



# Connecticut residents with developmental disabilities get less primary care, with costly consequences

April 14, 2023

**About 45,000 Connecticut residents have a developmental disability.** Many more have similar disabilities and face similar challenges. As for other Americans, the Affordable Care Act increased coverage for people with disabilities, However, unlike for other Americans, it did not increase access to healthcare or improve health outcomes. **People with developmental disabilities are less likely to get primary, preventive and maintenance care, with costly consequences.**

**Studies have found resistance among physicians to caring for patients with developmental disabilities.** Researchers found structural and financial barriers, as well as poor information and biases, that affected their willingness to care for patients with disabilities. Physicians are overwhelmed, both in general and by legal requirements. They often lack knowledge and feel unqualified to care for patients with disabilities. One noted that the usual fifteen-minute visit is “absolutely ridiculous”. **People with disabilities are more likely to report inadequate patient-physician communication** that affects their access to care and health outcomes.

Physicians report needing help with care coordination, more space in facilities, and more reimbursement to overcome the barriers. Evaluations of provider training on the realities and best practices for care of patients with disabilities found they improve knowledge, outlook, and approach to care.

**Compared to Americans without disabilities, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are five times more likely to be in poor health, half as likely to get a check-up, have lower rates of blood pressure checks, flu shots, oral health care, and screens for cancer, cholesterol, vision, or hearing. Women, especially pregnant women, with disabilities face special barriers to care.**

## Recommendations/Potential interventions

- Training for primary care providers, in practice and in school, about the scope of legal requirements and effective care for people with disabilities
- Supports for primary care providers and practices such as care coordination, appropriate technology tools, and more space in facilities
- Financial resources to ensure ample time to adequately care for patients, and policies to ensure that health systems devote those resources to improving patient care and access
- Monitoring access to care and health outcomes for people with disabilities to identify best practices and areas for improvement