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Olatunji meet
to discuss
Altman's
enrollment in
Community
Care of
Portage
County, the
county's new
long-term care
pilot program.

Journal photo by
Doug Wojcik

Long-term Potential

Officials confident new Family Care plan will provide better options for elderly and disabled residents

By **LISA NELLESSEN-LARA**
Journal staff

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his week marks a new beginning for the elderly and adults with developmental and physical disabilities in Portage County.

Family Care, Wisconsin's redesign of long-term health care, was officially put in action Saturday. Portage County is one of five counties in the state running the pilot. It is the second of the pilots to be fully implemented.

"The difference is that in the past we only got so much money for long-term care," said Jim Canales, coordinator of Portage County Health and Human Services' long-term care division. "When our money ran out, you might be eligible for services, but you got put on a waiting list anyway."

"We will not plan for somebody, we will plan with them."

Jim Canales, Portage County HHS long-term care coordinator

Not so with Family Care, where services for all functional and financially eligible candidates are deemed an entitlement. Through the Aging and Disability Resource Center, one of two parts to Family Care, participants will be screened for eligibility. Once that has been determined, they are invited to join Community Care of Portage County (CCPC), the second part of Family Care.

"The goal of Family Care from the state's perspective is we will be able to intercede in

people's lives to help them stay at home as long as possible instead of entering an institutional setting."

Portage County averages about eight to 10 new people in its long-term care programs a month. In the past six months, everyone was added to the waiting list because no new money for long-term care was available.

Current recipients of the Community Options Program and Community Options Program Waivers have the opportunity to become members of CCPC, in addition to new members.

"There were 300 existing participants in COP and COP Waiver and we anticipated about half would pre-enroll in Family Care," Canales said. "We're at 200 already, so we've been very pleased people have chosen to make that transition."

No one will be forced to join at this time,

See **FAMILY CARE**, A5