportation.
- Employment and other chosen day activities.
- Supports for family and unpaid caregivers.
- Home modifications and enabling technologies; and service coordination and navigation across systems, among others.

HCBS can be provided in places such as a person's home, workplace, school, and other community locations. HCBS help people to live, work, and spend time in places they choose that are part of the broader community.