

National Survey of People with Disabilities and COVID-19: Healthcare Access and Rights

The spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has led to a worldwide pandemic. Understanding how people with disabilities have been affected by COVID-19 is important as we navigate this unprecedented time. In July 2020, 990 adults with disabilities from age 18 to 85 across the United States reported on topics related to how COVID-19 was affecting their lives, roughly four months after states began providing guidance in response to spread of the virus. This resource addresses survey participant results about knowledge of healthcare access and rights.

The Right to Health Care

Overall, 62.2% of respondents knew that people with disabilities have the right to health care access, just like everyone else.

Health Care Cannot be Denied Based on Disability

Overall, 57.5% of respondents knew that people with disabilities cannot be denied care because of a disability.

Hospitals Can Make Exceptions to Visitor Policy

Overall, 55.1% of respondents knew that hospitals can make an exception to their visitor policy if people need help advocating, communicating, understanding, or for help with self-care.

People with Disabilities Have the Right to be Treated Fairly in the Hospital

Overall, 61.4% of respondents knew that people with disabilities have the right to be treated fairly in the hospital.

Treatment Should Not be Denied Based on Disability

Overall, 65.5% of respondents knew that medical treatment should not be denied because of disability.

What Does it Mean?

It is encouraging that more than half of respondents, overall, know about the health care rights that were included in this survey. Yet, there is a large proportion of people who don't know or are unsure about their health care rights. Over one-third (34.5%) of people are not clear that treatment cannot be denied because of disability. The right to get healthcare was not known by 37.8% of respondents. Racial differences in items are also present. In the current COVID environment, knowledge of healthcare rights is critical.