

ADVOCACY

People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter



Barriers to Care

By Quinn Thomas

An important issue for people with disabilities of all types is accessing healthcare. In fact, disabled people use healthcare services more than anybody else. And yet, despite this, it can be harder for us to access this care than it is for other people.

The elephant in the room in this conversation is insurance. Half of all adults without insurance have some sort of chronic health condition, and half of those people have gone without medicine because of the cost. Even people who do have insurance often find gaps in what it will cover versus what they need. Studies say between 1 in 2 or 1 in 3 adults with disabilities have been denied or delayed care because of issues with their insurance. Employer-sponsored health plans are especially bad about this,

UPCOMING EVENTS

HOLIDAY MINI PHOTO SESSION AT CCS

December 8, 9:00-6:00, at 12701 Waterville-Swanton Road, Whitehouse. \$10. Book a session online.

ADULT AUTISM BOARD GAME GROUP

December 8 & 15, 7:30, at 3001 West Sylvania Avenue, Toledo. Last sessions for the year.

SUPER SATURDAY DANCE

December 9, 7:00-9:00, 4765 McCord Road, Sylvania.

PEOPLE FIRST & SALUTE JOINT HOLIDAY PARTY

December 11, 5:30-7:00, at 1155 Larc Lane, Toledo. Bring a store bought dessert. \$20 limit if you participate in the gift exchange.

because they are designed to support healthy, non-disabled adults. People who attempt to buy private insurance on their own get denied 90% of the time if they have any major or minor health problem.

Besides just flat-out denying coverage, finding a provider is another issue. Many disabled people are on Medicaid or Medicare, but providers who will accept either are hard to find. In addition, Medicare forces disabled individuals under 65 to wait two years before coverage will kick in.

There's a government office in charge of enforcing the ADA and Section 504 for healthcare offices. They take on very few cases. In 2017, a set of guidelines were produced for accessible medical equipment, but no particular part of the government was put in charge of enforcing those standards. Since no one's enforcing them, no one follows them.

Exam tables, X-ray equipment, weight scales, and exam chairs are both the four most basic pieces of medical equipment and the four most commonly inaccessible. Lack of accessible mammogram machines puts disabled women at a much higher risk of breast cancer.

Major accreditation organizations don't even check if healthcare providers are ADA-compliant. Disability competency isn't required to be taught in medical schools.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic started, experts were predicting a boom in the disabled population within the next generation. It's only recently that disabled people have been considered a unique demographic. Because of this, most research is about preventing disability rather than serving people who are already disabled.

We deserve better.

OUR NEXT MEETING

December 14th, 6:00-7:30, virtually on Zoom or in-person at the Ability Center at 5605 Monroe Street, Sylvania. Meeting dues are \$5 or \$50 for twelve months.

This meeting will be our end-of-year "town hall" meeting, to reflect on 2023 and plan for 2024. We will also be electing new officers to serve two-year terms starting in January.