

State-Based Disability & Health Program

New York State Department of Health

Serving the Needs of People with Disabilities Through Policy Change

Public Health Issue

Adults with disabilities in New York are 35% more likely to characterize their health as fair or poor compared with adult New Yorkers without disabilities. New York State (NYS) also has the highest disability-associated health expenditures of any state in the country—more than \$40 billion. People with disabilities are often unserved or underserved in public health programs. The Disability and Health Program (DHP) within the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) initiated a policy change to ensure public health programs are integrating the needs of people with disabilities into statewide and local initiatives.

Program Overview

The DHP developed an Inclusion Policy that became a requirement in 2009 for procurements released by the NYSDOH Center for Community Health (CCH). Previous funding announcements for these procurements did not require any documentation of the disparities experienced by people with disabilities, nor did the funding announcements direct applicants to describe how their proposed activities would reach this underserved population. The Inclusion Policy requires programs to incorporate strategies throughout procurements to ensure people with disabilities are integrated in funded initiatives.

Making a Difference

Programs designed to be inclusive at the outset expand reach, ensure accessibility and are more cost effective than retrofitting or modifying inaccessible programs. The Inclusion Policy requires applicants to include people with disabilities in the initial stages of procurement development.

The DHP worked with the CCH to integrate disability components into 20 procurements for variety of public health programs, including tobacco cessation, food security, adolescent pregnancy prevention, and obesity prevention. Once these 20 procurements close, 330 contracts will be established with an annual aggregate value of \$123.5 million.

“Within our Division of Chronic Disease we have a Disability and Health Program that brings it all together in one place; where we can look at policies across the departments’ programs to say: Can we infuse disability in everything we are doing in our departmental programs – designing streets, healthy communities and programs – so that they work for everyone.”

~ NYSDOH Commissioner Richard H. Daines
Opening Remarks. Public Health Live, February 2010

Shaping Tomorrow

The DHP continues to work with programs across CCH to shape their procurements. The DHP is also educating Independent Living Centers and other disability groups about the Inclusion Policy and the opportunities to promote health and empowerment for people with disabilities. More and more, public health practitioners are reaching out to individuals with disabilities and disability service and advocacy organizations when crafting their procurement applications and implementing project activities.

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