



Legislative Report

MinnesotaCare Program Helpline and Disability Hub MN Reports

Health Care Administration

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Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 3.197, requires the disclosure of the cost to prepare this report. The estimated cost of preparing this report is \$700.00.

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I. Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) created this report in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 256.01, Subdivision 31, to report on the consumer experience in using DHS' helplines. The report includes information on the following:

- **MinnesotaCare program helpline**, including background on methods used to evaluate recently implemented initiatives to improve customer service and plans for future initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of the helpline
- **Disability Hub MN (formerly the Disability Linkage Line®)**, including evaluation of services, recent initiatives to improve customer service and plans to enhance the helpline

II. Legislation

Minnesota Statutes, Section 256.01, Subdivision 31, Consumer satisfaction; human services:

- (a) The commissioner of human services shall submit a memorandum each year to the governor and the chairs of the house of representatives and senate standing committees with jurisdiction over the department's programs that provides the following information:
 - (1) the number of calls made to each of the department's help lines by consumers and citizens regarding the services provided by the department;
 - (2) the program area related to the call;
 - (3) the number of calls resolved at the department;
 - (4) the number of calls that were referred to a county agency for resolution;
 - (5) the number of calls that were referred elsewhere for resolution;
 - (6) the number of calls that remain open; and
 - (7) the number of calls that were without merit.
- (b) The initial memorandum shall be submitted no later than February 15, 2012, with subsequent memoranda submitted no later than February 15 each following year.
- (c) The commissioner shall publish the annual memorandum on the department's Web site each year no later than March 1.

III. MinnesotaCare Program Helpline

The MinnesotaCare program helpline (651-297-3862 or 800-657-3672) uses various measurements to evaluate efficiencies of incoming calls and to improve customer service. Callers are routed to the MinnesotaCare Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) line, where agents are available to assist them from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Beginning in October 2017, consumers can call any time and use the self-service options to pay a premium or get automated information about their case.

MinnesotaCare Program Helpline: Data and Evaluation

The table shows MinnesotaCare program helpline data for 2017:

January–December 2017

| Average monthly calls routed to the ACD line* | Calls connected to an agent | Average time a consumer waits to speak with an agent |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 22,681 | 64% | 11 minutes, 16 seconds |

*Calls were periodically routed to another DHS division to allow MinnesotaCare staff to process renewal applications.

To ensure optimum services for consumers calling the helpline, staff consider and monitor a few factors daily:

- **Anticipating consumer calls.** The type of consumer calls can be anticipated at certain times of the month. For example, if closing notices are mailed, then most of the calls at that time of the month are typically about why the eligibility or coverage is closing. Providing training to agents on how to anticipate calls gives them the ability to plan and ensures that calls are promptly handled within the predetermined performance standard.
- **Scheduling agents for different shifts to allow longer hours of operation.** To provide nine hours of phone coverage, MinnesotaCare assigns agents to different shifts to allow for coverage at all times.

Note: In addition to calling the MinnesotaCare program helpline, consumers can visit the MinnesotaCare office in person to pay a MinnesotaCare premium or meet with an agent. The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

2017 Improvements

In early 2017, MinnesotaCare conducted a continuous improvement project for our program helpline. The objective was to increase the monthly percentage of MinnesotaCare calls answered in five minutes or less by the end of 2017. Along with implementing an improved and dynamic phone system, we implemented new customer-service training and system-refresher training, developed templates for system case noting, and streamlined our issue-escalation processes. Since making these changes in fall 2017, we have experienced an increase of 14 percent in calls answered within five minutes.

New features enabled for MinnesotaCare consumers in 2017

We have added the following new helpline features to improve consumers' experience by providing self-service information and reducing the amount of time consumers spend waiting for an agent.

- **Phone payments:** MinnesotaCare enrollees can now pay their premiums by phone using a credit card or checking account. Enrollees opting to pay by phone are connected with the secure MinnesotaCare phone payment system hosted by U.S. Bank. Other payment options, such as paying online, by mail, or in person, remain available.
- **Consumer self-service:** After proper authentication, MinnesotaCare enrollees can get automated information that answers many of their common questions. This includes information about their premium amount due, application or renewal status, and managed care enrollment and about general program requirements. Non-enrollees can also hear general program requirements and get instructions on how to apply.
- **Courtesy callback:** When call volumes are high, callers can use the courtesy callback feature, which reduces the time they wait on hold or in a queue. The feature enables callers to choose to have the system call them back when an agent is ready to take their call instead of waiting on hold for an agent. It works as follows: Callers who choose to use this option leave their name and phone number. When the system determines that an agent will be available soon (or is available), the system places a call back to the caller. The caller answers the call and confirms he or she is the original caller, and the system connects the caller to the agent after a brief wait.

Hardware and software upgrades completed in 2017

The following upgrades were completed in 2017:

- As part of the MNIT call center upgrade project, MinnesotaCare is now using the most recent hardware and software available, which is also used by other call centers within the state. Support for the new system is centralized within MNIT.
- The new CISCO software MinnesotaCare agents use is integrated with other systems to provide efficiencies. These efficiencies reduce the amount of time agents spend entering data and researching

case information across multiple systems. For example, if the MinnesotaCare phone system authenticates an applicant's or enrollee's identity,

- the case information is automatically filled in in our Customer Relations Management (CRM) system. This reduces the time agents spend entering data and checking other systems to get case information needed to assist callers.
- the phone agent is presented with a copy and the status of the most recent application or renewal form on file. This reduces the time agents spend researching the application status and locating a copy to review with the caller.

Future Improvements

DHS is planning the following initiatives to better serve consumers through enhanced efficiencies and effectiveness of the MinnesotaCare program helpline:

- **Providing ongoing customer service training.** Ongoing training for agents will help improve the consumer experience. This training will include web-based soft skills training, in-person training, workshops and presentations.
- **Developing additional performance standards.** Staff will develop performance standards and monitor each agent's performance to ensure standards are met. Implementing additional performance standards will confirm that agents are handling consumer calls efficiently and will identify areas requiring improvement.

IV. Disability Hub MN

Minnesota’s Disability Hub MN (formerly the Disability Linkage Line®) (1-866-333-2466) makes it easier for people with disabilities to understand their options, connect to solutions, and engage in possibilities. They do this through a network of experts, tools, and partnerships that bridge systems, and focus on helping people create their best life. The service is a collaborative partner in the statewide Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) initiative, the MinnesotaHelp Network®, which includes the Disability Hub MN, Senior LinkAge Line®, and LinkVet.

The Disability Hub MN operates during regular business hours, Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Disability Hub MN’s Options Counselors are certified by DHS prior to providing service. All Options Counselors are expected to become certified by the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS). In addition, staff who want to provide work and benefits planning services complete a one year national certification program to become a Community Partner Work Incentives Coordinator (CPWIC).

Disability Hub MN: Data and Evaluation

The Disability Hub MN uses an integrated automated call distribution and messaging system for all calls and chats. Calls are automatically routed to available Options Counselors located at six regional sites throughout the state. If an Options Counselor is not available, callers can choose to either wait or leave a voicemail message. Messages are returned within one business day.

At the end of 2016, the Disability Hub MN started using a new contact management tool that was created to incorporate a person-centered layout, more efficient work processes, and a better way to report outcomes.

In calendar year 2017, the Disability Hub MN staff handled 69,870 contacts, serving 26,507 people. The average hold time was 3:08 minutes.

| Total Contacts | People Served | Average time a person waits to speak with an agent |
|----------------|---------------|--|
| 69,870 | 26,507 | 3.08 |

Customer Needs and Inquiries

In 2017, customers asked most frequently about:

- Health benefits 48% of total contacts
- Public cash benefits 11%
- Housing/shelter 7%
- Benefits and work counseling (including work incentives) 7%

Hub staff provide education, navigation, coaching and support to their customers.

Customer Satisfaction

Customers participate in customer satisfaction surveys. In 2017 customers reported:

- 96% indicated the Disability Hub MN was helpful.
- 93% said they would recommend Disability Hub MN to someone else.
- Below are the outcomes customers reported on the satisfaction surveys:

The Disability Hub MN helped me (check all that apply):

- Understand my benefits and options 66%
- Resolve a problem 48%
- Make decisions about services 36%
- Connect with another organization 34%
- Other 16%
- Explore work or school/training 5%

Quality Improvement and Evaluations

In 2016-2017, the Disability Linkage Line went through a complete restructure that focused on aligning the work with strategic goals and person-centered principles. The strategic goals and realignment focused on culture, brand, structure, strategy, and systems.

In 2016, the mission, vision and values were updated after a strategic planning process that included extensive stakeholder feedback.

Culture

Built a unified HUB internal culture to have shared values and purpose.

Brand

- Launched the new Disability Hub MN brand August, 2017.

- Established web presence - www.disabilityhubmn.org - where people can find information about the Disability Hub MN and access the information to make informed decisions. Site highlights include:
 - *My Voice*: A place for people to share their ideas, their stories and feedback.
 - *My Options*: Learn more about options to create your best life. Information available about home, skills, health, money and work
 - *Hub Partners*: Tools and information to help professionals support people in creating their best lives. Includes access to a Work toolkit and Hub materials.
 - *My Tools*: Additional resources and sites such as, www.HB101.org, www.DB101.org, and www.MinnesotaHelp.info.

Structure

- Restructured the Disability Hub MN staffing and management roles to better support the growing system and service.
- Created a new Hub management team by adding the role of Hub Directors and increased the number of Operational Supervisors at each CIL to provide more hands on support and coaching for staff.
- The expanded management team coordinates daily work, in addition to focusing on strategic goals and implementation.
- Additional staff roles were also created to provide more opportunities for expanded staff advancement to improve retention.

Strategy

- Built out a statewide benefits planning service in partnership with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). Disability Hub now supports a benefits planning system that provides services for people working with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) statewide.
- Launched the Virtual Insight Panel. The Virtual Insight Panel (VIP) is a diverse group of Minnesotans who volunteer to shape and inform communications and programs for people with disabilities. VIP members provide insight through interviews, focus groups and surveys.

Technology

- Refined our new customer relations management systems to improve our data collection and better support Options Counselors in their daily work.
- Built new workflows within our Disability Benefits 101 tool to better support people in benefits planning activities.

Future Improvements

To better serve customers and support our staff, we are doing the following:

- Create a staff portal so staff can find the information they need to do their jobs. The staff portal will focus on plain language, and include an online operations manual and staff resources.
- Build a learning management system to make it easier to access and manage staff training and competencies. There will also be a certification process built for our business partners, such as future Benefits Coaches and waiver employment service providers.