

MinnesotaCare Program Helpline and Disability Linkage Line[®] Reports

**Department of Human Services
Health Care Administration**

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1. 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 the use of DHS' helplines.

- **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 Linkage Line[®]**, including evaluation of services, recent initiatives to improve customer service and plans to enhance the helpline.

2. MinnesotaCare Program Helpline

The MinnesotaCare program helpline – (651) 297-3862 or (800) 657-3672) – uses various phone 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.

The MinnesotaCare program helpline extended its phone hours in September 2013, from an eight-hour day to a 10-hour day (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) in order to prepare for the October 1, 2013 statewide launch of MNsure. From January through May of 2014, the helpline maintained these extended hours. Review of peak call times illustrated a low number of calls were received during the last hour of operation. As a result of this review, DHS reduced the hours of operation for the helpline in June 2014 to 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

MinnesotaCare Program Helpline: Data and Evaluation

Here are the monthly averages for the MinnesotaCare program helpline phone data for 2014:

January 2014 to December 2014

Calls routed to the ACD line	Calls connected to an agent	Time a consumer waits to speak with an agent
30,915	71%	7 minutes 34 seconds

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

- **Anticipating consumer calls.** This provides agents with the ability to plan and ensures that calls are promptly handle within the predetermined performance standard.
- **Providing phone coverage for hours of operation.** In order to provide nine hours of phone coverage, MinnesotaCare operations runs two shifts, with start times separated by one hour. Agents are assigned to an ongoing shift to allow for coverage at all times.
- **Scheduling times to take lunch and breaks.** This information allows agents to adequately provide phone coverage during the lunch and break hours at busy times during the day.

Note: In addition to calling the MinnesotaCare program helpline, consumers may visit the MinnesotaCare office in person to make MinnesotaCare premium payments and can meet with an agent if they want to between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

Recent Improvements

The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and Voice Over Internet Protocols (VOIP) upgrade was completed in August 2014 which allows DHS to upgrade the telephone platform in 2015. This upgrade will:

- allow enhanced call monitoring.
- provide statistics to improve quality assurance and reporting.
- permit the incorporation of new technology such as Calabrio, which will allow us to start accepting health care applications by phone in early 2015.

Future Improvements

The initiatives below are efforts DHS is planning to better serve consumers through enhanced efficiencies and effectiveness of the MinnesotaCare program helpline.

- **Calabrio call recording.**
This new web application will be used to record a consumer's application for health coverage as it is completed over the phone with an agent. The ability to complete applications over the phone will provide Minnesotans with another option to apply for health coverage and receive real-time results. In addition, this will satisfy the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) which requires a phone application in accordance with the Affordable Care Act (ACA). DHS expects to begin piloting the phone application in early 2015.
- **Upgrade Customer Relations Management (CRM) contact tracking system.**
The new tracking system will replace the MinnesotaCare program helpline's current contact tracking system. This change in tracking mechanism will ensure alignment with the technology used by the MNsure call center to streamline services provided to consumers.

- **Upgrade Quality Management system.**
This upgrade provides the ability to measure quality assurance and establish call recording of consumer calls. Analyses of these calls will assist in evaluating and developing staff training to enhance agents' customer service skills.
- **Upgrade Workforce Management system.**
This upgrade provides the ability to efficiently and accurately anticipate and forecast agent staffing needs, so the helpline is available to effectively handle consumer calls.
- **Upgrade telephony platform.**
This upgrade improves technological tools for phones and agent desktop application.
- **Provide ongoing customer service training.** Ongoing training for agents will help improve consumer experience when calling into the helpline. This training will include in-person training, workshops and presentations.
- **Develop performance standards.**
Because DHS is establishing new systems and programs, the previous performance standards are no longer applicable. Staff will develop performance standards and monitor each agent's performance to ensure standards are met. This will confirm that agents are handling consumer calls efficiently and will identify areas requiring improvement.

3. Disability Linkage Line[®]

The Disability Linkage Line[®] is a free, statewide information and assistance service available at (866) 333-2466. Formed as part of the federal Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, the Disability Linkage Line[®] is one partner in the MinnesotaHelp Network[®]. Other partners include the Senior LinkAge Line[®] and Veterans Linkage Line[™].

The Disability Linkage Line[®] operates Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Voicemails are accepted 24/7. Trained, certified options counselors answer calls. DHS certifies options counselors to provide the service. DHS also needs to certify options counselors through the Counselors in Information and Referral Services (CIRS) by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS).

Disability Linkage Line[®]: Data and Evaluation

The Disability Linkage Line[®] and the other partners in the MinnesotaHelp Network[®] use a 24/7 integrated Automated Call Distribution and Messaging System (ACD) called Revation for all calls. The system triages calls to send callers to the appropriate subject matter experts or options counselors during special initiatives or with other requests for information. Calls are automatically routed to available options counselors located at five regional sites throughout the state. If a counselor is not immediately available, callers can choose to either wait in queue or leave a voicemail message. A counselor will respond to messages within one business day.

Before taking calls, options counselors undergo rigorous training in call center services as well as in the wide range of disability-related topics. The pre-service and regularly scheduled training for current counselors continues to expand as the Disability Linkage Line[®] serves as first point of contact for disability services.

Here is the Disability Linkage Line[®] data for 2014:

January 2014 to December 2014

Total Inquiries	Consumers Served	Wait time
65, 299	29, 128	2 minutes 21 seconds

Customer Needs and Inquiries

Most frequently asked questions in 2014:

- Health insurance coverage (n=50,478)
- Public benefits (n=7,905)
- Care transitions (long-term care services, transition from nursing facility, hospital or other institution). (n=4,969)
- Financial assistance (n=3,051)
- Housing/shelter (2,777)
- Legal/advocacy (n=2,753)
- Individual and family supports (2,389)
- Employment/volunteering (n=2,188)

Disability Benefits 101 Talk to an Expert Services

Disability Linkage Line[®] provides *Talk to an Expert* services through Disability Benefits 101 (DB101 is available at www.db101.org). Live chat is available during Disability Linkage Line[®] operating hours. In 2014, options counselors responded to **1,956** Disability Benefits 101 chats and emails.

Customer Satisfaction

Callers participate in customer satisfaction surveys. Of those who responded

- 97 percent indicated the Disability Linkage Line[®] was helpful.
- 94 percent said they learned something new from the Disability Linkage Line[®].
- 96 percent said they would recommend Disability Linkage Line[®] to a friend.

Current Initiatives

Health Care

In 2014 people with disabilities were automatically enrolled into a Special Needs BasicCare (SNBC) plan with the choice to opt out. The Disability Linkage Line[®] served as the point of contact for questions in either opting out or choosing a plan. The Disability Linkage Line[®] also provides support for Medicare Part D enrollment and for Medical Assistance for Employment Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD).

Of the **50,478 health insurance counseling topics** discussed with caller:

- 18 percent were related to MA-EPD.
- 17 percent were related to SNBC (n=8,575).
- 16 percent were related to Medicare Part D (n=8,126).

Economic Advancement

The Disability Linkage Line[®] provides support to people interested in exploring work to increase income or access to health care. In 2014 **phone counselors discussed work 3,465 times** with callers. Of those, the top five topics included

- Disability Benefits 101 (n=1,277)
- Work Incentives (n=566)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (n=493)
- General employment questions (n=222)
- Work force center (n=150)

Community Living

The Disability Linkage Line[®] is embedded into DHS community living initiatives, providing follow-up for Moving Home Minnesota, Pre-Admission Screening and Return to Community.

Follow-up is provided by community living consultants who connect with people identified through these initiatives to help make CHOICE a part of their lives.

- Community membership
- Health, wellness and safety
- Own place to live
- Important long-term relationships
- Control over supports
- Employment earnings and stable income

In addition to checking on the life domains, the community living consultants ensure services are being provided and alert DHS to quality concerns. The Disability Linkage Line[®] provides ongoing assistance/follow-up as requested.

The Disability Linkage Line[®] community living consultants provided more than 4,000 contacts to people through outreach and follow-ups.

Quality Improvement and Evaluations

To ensure a high-quality level of services for customers calling the Disability Linkage Line[®], staff:

- Monitor call center data available through a “real time” dashboard, including agent availability, average hold time, calls handled, hang ups, call time and voicemails.
- Use a call evaluation form modeled after national 2-1-1 standards. Together, staff and supervisors create an action plan to enhance performance and to identify areas where staff excel and can serve as models for colleagues.
- Review recorded calls to ensure staff are answering calls correctly and managing them according to protocols.
- Record in detail each contact through a client tracking system (Resource House) that works with MinnesotaHelp.info[®], giving access to resource information on over 45,000 community services.
- Monitor call center staff availability to answer calls promptly.
- Contract with a national work and benefits expert to develop a quality framework and provide quality assurance activities.
- Participate in ongoing training that includes in-person training, workshops and presentations.
- Expand the Disability Linkage Line[®] network to include focused specialties, e.g., community living consultants and work and benefits specialists.

Future Improvements

The initiatives below are efforts to better serve customers.

- **Continue to support integration among technology.**
Through funding from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the online tools the Disability Linkage Line[®] uses will seek opportunities for integration so that an options counselor can go directly from the client-tracking tool to other tools to improve response time and efficiency.
- **Develop and embed discussion guides to build Disability Linkage Line[®] call interventions around quality-of-life indicators.**
 - Implement triage questions to build stronger community-living interventions that better meet the needs of the individual and to provide quality assurance and detailed reporting of the needs of Disability Linkage Line[®] consumers.
 - Insert conversation guides within technology tools to support the agent in providing consistent service throughout the system
- **Complete Certified Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) training.**
DHS began the CWIC training of the work and benefits specialist in 2014 and will complete the training in 2015. DHS trains the work and benefits specialists to empower people to make informed choices about work and to support working as a successful transition to self-sufficiency.