THE VAST MAJORITY OF OLDER ADULTS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WANT TO LIVE AT HOME.

Unfortunately, many people can’t access the support they need to live independently in the community. A major reason why is because Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) is underfunded. We need to speak with one voice and share stories about how expanding equitable access to HCBS will transform lives.

Recent messaging research has revealed best practices for how to talk about HCBS and the individuals who rely on these services in ways that are persuasive to broad audiences.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR ADVOCATES WHEN TALKING ABOUT HCBS

Using the term “home” is key, because it’s simple to understand and conveys the clear idea of “home” vs. “institution.” Adding “community” tends to confuse the issue.

Talking about “care,” “help,” or “support” (singular nouns) is more persuasive than “services” or “supports” (plural nouns).

Use “at-home” interchangeably with “in-home” or “home-based” or “home-based model.”

Emphasize that investments in HCBS will provide a meaningful choice for people between institutions and home.

People currently understand intuitively that there isn’t really a choice for most people and that a lot of people are institutionalized who would do well at home.

WHEN TALKING ABOUT HCBS, DO:

Pair “home” with singular nouns like “care,” “help,” or “support.”

Use a few examples to explain what you mean: help bathing, dressing, cooking, cleaning, transportation.

Present this home-based model as an alternative to institutionalization.

Explain that we need more funding for home-based care because more people are institutionalized than need to be.

Convey that home-based care helps a lot of people with different needs, including older adults and people with disabilities, and supports families.

Emphasize that part of the home-based model we want to build includes someone to help families and individuals navigate the system in order to receive the support.

Convey that we have the program to make this happen; we just need Congress to provide more funding for at-home support like they currently do for nursing homes.

Mention that more funding would also ensure an adequate, well-trained and better compensated workforce.

Emphasize possibility. Access to at-home support for everyone who needs it can become a reality with adequate funding.