

Oregon's 211info Improves Usability for People with Disabilities

New indicators make accessible services easier to find

According to the State Independent Living Council survey, 24% of people with disabilities in Oregon could not find a general health provider and 30% could not find a mental health provider that met their needs. They reported barriers such as accessible office spaces, accessible transportation, and disability knowledge of health care providers. 211info offers the public a searchable database of more than 2,500 health and social service organizations, covering all 36 Oregon counties. As part of its commitment to equity, 211info provides space to report accessibility features of the services listed. However, the indicators were very general and did not offer meaningful information. Individuals with disabilities would find it difficult to know whether an agency could accommodate their needs. Also, more than half of agencies in the database (53%) had no accessibility information at all.



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Basic Needs

The Oregon Office on Disability and Health worked with 211info to replace the existing accessibility fields with new indicators. With our Advisory Council, we developed a set of 8 indicators that fit into the existing 211info framework and were more meaningful to people with disabilities:

Alternative communication formats
Staff trained in disability awareness
Wheelchair access: full
Accessible parking: private lot

Virtual service options
Accessible restrooms
Wheelchair access: partial
Accessible parking: nearby public/street

We worked with 211info to convert information from the old indicators to the new. We also partnered with Blue Path at Disability Action Center Northwest and the Northwest ADA Center to create a guide for agencies in the database to self-report accessibility features using the new indicators. With 211info, we developed outreach communications and instructions for agencies to update their accessibility information in the database.

In February 2023, 211info began to pilot test the new accessibility fields, self-report guide, and agency update process. The pilot area aligns with our Linkage Demonstration Project, targeting the 267 agencies in five counties of rural southwest Oregon. The pilot will end by July 2023, and we will review lessons learned before going statewide.

This project with 211info aims to increase the number of agencies that report accessibility features. It also improves the usability of accessibility information that is available to the public. Awareness of accessible services breaks down some existing barriers and makes it easier for people with disabilities to maintain their health and get services when needed.