ON THE ROAD TO
WELLNESS
North Dakota Disability Health Project

Promoting the health and wellness of people with disabilities

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Rural Health Care Services for People with Disabilities:
Transportation Issues

Rural residents may experience access barriers to good health care, but these problems can increase for people with disabilities living in rural communities. The 2008 estimated rural population in North Dakota (ND) totals approximately 330,034 individuals or 51% of the population. Generally, the more remote the area, the greater the problem of access to medical care due to geographic distances and transportation issues. As a result, access to education, prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and wellness services can be limited.

In 2007 in ND, the overall prevalence rate of people with a disability ages 65-74 was 31%; this means that 13,000 of the 40,000 individuals ages 65-74 in ND reported some type of disability. In the age group 75 and older, the rate of people with a disability was 51%, indicating that 21,000 of the 42,000 individuals ages 75 and older reported a disability. Even more significant is the increase in the number of the oldest population, those 85 and older. Like the United States, North Dakota's oldest population showed the highest percentage increase, nearly 100% since 1980. North Dakota leads the way when it comes to the proportion of people 85 and older at 3%.

Within every community there are residents whose limitations may prevent full access to transportation services. This may include senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and individuals with low-income. Public or community transportation may be limited or absent in many rural communities, and the demographics, needs and resources in rural areas may also be different from urban areas. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ensures that public accommodations must be made to ensure accessible transportation.

The rural health care system must be willing to simplify programs to overcome access barriers to increase transportation options for people with disabilities, persons with limited incomes and senior citizens. The ability to care for and manage the health care of this diverse population begins with accessible transportation services. People with disabilities especially need accessible transportation in order to meet their health care needs. Requirements in federal transportation authorizes legislation to increase cooperation and coordination of transportation among the various divisions associated with accessible transportation.

Coordination is about shared responsibility, shared management, and shared funding. A coordinated transportation system shares resources to increase rides, reduce costs, simplify access, and increase costumer satisfaction. It is essential to engage all members of the community in the coordinated planning process to ensure success. It is also important to reach out to people with disabilities to include their knowledge and experience into the planning process. People with disabilities have a perspective that is necessary to the success of coordinated planning because they have first-hand experience traveling in their communities and so have first-hand knowledge of access and usability of the available transportation. They can help to shape the transportation services to best meet the needs of their community.

To receive this newsletter by email or in an alternative format, call 800-233-1737.

Requirements of Coordinated Planning:

- Identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes;
- Provide strategies for meeting those local needs; and
- Prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.
- Include representatives of public, private, non-profit transportation, human services providers, members of the public for plan development., people with disabilities and the elderly.

Beginning a Successful Coordination Process:

Successful coordination takes time and hard work, and involves building relationships with the representing agencies and involved individuals. It will be important for the lead agency to recruit representatives from the community's transportation providers as well as from the public. The lead agency will need to encourage comments and ideas from everyone, and allow for differing opinions to bring in quality ideas to the coordinated plan. Sources to consider when identifying potential representatives include public transportation planners, private transportation providers, area transportation planning agencies, human service agencies, and representatives from the business community, and people with disabilities from the community, just to mention a few.

Effective Coordination:

Coordination requires pre-planning and clear communication that may include:

- Establishing a timeframe for accomplishments.
- Asking team members with disabilities if they require accessible formatting of materials.
- Encouraging everyone to actively participate in the meetings.
- Advertising that the process is taking place (e.g. local and community newspapers, community Web sites).

To increase available transportation services in the community, public transportation services and human services agencies in our state will need to continue working together to increase options in their communities, allowing for more transportation services and better quality of life for people with disabilities.

Sources:

- Access to Primary Health Care Among Persons with Disabilities in Rural Areas: A Summary of the Literature/www.amsa.org/programs/barriers/access.pdf
- Accessible Community Transportation in Our Nation/www.projectaction.org

Additional Resources:

- Community Transportation Association (http://web1.ctaa.org)
- Rehabilitation Consulting Services (http://www.nd.gov/dhs/rcs)
- Easter Seals Project Action (http://projectaction.easterseals.com)
- North Dakota Transit Links (http://www.apta.com/resources)

The ND Disability Health Project can provide technical assistance to assist with health promotion, staff training and education, and disability awareness. Contact us at 800.233.1737 or visit our website at www.ndcpd.org/health

NDCPD Minot State University Center of Excellence

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Vision:

All people in ND have access to information and services they need to maintain good health and wellness. There are no health disparities between people with and without disabilities that are based solely on the presence of a disability.

Pay It Forward…..

Pass it on to others who may find this information helpful.

Health-related information provided in this fact sheet is for informational purposes only and should not replace advice from a medical professional. The ND Disability Health Project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through a grant (1 u59 DD000278) to the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the CDC.