RTC MiCL

Research and
Training Center on
Measurement and
Interdependence in
Community Living

FACT SHEET

Using a Community Engagement Process to Improve Health Care Access

R-6

Background

This purpose of this project is to determine if the use of community engagement methodologies can increase access to health care for individuals with disabilities.

The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) brings together individuals with disabilities, representatives of local government, health care providers, and disability organizations and advocates to identify and solve problems. They collaborate to identify and prioritize barriers to health care access in their community, then develop and implement solutions related to three issues:

- Transportation
- Accessibility of health care settings
- Provider knowledge, attitudes and communication

The CEI process includes a town hall meeting, a community infrastructure meeting, and resource mobilization. There is also a one-year follow-up period with identified community partners.

What We've Accomplished So Far

CEI projects will be conducted in nine cities – three each in Oregon, Kansas, and Missouri. The process has been implemented in three Oregon cities and is underway in Emporia, Kansas, and two Missouri cities.

The Oregon communities have begun making measurable improvements in access to health care for people with disabilities.

In Bend, Oregon:

o The St. Charles Medical Center parking lots have been resurfaced and restriped – for more than the legally required number of accessible

The Bottom Line

The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) uses grassroots action to reduce barriers to participation for people with disabilities. This project focuses on health care access and is based on the premise that a disability does not equal ill health.

CEI teams document identified barriers in photos. These photos show the absence of safe sidewalks at a community medical center in Oregon and inadequate temporary signage.

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parking spaces. The Facilities Director reported he received funding to "do whatever it takes to make the medical center accessible."

o The Medical Center's main entrance revolving door has been replaced by automatic doors, and restroom doors will be monitored to ensure that it takes no more than five pounds of pressure to open them.

o The group is working to re-establish some form of volunteer mobility training since the city cut that position for budgetary reasons.

In Corvallis, Oregon:

o The hospital system improved accessibility of its parking structures with additional accessible parking spots, new signage pointing to van accessible parking areas, additional drop-off points for patients, and improved traffic flow.

o The Executive Director of the para-transit bus system added seven new volunteers to take incoming calls and incorporated three new bus routes to increase access to hospital services.

In Pendleton, Oregon:

o An Access Committee has been formed to bring more awareness to the community at large.

o A community partner has developed a disability awareness/sensitivity training that will be presented to service providers, health care entities, and civic organizations.

o Pendleton Community partnered with the Confederate Tribes of

This photo documents barriers to parking lot accessibility.

Umatilla to develop new bus system, which will increase transportation access to rural areas and access to medical facilities outside of Pendleton.

o The hospital improved inside directional signage to include disability formatted signs.

A Tool to Improve Outpatient Access

As part of the CEI assessment, the research team developed an Outpatient Health Care Usability Profile (OHCUP) to help clinics improve their accessibility.

This easy-to-use checklist is less complex thatn ADA guidelines and measures how usable clinics are for people with specific disabilities: physical, vision or hearing, and learning.

Individuals with disabilities can give the OHCUP to their health providers to encourage them to improve accessibility. To learn more, visit www.healthwellness.org.