

New Report: Healthcare Access for People With Disabilities in Rural PA

PHAN has released a report compiled from over 300 conversations with people with disabilities, their family members and caregivers, and local organizations in rural PA. This study was completed as part of the Rural Healthcare Access Project, an initiative intended to improve access to healthcare for people with disabilities in rural PA.

Findings



Getting the Right Information Is Often a Fundamental Barrier

- Information is often difficult to access or simply not available.
- Healthcare providers don't always provide information and referrals to community resources.



Healthcare Networks Often Cannot Accommodate Local Need

- Wait times can be **one to two years** or more.
- Some providers are unwilling to treat people with disabilities.
- Those with Medical Assistance face even more limited choice and longer wait times.



Access to Transportation Is Crucial to Accessibility

- Participants reported commutes of **one to three hours each way** to access services.
- Some have considered moving in order to have better access to treatment.
- The Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) isn't always accessible.



A Good Relationship with One's Healthcare Provider is Essential

- Providers who take the time to listen are especially important for people with disabilities.
- Many providers are excellent in treating patients with disabilities while others may benefit from additional training and education.



Insurance Companies Can Limit Access to Healthcare

- It is often challenging to get insurance to authorize necessary treatments or equipment.
- Consumers reported insurance companies denying claims, questioning medical necessity of treatments and equipment, and forcing consumers to try less effective treatments first.

The full report
is available
on our website:
[pahealthaccess.org/
rural-access-report](http://pahealthaccess.org/rural-access-report)

Our Recommendations

- Increase funding to rural health systems.
- Use consumer experiences as a roadmap for policy shifts.
- Provide education and support to consumers in navigating the healthcare system.
- Increase provider education & competency.
- Make information about the healthcare system more accessible by consolidating, better publicizing, and utilizing various accessible formats that can be easily understood.
- Create opportunities for direct communication between consumers, providers, insurance companies, and officials.



Pictured are a few of the many community members who contributed their stories.

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