NORTHEND

WISCONSIN AGENCY PATH INSIGHT

How to Choose the Right Wisconsin Agency Path

Wisconsin distinguishes nonmedical companion and homemaker services, supportive home care, regulated Personal Care Agencies, licensed Home Health Agencies, and hospice. The correct path depends on the exact tasks, clinical level, payer, and survey plan.

Companion and Homemaker Services

Wisconsin's current DQA materials do not describe a standalone health-care-agency license for a private-pay business limited to nonmedical companionship, meal preparation, light housekeeping, laundry, shopping, errands, and similar support. Confirm the planned services and payer before relying on this pathway.

The agency still needs proper business formation, local approvals, employment and insurance systems, background-screening decisions, client agreements, personnel records, policies, incident procedures, privacy safeguards, and a clearly limited service scope. Adding hands-on or health-related care can change the regulatory path.

Supportive Home Care

Wisconsin uses the term supportive home care for help with instrumental activities of daily living and community support, including meals, housekeeping, laundry, shopping, errands, companionship, supervision, and escorting. DHS identifies this as a service funded through Family Care, Family Care Partnership, or IRIS.

This is a program and payer pathway rather than permission to provide every type of personal or skilled care. An agency pursuing waiver-funded services must separately confirm contracting, credentialing, enrollment, EVV, authorization, documentation, and program requirements.

Personal Care Agency (PCA)

A free-standing PCA provides health-related personal care in a client's residence, including assistance with bathing, dressing, walking, eating, and medical appointments. Services operate under written orders, a plan of care, and registered-nurse supervision. Wisconsin describes this as a PCA approval, licensure, and Medicaid-certification pathway.

Applicants use the DQA Provider Portal and submit agency information, policies, procedures, and entity background checks. DQA completes a fit-and-qualified review and registered-nurse policy review. A successful initial survey is required before DQA recommends the agency for Wisconsin Medicaid certification and ForwardHealth enrollment.

Home Health Agency (HHA)

A Wisconsin HHA primarily provides skilled nursing and other therapeutic services in patients' homes. Skilled services can include wound care, catheter care, medication management, gait training, transfer training, and other professional care. Personal care alone is not the HHA pathway.

State licensure requires qualified leadership, financial and organizational documentation, background checks, an operating budget, agency-specific policies, the pre-licensure checklist, and a fit-and-qualified review. Medicare certification and Medicaid participation are separate, even when coordinated with licensure.

Hospice

Hospice is separately licensed for coordinated palliative and supportive care to terminally ill patients, including home-based care and arranged or provided short-term inpatient or respite care. The agency needs qualified leadership, interdisciplinary services, 24-hour availability, clinical and bereavement systems, quality oversight, policies, records, and survey readiness.

Questions to consider

- Will staff provide only homemaker and companion tasks, or hands-on personal care under clinical supervision?
- Will the agency provide skilled nursing, therapy, hospice, medication management, or other clinical services?
- Will services be private pay, HCBS-funded, Medicaid-certified, Medicare-certified, or a combination?
- Can the agency maintain a functioning office, qualified staff, client records, and survey-ready evidence?

Personal care is not home health

Wisconsin directs agencies providing ADL assistance and similar personal care to the PCA pathway, while skilled nursing and therapeutic services fall under HHA rules. The agency's advertising, assessments, care plans, staffing, supervision, and policies must all match the selected scope.

Application review comes first

PCA, HHA, and hospice applicants must submit complete ownership, leadership, background, financial, policy, and organizational information required for that provider type. DQA does not begin a PCA review until all application materials and entity background checks are complete.

HHA provisional-license sequence

After the fit-and-qualified and policy reviews, DQA may issue a 90-day provisional HHA license, renewable in 90-day terms for up to one year. The agency can then serve clients. For the state-only route, 10 skilled-nursing clients, including seven active clients, trigger the request for an unannounced licensure survey and permanent-license review.

Hospice provisional sequence

A state-only provisional hospice license can be issued after application and policy approval and is currently valid for two years. Once the hospice has served five skilled-care patients, including three active patients, it submits the care plans and requests the unannounced survey leading toward permanent licensure.

The office must be survey-ready

Wisconsin surveys are operational reviews. Surveyors may arrive unannounced, meet with the administrator, request a working area, and review client lists, schedules, admission materials, complaints, personnel files, clinical records, policies, and care delivery. A mailing address or virtual presence alone does not create this operational readiness.

Licensure and payer approval are separate

A state license or approval does not automatically create Medicare certification, Medicaid certification, ForwardHealth enrollment, HCBS contracts, accreditation, or payer authorization. Each requirement should be mapped before the business commits to staffing, clients, or billing.

Build the agency in the right order

Define the services and payer first. Then confirm the correct pathway, legal entity, office, ownership and leadership, background checks, staffing and supervision, policies and forms, application documents, client-acquisition plan, survey evidence, certification, and enrollment requirements.

Planning a Wisconsin agency?

NorthEnd Consulting helps owners define the correct service scope and prepare the licensing documents and operational structure that match the Wisconsin agency plan.

Visit northendconsultants.com to discuss your agency plan

Current as of November 2026. Requirements, forms, fees, service definitions, survey thresholds, program rules, and federal or payer enrollment requirements may change. Licensing, certification, accreditation, enrollment, and payer contracting are separate decisions controlled by the applicable authorities. This is a general planning resource. NorthEnd Consulting does not guarantee approval.