As of 2013, approximately 3 million people had access to Medicaid-funded home and community-based services (HCBS), including personal care attendant (PCA) services. Due to the shared federal/state funding model of Medicaid, state programs differ in the types of services offered, functional and income eligibility criteria, and mechanisms through which services are made available; known as interstate variation. Service eligibility is neither portable nor transferable across states, making moves across states difficult and or risky for HCBS users. Participants: 18 Medicaid HCBS users with physical disabilities desire and pursue cross-state moves to follow educational, employment, social, and cultural opportunities. Participants: move stories offer support for the Moves in Context framework, illustrating how both interpersonal (i.e., family) and structural (i.e., interstate variation in Medicaid HCBS policy) factors influence their trajectories. The patterning of these trajectories demonstrates how, for program users, opportunity may be: dreamed, missed, delayed, or pursued. From a disability policy perspective, opportunity pursued is what successful education and employment programs look like for disabled people. Policy needs to address how opportunities may be in other states and that moves to pursue them are possible. Similarly, opportunity delayed and opportunity missed indicate a need for greater consideration of the effects of interstate variation on Medicaid HCBS users’ access to social participation and the pursuit of educational and economic advancement. Lastly, opportunity dreamed clarifies that Medicaid HCBS users with physical disabilities think about their futures, considering how potential opportunities will draw them out of state. Future policy changes should address how users who secure higher-paying jobs in new states are penalized and/or disqualified for the services they currently receive elsewhere. Additionally, policies should better support access to PCA workers during cross-state transition to alleviate delayed (e.g., Blaine) or missed (e.g., Jordan) opportunities. It is necessary to recognize that cross-state opportunities are not equitably accessible to Medicaid HCBS users. To address this inequity, national HCBS policy needs to ensure that money follows persons not just out of institutions within states, but also alongside them as they pursue self-determined journeys, including those in other states.}

Network protocol was approved by the Review Boards of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research and the University of Illinois at Chicago. One researcher (M. J. O’Leary) conducted all in-person interviews and facilitated debriefings with participants. Qualitative data were analyzed using both conventional content analysis and constant comparative methods.13-15

1. How do Medicaid HCBS users with physical disabilities experience the desire to move across states? 2. How do these Medicaid HCBS users’ experiences of opportunity differ based on whether or not they were able to pursue a desired move?

**Research Questions**

**Conceptual Framework**

**Participants**

18 Medicaid HCBS users with physical disabilities

- 8 moved, 10 considered moving
- Aged 21-64 (average = 33)
- Most white, 2 participants of color
- 9 females, 7 males, 1 genderqueer person, 1 trans man
- 2 identified as queer, 1 as gay
- Highly educated group (all had some college)
- Most lived alone with partners, 3 with parents

**Number of Participants by Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Regions**

- Great Lakes (7)
- Midwest (5)
- Southeast (2)
- Northeast (2)
- Far West (2)

**Data Collection**

- Interviews conducted by phone, video chat, or email
- Interviewer was a Medicaid HCBS user

**Data Analysis**

- Grounded theory methods
- Over 180 pages of transcripts
- Codes, memos, theorizing

**Methods**

**Findings: Four Opportunity Arcs**

**Arc 1: Opportunity Dreamed**
Program users described plans to move responding to both pull factors (e.g., job, school) to new states and push factors (e.g., weather, need for autonomy) away from home states.

- [I] definitely would move to another state if it were for work.

- Jazzy, a 34-year-old Black woman who considered moving

**Arc 2: Opportunity Missed**
Program users expressed regret about a specific opportunity that they could not pursue expressing immediate and long-term effects of loss.

- It’s one of my regrets that I didn’t go to university in that state...my whole life would’ve been different.

- Jordan, a 28-year-old cisgender white disabled queer woman

**Arc 3: Opportunity Delayed**
Program users outlined plans to pursue opportunities in other states after initial attempts did not result in a move.

- I would call the first two [PCAs] and say, ‘Hey, I’m ready. I can pay you now.’ Either they would say, ‘I couldn’t wait. I had to find a different job. or they just wouldn’t answer my calls.”

- Blaine, a 30-year-old white man who desired a cross-state move

**Arc 4: Opportunity Pursued**
Program users moved to another state. Some self-evaluated their respective moves as successful, others as unsuccessful, and others still, faced uncertainty.

- It was a very, very good experience and it got me self-directing and self-managing [PCA services] [successful]

- Claire, a 23-year-old, white woman who moved for college

- the bare minimum [unsuccessful]

- Mike, a 25-year-old white man

**Discussion & Implications**

**References**


**Acknowledgements**

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**Mobile Citizens:**

Medicaid HCBS Users Desire and Pursue Cross-state Moves

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Findings from this project offer empirical evidence that Medicaid HCBS users with physical disabilities desire and pursue cross-state moves to follow educational, employment, social and cultural opportunities. Participants: move stories offer support for the Moves in Context framework, illustrating how both interpersonal (i.e., family) and structural (i.e., interstate variation in Medicaid HCBS policy) factors influence their trajectories. The patterning of these trajectories demonstrates how, for program users, opportunity may be: dreamed, missed, delayed, or pursued.