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Healthcare

Everyone who lives in Delaware must be able to get the healthcare and health-related services they need. This includes oral healthcare and eye care.

Health-related services help you stay healthy or get better if you are not feeling well. This includes going to the doctor, getting shots, staying mentally well, and doing activities to keep your body healthy.

Oral healthcare makes sure your mouth, teeth, and gums stay healthy.

Eye care makes sure your eyes stay healthy and you can see well.

It is important that:

- Everyone makes their own healthcare decisions, with good information and support when needed.
- People get healthcare and related services when needed.
- Healthcare and related services are affordable (people have enough money to pay for them)
- Healthcare and related services are high quality. They keep people healthy.
- Healthcare providers follow rules, treat people well, and help people stay healthy. This means they are “accountable.”

Healthcare and health-related services should:

- Help people make decisions by giving them good information and support from doctors and other health professionals.
- Help people with disabilities learn how to live healthy lives.

- Provide screening, diagnosis, and treatment for disabilities early in people's lives. Services should be based on what has been proven to work well.
- Be very cautious when prescribing medications to treat mental health issues. This means doctors should make sure medication for mental health issues is necessary before they give it to a patient. Doctors should give patients clear information so they can decide whether they want to take these medications.
- Make sure healthcare professionals have information and tools to screen, diagnose, and treat people with disabilities in a respectful way.

Healthcare and health-related services should include:

- Information and services that help people stay healthy and avoid getting sick.
- Information and services that help people keep their teeth and gums healthy.
- Accessible medical and dental offices and equipment. This means people with physical disabilities can get into and move around the offices. And the machines doctors use to check people's health work with people who have physical disabilities. Use of health clubs in the community.
- Many different services for health, rehabilitation, personal care, and support.
- Support services for people with all types of disabilities ready anytime they are needed.
- Services that are affordable and people can keep even when they change insurance plans.
- Equity in coverage between mental health and physical health benefits. This means mental health services get as much attention and support as physical health services. People should always get to choose what healthcare they want and should get good information to help them decide. They should never be forced to accept services they do not want.
- Medicaid Waivers that do a good job supporting people, no matter what their disability is. A Medicaid Waiver is a way the government pays for support at home and in the community for people with Medicaid.

- Studies and surveys that get information from people with disabilities about:
 - their healthcare and health-related service needs,
 - their experience getting healthcare, and
 - how good their healthcare is.
- The inclusion of people with disabilities on hospital boards and other groups that focus on healthcare.
- An independent board that reviews problems. The board should include people with disabilities and treat everyone fairly. That means it is “impartial.”
- An appeals process when people disagree. An appeals process is the steps people would take to fix a problem related to healthcare when people disagree.

Discussion

The Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council supports fully including people with disabilities in all parts of community life. The Council believes everyone in Delaware should make their life better by staying healthy.

People who do things to stay healthy cost the healthcare and dental care systems and the government less money than people who do not take care of themselves.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that up to 1 in 4 adults in the United States have some type of disability.ⁱ And the U.S. Surgeon General said that, “most Americans will experience a disability sometime during the course of their lives.” People with disabilities are more likely to have health problems as a result of their disability.

"The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities" 2012 report says "One critical area is the widespread inequity in the area of health - in terms of access to services, the quality of service available and delivered, and the health outcomes experienced by individuals with disabilities." This means that not everyone gets good care or gets it when they need it. This is often true of people with disabilities. As a



result, some groups of people are not as healthy as others. A 2015 report from the Center for Disabilities Studies, "The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities," found that people with disabilities get diseases (get sick) much more than people without disabilities. They are not always getting the care they need. The 2013 Public Health statewide assessment of people with disabilities in Delaware found that they are:

- More likely than people without disabilities to wait to see a doctor because of the cost.
- More likely to be obese (very overweight).
- Less likely to be physically active in the past month.
- More likely to be smokers.
- More likely to have diabetes, coronary heart disease, and depression.

Based on all of this information, the Developmental Disabilities Council believes healthcare, dental care, and health-related services must improve for people with disabilities.

Recommendations

Delaware must:

1. Develop a healthcare, dental care, and health-related service system that treats everyone fairly and gives them the services they need to be healthy.
2. Develop a coordinated system of health care and dental services for people with disabilities so they get the services they need, when they need them.
3. Require Delaware doctors, dentists, and other healthcare professionals to be educated about disability. Develop and coordinate this education requirement.
4. Develop and coordinate education for people with disabilities about how to stay healthy.

5. Make sure healthcare providers follow rules, treat people well, and do a good job helping people stay healthy. This means holding them “accountable.”
6. Develop more ways to get and keep healthcare workers. This might include:
 - Higher pay.
 - Better benefits.
 - Paid education.
7. Develop an emergency system for Delaware’s personal attendant service program. An emergency system would quickly meet people’s needs when there is an emergency or crises.
8. Develop a state and local emergency management and recovery plan that includes the needs of people with disabilities of all ages. This will help make sure people with disabilities are safe and well when there is an emergency. Emergency management and recovery plans describe how Delaware will deal with things like hurricanes, floods, and big health problems like COVID-19.
9. An independent board to review problems related to healthcare. This should include people with disabilities and treat everyone fairly. Members should participate actively.
10. Advocate for people with disabilities to be members of boards, commissions, and committees that focus on health. This includes the Delaware Health Care Commission, the Architectural Accessibility Board, the Delaware Human Relations Commission, the Oral Health Coalition, the Delaware Academy of Medicine, and others.

ⁱ Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>

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