

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850



DATE: August 12, 2019

TO: All Medicare Advantage Organizations, Prescription Drug Plans, Cost Plans, PACE Organizations, and Demonstrations

FROM: Jordan Luke
Director, Program Alignment & Partner Engagement Group
CMS Office of Minority Health

SUBJECT: New Resources to Improve Physical Accessibility for People with Disabilities

In recognition of the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Office of Minority Health (CMS OMH) is offering several new resources for people with disabilities and their care providers to improve accessibility to high quality health care and support independent living. People with disabilities face many challenges when accessing care. Adults with disabilities are almost twice as likely as other adults to report unmet health care needs due to problems with the accessibility of a doctor’s office or clinic. These resources are available for patients as well as providers.

First, CMS has developed “Getting the Care You Need: A Guide for Individuals with Disabilities,” a best practices resource that you may considering sharing with enrollees that have disabilities. The guide highlights the approaches some beneficiaries with disabilities have implemented to help providers and office staff better meet the needs of people with disabilities. The guide includes a brief overview of patients’ rights, tips on preparing for medical appointments, information on what to do if a beneficiary experiences difficulties accessing care, and an appointment checklist with tips on how individuals can work with their provider to get the care they need before, during, and after an appointment.

Click here to review the *Getting the Care You Need: A Guide for Individuals with Disabilities*: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/equity-initiatives/Getting-the-Care-You-Need.pdf>

Listening to the personal stories of people with disabilities is a powerful tool to improve our cultural competency in health care. To learn more about the experiences of people with disabilities that use wheelchairs and what you can do to be a better advocate, visit the CMS YouTube channel.

Click here to watch *Navigating Health Care with a Disability: Our Stories, a Focus on People with Disabilities*: <https://youtu.be/VgbPFV0i3vA>

Click here to watch *Navigating Health Care with a Disability: Our Stories, a Focus on the Provider*: [https://youtu.be/ aydKRTPlg](https://youtu.be/aydKRTPlg)

Finally, CMS has developed *Modernizing Health Care to Improve Physical Accessibility: Resources Inventory*, a summary of resources and tools for health care professionals to reduce barriers and provide access to high quality care for people with disabilities. This compendium includes guidance on how to increase physical accessibility of medical services, tools to assess a practice or facility's accessibility, and tips and training materials.

Click here to read the *Modernizing Health Care to Improve Physical Accessibility: Resources Inventory*: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/OMH-Modernizing-Health-Care-Physical-Accessibility.pdf>

Finally, the latest data highlight from CMS, *How Does Disability Affect Access to Health Care for Dual Eligible Beneficiaries?* examines how a disability affects access to health care for Medicare and Medicare dual eligible beneficiaries. This builds on existing research by focusing on an alternate definition of disability and looking at beneficiaries who said they were unable to get the care they needed. The key findings indicate that dual eligible beneficiaries who report having a disability are more likely to report being unable to get the care they need. Those with a disability who report being unable to get the care they need were more likely to be non-Hispanic white, younger than 55 years, and in fair or poor overall health. These beneficiaries were also more likely to cite lack of transportation and affordability as barriers to care.

To read the full data highlight, click here: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/Data-Highlight-How-Does-Disability-Affect-Access-to-Health-Care-for-Dual-Eligible-Beneficiaries.pdf>

To learn more about the CMS Office of Minority Health, please visit [go.cms.gov/omh](https://www.go.cms.gov/omh). For technical assistance on improving physical accessibility, please contact us at HealthEquityTA@cms.hhs.gov.