



Disability Health Action Network

2025 – 2026 Action Plan

Disability Health Action Network (DHAN)

The **Disability Health Action Network (DHAN)** is a statewide collaborative initiative by The Arc of Pennsylvania, committed to addressing inequities in the disability community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing the health and wellbeing of individuals with disabilities in Pennsylvania. DHAN’s key objectives are to promote equitable access to quality healthcare, foster effective communication between stakeholders, and enhance overall health outcomes for people with disabilities. We recognize the unique challenges faced by this community and strive to address them through collaborative strategies. By forging partnerships among physical/oral/behavioral healthcare professionals and stakeholders, disability stakeholders, advocacy groups, government agencies, researchers, and community organizations, DHAN fortifies our collective ability to address the multifaceted healthcare needs of individuals with disabilities.

Table of Contents

Disability Health Action Network (DHAN)	2
DHAN Purpose Statement	3
DHAN Key Objectives	3
Foster effective communication between stakeholders	3
Promote equitable access to healthcare	3
Enhance overall health outcomes.....	3
DHAN Grant Tasks	4
DHAN Advisory Committee and Network.....	4
The Arc of Pennsylvania and Media Specialists.....	4
Public Health Management Corporation	4
Temple University.....	4
DHAN Action Plan Goals	5
DHAN Advisory Committee Member Organizations	Back

DHAN Purpose Statement

The Disability Health Action Network (DHAN) is a statewide collaborative initiative committed to advancing the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities in Pennsylvania through disability equity of physical/oral/behavioral healthcare and disability inclusiveness in emergency preparedness planning.

DHAN Key Objectives

Funded through a grant by the Pennsylvania Department of Health through the CDC's National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, DHAN's key objectives are to:

[Foster effective communication between stakeholders.](#)

The power of communication and collaboration has the potential to change health outcomes for those with disabilities. DHAN will facilitate partnerships among physical/oral/behavioral healthcare professionals and stakeholders, disability stakeholders, advocacy groups, government agencies, researchers, and community organizations to create a network that strengthens our collective ability to address the multifaceted needs of individuals with disabilities.

[Promote equitable access to healthcare.](#)

DHAN seeks to promote equitable access to healthcare by dismantling barriers that impede people with disabilities from accessing quality healthcare services. DHAN aims to create an action plan that addresses issues such as physical accessibility, communication barriers, and discrimination. Through collaboration with healthcare providers, policymakers, and advocacy organizations, DHAN will foster a community that is committed to creating an inclusive healthcare environment that promotes respect and optimal health outcomes for all.

[Enhance overall health outcomes.](#)

By completing key objectives 1 and 2, DHAN will enhance overall health outcomes for people with disabilities in PA. By prioritizing research, education, and innovative approaches, DHAN aims to significantly elevate the quality of healthcare for this community, empowering individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

DHAN Grant Tasks

The Pennsylvania Department of Health grant includes the following tasks.

DHAN Advisory Committee and Network

- Form a Disability Health Action Network (DHAN) and advisory committee to forge strategic partnerships and mobilize action to address inequities in the disability community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and advance the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities in Pennsylvania.
- Review data and research on the existing infrastructure to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement in addressing the unique needs of the disability community.
- Brainstorm systems solutions, ideas and innovations for inequities faced by people with disabilities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Facilitate discussions on building, leveraging, and expanding systems infrastructure for COVID-19 prevention and control among populations that are at higher risk and underserved.

The Arc of Pennsylvania and Media Specialists

- Develop new resources and enhance existing ones to provide information in multiple formats to accommodate various disabilities.
- Coordinate the development of a comprehensive communication plan to promote awareness of the new and enhanced resources.

Public Health Management Corporation

- Assess existing infrastructure, including gaps and opportunities, for addressing the unique needs of the disability community in current and future pandemics and emergencies.
- Conduct literature review to assess the extent to which current preparedness efforts in the U.S. include disability considerations.

Temple University

- Review and assess existing Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs) and Community Health Assessments to determine the extent to which people with disabilities are represented, using consistent criteria to document inclusion or omission.
- Conduct structured data analysis to identify representation gaps, extract key findings, and highlight systemic barriers impacting people with disabilities.
- Translate findings into evidence-based advocacy tools to support DHAN-led efforts targeting policymakers, healthcare providers, and medical equipment manufacturers with actionable recommendations for inclusive and equitable healthcare reforms.

DHAN Action Plan Goals

As a statewide collaborative (including disability advocates, physical/oral/behavioral healthcare representatives, governmental agencies, insurance reps, researchers, and others), the Disability Health Action Network establishes the following goals for 2025-2026.



- Resource Hub:** By August 31, 2025, launch a Disability Health Resource Hub with links to existing resources for professionals, families and individuals, and Institutions of Higher Education.
- Access:** By June 30, 2026, create a current resource about telehealth information that ensures people with disabilities and their families have access to information on telehealth services, accommodations, and policy allowances.
- Qualified Healthcare Personnel:** By June 30, 2026, curate existing curricula to be introduced for use in universities, hospital networks, and other educational settings. Create a communication strategy introducing the healthcare community to the disability community and why health equity matters.
- Voices & Policy:** By June 30, 2026, advance the reactivation of Governor’s Cabinet and Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities to increase involvement of people with disabilities, their families, and caregivers in policy making and healthcare decisions and development of systems at the beginning of their process.
- Voices & Policy:** By June 30, 2026, advocate for the Governor to formally urge the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) to designate people with disabilities as a Medically Underserved Population (MUP).
- Data and Research:** By June 30, 2026, identify data sources that currently exist within the healthcare system as relates to individuals with disabilities in Pennsylvania.

Member Organizations:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Disability Rights Pennsylvania

Geisinger Health

Good Measures

Temple University, Institute on Disabilities, University Center of Excellence
on Developmental Disabilities

National Institute of Rural and Minority Health (NIRMH)

Office of the Governor

PA Coalition for Oral Health

PA Department of Human Services/Office of Developmental Programs

Penn Dental

Pennsylvania Centers for Independent Living (PCIL) *

Pennsylvania Department of Health

Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC)

Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA)

Social Impact, LLC

Special Olympics Pennsylvania *

SPIN, Inc.

The Arc of Philadelphia

The Arc of Pennsylvania *

The Arc of Susquehanna *

The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania

The National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices

UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh *

William Penn Human Services

Woods Services, Inc.

(* Indicates that representation included individuals with disabilities)

Disability Health Action Network is an initiative by The Arc of Pennsylvania funded through a grant by the Pennsylvania Department of Health through the CDC's National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved. (2024-2025)



Pennsylvania
Department of Health

