



# Legislative Report

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## Health Care Consumer Support Helpline and Disability Hub MN Reports

### Health Care Administration

February 2020

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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 \$1,825.

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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:

- **Health Care Consumer Support line (formerly the 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<sup>®</sup>)**, 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. Health Care Consumer Support line

The Health Care Consumer Support line (HCCS) (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 HCCS 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. Consumers can call any time and use the self-service options to pay a premium or get automated information about their case.

#### Health Care Consumer Support: Data and Evaluation

The table shows HCCS data for 2018:

##### January–December 2018

Average monthly calls routed to the ACD line*	Calls connected to an agent	Average time a consumer waits to speak with an agent
19,047	68%	13 minutes, 48 seconds

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

The table shows HCCS program helpline data for 2019:

##### January–December 2019

Average monthly calls routed to the ACD line*	Calls connected to an agent	Average time a consumer waits to speak with an agent
40,025	68%	10 minutes, 29 seconds

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.  
 HCCS also uses historical data to inform call center staffing levels, especially during critical times of high volume, such as renewal season.
- Scheduling agents for different shifts to allow longer hours of operation.** To provide nine hours of phone coverage, HCCS assigns agents to different shifts to allow for coverage at all times.

**Note:** In addition to calling the HCCS, 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

## 2018 and 2019 Improvements

In early 2017, HCCS conducted a continuous improvement project for our program helpline. The objective was to increase the monthly percentage of HCCS 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.

HCCS continues to review Helpline performance from a continuous improvement perspective. Additional improvements that were implemented in 2018 and 2019 include:

- **Ongoing customer service training.** Ongoing training for agents improves the consumer experience. This training includes web-based soft skills training, in-person training, workshops and presentations.
- **Expanded performance standards.** Additional performance standards were implemented. Staff monitor each agent's performance to ensure standards are met. Implementing additional performance standards ensures agents are handling consumer calls efficiently and will highlight future opportunities for improvement.
- **Consolidation of the MinnesotaCare Program Help Line and the MHCP Member Help Desk.** In June 2019, the MinnesotaCare Program Help Line and the MHCP Member Help Desk merged to bring consumer-facing work together. The result is customer service that encompasses the consumer's entire experience. Information about eligibility enrollment and case management, managed care enrollment, and education of covered services is now available at a single point of contact. Additionally, the merge provides additional agility by increasing volume of available agents ready to manage calls for both MinnesotaCare Program and MHCP Member calls.
- **Enhanced IVR Messages.** Messaging within the IVR system was refined to improve clarity of information. Customer and agent experience was used to identify messages that could be improved.
- **Custom Hold Messages.** Hold messages were customized to provide the most valuable information for consumers. This allows consumers to potentially receive the information they were calling for prior to speaking with an agent, choose to self-serve, or continue to hold for additional help.

## Future Improvements

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

- **Workforce Management Tools:** Utilization of workforce management tools will allow us to continue to improve our ability to predict phone call volume and optimize staffing levels.

## IV. Information for Disability Hub MN™

Minnesota's Disability Hub MN™ (866-333-2466 and [disabilityhubmn.org](http://disabilityhubmn.org)) is a one-stop information service for people with disabilities. It makes it easier for them to understand their options, connect to solutions and engage in possibilities. The Hub does this through a network of experts, tools and partnerships that bridges systems and focuses on helping people create their best life.

The service is a collaborative partner in the statewide Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) initiative and 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. Hub options counselors are certified by DHS before providing service. All options counselors are expected to become certified by the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS). In addition, staff who provide work- and benefits-planning services complete a one year, national certification program to become a Community Partner Work Incentives Coordinator (CPWIC).

The Hub service consists of:

- **Information, referral and assistance (IR&A):** The art, science and practice of bringing people and services together (which is an AIRS definition)
- **Options counseling:** Person-centered, interactive, decision-support process whereby people receive help to make informed long-term support choices in the context of their own preferences, strengths and values. (which is an Aging & Disability Resource Centers [ADRC] definition)
- **Follow along:** Deeper-dive options counseling focuses on goals driven by the person to live his/her best life, his/her way. This service also offers the opportunity to build a 1 on 1 relationship, identify needs through an ongoing discovery process and support to strengthen a person's self-direction and advocacy skills to meet his/her needs and goals.

### Data and evaluation

Disability Hub MN™ uses an integrated/automated contact distribution and messaging system for all calls and online chats. Calls and chats are automatically routed to available options counselors located at six regional sites throughout the state. If an options counselor is not available, callers and chatters can choose to wait, leave a voicemail message or send an email. Staff respond to messages within one business day.

People also can reach Disability Hub MN via email, using [info@disabilityhubmn.org](mailto:info@disabilityhubmn.org) or participate in a chat through the following sites:

- [DisabilityHubMN.org](http://DisabilityHubMN.org)
- [DB101.org](http://DB101.org)
- [HB101.org](http://HB101.org)
- [MinnesotaHelp.info](http://MinnesotaHelp.info).



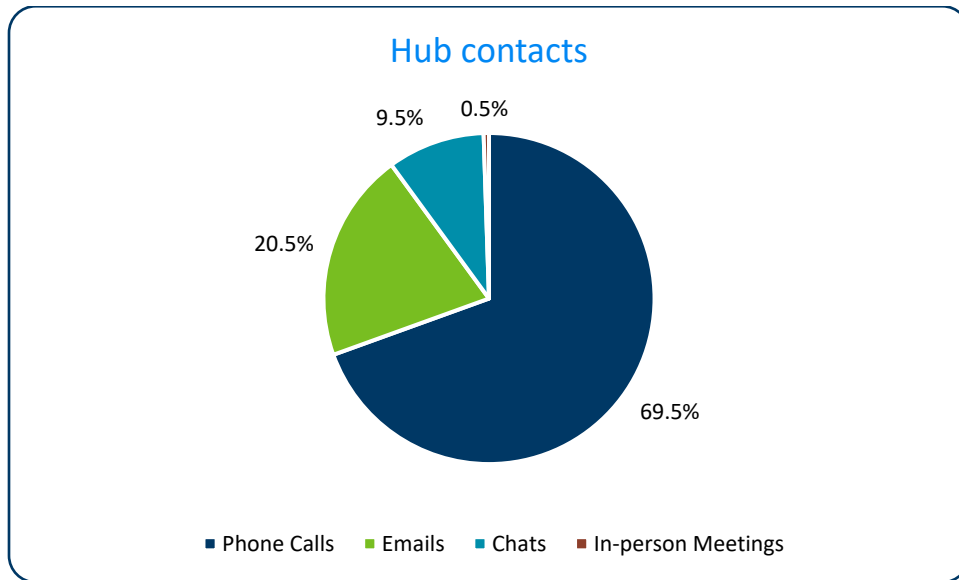
**2018**

Call volume in calendar year 2018, Disability Hub MN™ staff members handled 84,234 contacts, serving 28,336 people. The average hold time was 1.28 minutes.

Table 2: Call volume (CY 2018)

Total contacts	People served	Average time a person waits to get connected to an agent
84,234	28,336	1.28

Figure 1: Hub contacts (CY 2018)



Of all the interactions with Disability Hub MN, customers needed help understanding, accessing and managing the following:

- Health benefits, 45 percent
- Public cash benefits, 12 percent
- Housing/shelter, 10 percent
- Benefits and work counseling (including work incentives), 7 percent.

Of total contacts to Disability Hub MN, options counselors assisted people in the following ways:

- Educate/navigation, 40 percent
- Coaching/support, 20 percent
- Referrals, 20 percent
- Sent materials/forms/forms assistance, 8 percent
- Enrolled/disenrolled, 3 percent

## 2019

In calendar year 2019, the Disability Hub MN™ staff handled 84,566 contacts, serving 28,851 people. The average hold time was 1:52 minutes.

Total Contacts	People Served	Average time a person waits to get connected to an agent
84,566	28,851	1:52 minutes

Incoming Hub Contacts:

Phone Calls	Emails	Chats	In-Person Meetings
71.3%	10.4%	17.9%	0.5%

### Most Frequent Topics

Customers needed help understanding, accessing and managing the following:

- Health Benefits 43%
- Public Cash Benefits 13%
- Housing/Shelter 10%
- Benefits and Work Counseling (including work incentives) 2%

### Most Frequent Ways the Hub helped

Options counselors assist people in the following ways:

- Education/Navigation 44%
- Coaching/Support/Advocacy 21%
- Referrals 18%

### Quality Improvements

- Continued to expand Minnesota’s capacity to provide benefits planning
  - Fourteen people have received their benefits coach certification
  - Started training 245D licensed waiver employment service providers
- Strategic outreach events for:
  - Tribes
  - Other underserved populations
  - Families
- Launched a family initiative to service families with children
  - Strengthen family connections and support
- Expand Customer Feedback channels
  - Completed testing a phone and chat based customer satisfaction survey to capture feedback on the Hub service.

# Customer satisfaction surveys

## 2018

Of the customer satisfaction surveys completed in 2018:

- 95 percent of respondents indicated the Disability Hub MN was helpful.
- 92 percent of respondents said they would recommend Disability Hub MN to someone else.

Customers reported the following outcomes of the Hub’s service on their survey:

Table 3: Responses to how “Disability Hub MN helped me”

Category	Percentage of respondents
Understand my benefits and options	66
Resolve a problem	45
Make decisions about services	36
Connect with another organization	41
Other	11
Explore work/school training	7

## 2018 achievements

In 2018, the HUB saw a:

- 21 percent increase in total number of contacts
- 7 percent increase in people served
- 45 percent decrease in hold time

The expanded follow along service

- Served 191 clients
- Average eight hours of assistance from Hub staff per client served

Overall, we expanded our channels of service to include chat support for HB101 and expanded Minnesota’s capacity to provide benefits planning by:

- Serving 792 clients with benefits planning
- Creating a credentialing process for benefit coaches

## 2019

Of the customer satisfaction surveys completed in 2019:

- 96% indicated the Disability Hub MN was helpful.
- 98% said they would recommend Disability Hub MN to someone else.

Customers reported the following outcomes of the Hub's service on their survey:

- The Disability Hub MN helped me:
  - Understand my benefits and options 63%
  - Resolve a problem 43%
  - Make decisions about services 40%
  - Connect with another organization 33%
  - Other 14%
  - Explore work or school/training 5%

## Future Improvements

- **Update and expand online tools to help people explore and plan for their life**
  - Launch updated Disability Hub MN ([disabilityhubmn.org](http://disabilityhubmn.org)) website with a new Family member portal
  - Launch updated Disability Benefits ([db101.org](http://db101.org)) website to make it more user friendly
- **Launch Chartering the Life Course**

A collection of planning materials to help people with disabilities and their families think about what they need to know at any age or stage of life.
- **Improve staff onboarding and development opportunities**

By building out a learning management system, our goal is to become more efficient at having trained, competent staff to support the Hub's service and offer staff development and advancement opportunities.
- **Implement continuous quality improvement priorities defined by external assessment**
  - Simplify our Customer Relations Management (CRM) contact tracking system (content – to make it easier for staff to use and collect essential data)
  - Improve reliability of data