Health Care for People with Developmental Disabilities

Approved January 2020

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 treatments. 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. Health disparities and secondary conditions can be the result of inaccessible health care facilities and equipment, lack of knowledge among health professionals about specific differences among people with disabilities, transportation difficulties, and higher poverty rates among people with disabilities.[1]

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, equitable, comprehensive, and evidence-based health care services by qualified providers as the standard of care 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.

References:

1 Disability and Health Information for Healthcare Providers | CDC. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/hcp.html