

State-Based Disability & Health Program

Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Creating a Shared Vision for Decreasing Health Care Barriers

Public Health Issue

Twenty-one percent of adults in Kansas currently live with a disability. That number is expected to rise as our population grows and ages. Poor access to health care is a primary concern for people with disabilities, forcing many to go without regular visits to health care providers. According to the state's most recent health survey, one-third of those who screened positively for disability reported unfair treatment by their physician or office staff because of their disability.

Program Overview

The Kansas Disability and Health Program (DHP) recruited Kansans with disabilities to participate in state-level public health advisory councils. These participants comprise the DHP Advisory Board. The Advisory Board met with chronic disease managers in 2010 to address health care barriers for people with disabilities. Together they created an online continuing education course on disability and health for health care professionals. **All health care providers or staff members in KDHE's network are contractually required to complete the course and report on changes in their practice.**

Making a Difference

Since March 7, 2011, when the course was unveiled to the public, well over 100 people have completed the course and gave it rave reviews. The KDHE chronic disease programs are promoting the Health Care Access for Persons with Disabilities course throughout the state. At the statewide bi-annual Disability Caucus in 2011, approximately 600 Kansans with disabilities or from disability-related organizations attended and committed their support to the Health Care Access for Persons with Disabilities course.

Shaping Tomorrow

Our next step is to provide technical assistance to all clinics involved in our chronic disease programs to help make their facilities and services more accessible. Everyone can play a role in increasing access to health care for persons with disabilities by asking personal physicians, nurses and other health care professionals to take this important course.

"The Health Care Access for Persons with Disabilities course addresses situations and issues I've not seen previously addressed in nursing literature or classes. The suggestions for communicating and treating people with disabilities are relevant and applicable."

– Wilma Christensen, R.N.

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