



Health Care for People with Developmental Disabilities

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A person's health has a dramatic effect on their quality of life and ability to reach their full potential of independence, participation in family and social activities, educational achievements and vocational contributions. Essential components of appropriate health care include prevention, timely and accurate diagnoses, and effective treatment. Positive health outcomes for people with developmental disabilities are dependent on access to quality health care providers with specialized expertise who understand the issues and experiences faced by people with significant disabilities and their families.

Preventive health care is critical to optimize positive health outcomes and reduce unnecessary and over-reliance on costly emergency room visits and hospitalizations. Since people with severe and multiple chronic medical issues tend to have conditions that cause their health to deteriorate very quickly and dramatically, it is even more critical that they have access to effective preventive care. Louisiana's health care model should emphasize preventive health care services by qualified providers as standard for people with developmental disabilities.

Ensuring people with developmental disabilities have access to timely assessment and treatment by qualified health care providers ultimately leads to better health outcomes, greater quality of life, fuller participation in society and reduced costs. The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council supports the rights of all people, regardless of the type or severity of disability, medical and/or psychiatric needs, to have access to quality health care that maximizes positive health outcomes.

Recommendations:

1. Increase access to quality health care services for individuals with developmental disabilities.
2. Provide health care practitioners with training and technical assistance that cultivates an understanding of experiences of individuals with significant disabilities and their families.
3. Increase access to adequate dental services for adults with developmental disabilities.
4. Ensure direct support professionals display skill in supporting identified health care concerns and responding to emergent health issues for those they support through training and technical assistance.