

Linkage Project Promotes Preventive Health Care and Health Goals of Oregonians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)

Oregon adults with disabilities need person-centered care from health professionals who have the knowledge and skills to treat people with disabilities. Routine preventive health care improves the wellbeing of Oregonians with disabilities and reduces emergency visits and hospital stays, which decreases health care costs.



The Oregon Office on Disability and Health (OODH) Linkage Project was created to address the problems faced by individuals with I/DD when they are trying to get preventive care and health education. The Linkage Project provides health education and navigation support to people with I/DD. It connects participants to preventive care and health promotion programs using a person-centered approach and tailored support tools.

A key component of the Oregon Linkage Project model is supporting adults with I/DD in building skills for getting their health care needs met. Many participants receive sessions that feature the Taking Charge of My Health Care (TCMHC) Toolkit—a set of resources to support people with I/DD as they build confidence in navigation of complex medical systems.

Program Case Study

Many Linkage Project participants (72%) live outside the tri-county Portland Metro area, including participant Tom. Tom lives in rural southwest Oregon and was referred to the Linkage Project by his I/DD case manager. His mother and case manager were involved as his support team.

Tom set Linkage Project goals with the Linkage Project Team and his support team. These were to:

- 1. Find consistent primary care to reduce emergency care**
- 2. Seek mental health support for medication coordination**

Tom preferred phone meetings and had 9 sessions with the Linkage Project Team over 3 months. **Tom shared that meetings were easy to understand and follow and overall “great!”**

During two of these sessions, the Linkage Project Team gave Tom preventive health education and emphasized the need for regular primary care visits. Tom’s first TCMHC session helped him prepare questions for his new primary care appointment.

Benefits of Linkage Project Participation

Tom was one of the **78.4% of Oregon Linkage Project participants that received or made progress toward receiving primary care**. He met with his new primary care practitioner (PCP) twice during his Linkage Project experience. As a result of his prepared questions, Tom received a referral to Behavioral Health from his PCP. Tom feels his PCP is responsive and respectful. He now manages most of his medications with his PCP and has not needed emergency care. Another TCMHC health session on Mental Health was scheduled to prepare for his Behavioral Health assessment.



Since being involved in the Linkage Project, Tom has started therapy, gone to the dentist, and continues to check-in with his PCP on medications.

The Linkage Project Team has seen positive effects accumulate, with one positive result leading to increased benefits for participants. In Tom's case, he saw the benefits of his Linkage education and meeting his health goals. This resulted in a desire and drive to address more health care needs, like dental care.

Tom's mother explained how important it has been for her son to connect to medical professionals and establish relationships with them. She expressed appreciation for the support received through the Linkage Project.

"...everyone is different but the positive things you brought to us opened the doors. It's the first time I have gotten assistance to support (in this way) ...you knew what to do." - Tom's Mother

In the end, Tom met his Linkage Project goals and more. Tom says he is prioritizing his health care and regularly engages with his PCP.

"I would recommend this project to other people." - Tom

Impact

The OODH Linkage Project Team has created a high-quality experience for participants, resulting in a **95% retention rate**. We have successfully supported participants in scheduling health care appointments, preparing for appointments, and obtaining the quality preventive health care they need. Receipt of needed preventive care leads to improved wellbeing and reductions in emergency care and hospitalizations, thus reducing health care costs.

