



Health Equity for People with Disabilities

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The New Hampshire Public Health Association (NHPHA) recognizes that all New Hampshire (NH) residents, including people with disabilities, should have the opportunity to engage in activities that add to their growth, development, fulfillment, and community contribution.¹ With nearly one in five of NH adults ages 18-64 (18.2%) and children ages 0-17 (19%) experiencing one or more disabilities, it is imperative that public health programs, services, and initiatives are inclusive and available to all NH residents.^{2,3}

New Hampshire residents with disabilities experience significant health disparities and poorer outcomes related to social determinants of health than the general population without disabilities. For example, adults with disabilities are more likely to delay care, experience higher rates of obesity and physical inactivity, are significantly less likely to receive preventive care, and are more likely to be victims of non-fatal violent crimes and sexual assault.²⁻⁵ Individuals with cognitive disabilities are particularly vulnerable, as access to care falls far short of their medical and dental needs.^{6,7}

Health promotion and preventive health services are particularly important to reduce health disparities.⁸ NHPHA supports policies and initiatives that:

- Include individuals with disabilities in established public health and preventive health programs and services by identifying and removing barriers to participation.^{2,4}
- Support the inclusion of disability identifiers on health-related surveys and intake forms, to serve as a gauge of the accessibility and inclusiveness of programs and initiatives and develop data-driven health policy.^{4,7}
- Increase and improve training and competency-driven education of the direct service workforce supporting individuals with disabilities to improve retention rates and teach the importance and need for health promotion; in addition, engage the public health service workforce in disability-specific training and education.^{9,10}
- Assure access to medical insurance, improve coverage and reimbursement to support affordable health care services and supplies, and promote strategies and approaches that support culturally competent, accessible care for individuals with disabilities.⁵
- Reduce disparities in oral health, primary, and preventive care services for people with disabilities by strengthening the health workforce capacity to serve persons with disabilities, particularly for persons with cognitive disabilities.⁷
- Expand access to transportation for individuals with disabilities for medical appointments and opportunities to engage in wellness and recreational activities.⁵

References

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Additional Resources

- National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD): <http://www.nchpad.org/>
- The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44666/>
- Healthy People 2020, Disability and Health: <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/disability-and-health>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Disability and Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/>

The New Hampshire Disability and Public Health (DPH) Project: <http://nhdisabilityhealth.org/>