

Need continued...

and insulated. The Surgeon General Report on Health Disparities and Mental Retardation (2002) documented problems in health care access from a national perspective.

Issues cited in the aforementioned report included but are not limited to societal misunderstanding; lack of health care provider experience and knowledge in caring for those with developmental disabilities; improving provider incentives to ensure the health of this population; and the need for more research related to the health care needs of this population.

The health research report the Health Care Project produced in 2009 was necessary to understand the scope of the problem in Massachusetts and how best to intervene so that improvements can be made. Since our Project will rely on effective alliances with other disability organizations, public agencies, public officials and health care systems, it will be necessary to have reliable data with which to develop a plan and outreach to other groups and to propose statewide changes.

Purpose continued...

of our Project to improve health care access and eliminate health disparities, The Arc of Massachusetts conducted research via 10 focus groups, 84 on-line surveys, and 37 key informant interviews.

Focus groups were completed with self-advocates (age 18 and over), parents/guardians, and community support professionals. As a way to reach those who were unable to attend a focus group session, the Project also gained additional experiences and perspectives from parents/guardians, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD), and providers who serve individuals with ID/DD through an on-line survey.

Additionally, the Project used the interview method to collect knowledge and experiences among health care providers, state legislators, and health insurance providers.

After extensive coding and analysis of the data, in year two, the Project team produced a compelling report, which was published in February 2009. The Project has hosted five community meetings on the report's findings, one of them at The Boston Foundation with Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary, Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, as a panelist.

Currently, the Project is working to address the urgent barriers identified in the report and effectively make systemic statewide change.