

Altering the landscape

CDS played a lead role in 2014-2015 in identifying and addressing health disparities affecting Delawareans with disabilities.

First came [the Center's assessment of disability and health](#), a report that detailed the inequities in the health and access-to-health-care of Delawareans with disabilities. Drawing on national and state health surveys and Medicaid claims data, the report showed that adults with disabilities were nearly three times more likely to have diabetes, depression, a heart attack or stroke as adults without disabilities; that their delays in seeing a doctor due to cost were almost twice as common as adults without disabilities; and that youth with disabilities were more likely to be overweight, smokers, depressed and to have considered suicide.

In interviews with CDS for the report, people with disabilities expressed their frustration with inaccessible care and insensitive health care professionals.

"I am required to go to [the hospital] since the office I get mammograms in is unable to do a pap smear because I cannot get on the table," said one person. "If my aide takes me to a doctor," said another, "a lot of times they'll talk to her first instead of asking me. So I usually jump in and say, 'Hey, she doesn't know anything about it, I do.'"

To alter the landscape, CDS, the [Delaware Department of Health and Social Services](#) and a diverse contingent of 60 advocates and experts developed (with funding from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)) [The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities](#). Several of its more than 80 recommended changes spanning compliance and promotional issues have begun to be implemented. That's in no small measure due to DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraf, who upon release of the Plan announced she's making health equity for people with disabilities "a department-level priority." [See a PowerPoint presentation from CDS and DHSS on the Plan and its implementation.](#)

"Achieving health equity" is the "next phase [in the] evolution of inclusion," she said. [Watch Landgraf honor CDS's work on disparities at the ADA25 festival in Dover.](#)



DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraf (left) made health equity a department-level priority after a CDS-led team headed by Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities Project Director [Eileen Sparling](#) released a collaborative plan to achieve it. [See their op-ed in the News Journal here.](#)