

MinnesotaCare Program Helpline and Disability Linkage Line Reports

Health Care Administration

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For more information contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Health Care Administration
P.O. Box 69083
St. Paul, MN 55164-0983
(651) 431-2106



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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, reporting on the consumer experience in the use of helplines. This report contains information about the Department of Human Services’

- **MinnesotaCare program helpline**, including background on methods used to evaluate the helpline, 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.

II. MinnesotaCare Program Helpline

For most of 2013, the MinnesotaCare program helpline used a 24/7 Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system for all its incoming calls. Consumers were able to navigate through the IVR system for general program information as well as information specific to their case. They also could choose to have their call routed to the MinnesotaCare Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) line and be assisted by an agent. Agents were available between 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Effective September 16, 2013, the MinnesotaCare program helpline extended its phone hours to 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in order to prepare for the October 1, 2013 statewide launch of MNsure, Minnesota’s healthcare exchange marketplace. In anticipation of the forecasted increase in call volume and to ensure adequate and prompt services for consumers, the MinnesotaCare program helpline also hired additional agents.

III. MinnesotaCare Program Helpline: Data and Evaluation

The MinnesotaCare program helpline phone data from January 2013 to September 2013 reflects the timeframe prior to MNsure implementation. During this period, the MinnesotaCare program helpline

- received an **average of 70,689 IVR calls per month**,
- with a **monthly average of 22,773 calls routed to the ACD line**.
 - Of those ACD calls, a **monthly average of 65% connected to an agent**.
 - The average time a consumer waited before speaking to an agent was **16.10 minutes**.

Monthly Averages, January 2013 to September 2013

IVR Calls	Calls routed ACD line	Calls connected to agent	Wait time
70, 689	22, 773	65%	16.10 minutes

Please note that from September 12, 2012 through October 1, 2013, the MinnesotaCare program helpline phone hours were reduced in order to process applications within the statutorily required timeline. This reduction resulted in longer wait times, a greater number of dropped calls, and increased duplicative calls to the helpline.

Since the implementation of MNsure in October 2013 and through the end of December 2013, the MinnesotaCare program helpline

- received an **average of 36,150 ACD calls per month.**
 - Of those ACD calls, **an average of 86% connected to an agent.**
 - The average time a consumer waited in the call queue before speaking to an agent was **2.06 minutes.**
 - Received an average of 42,095 IVR calls monthly, a significant decrease from the prior average of 70,689.

The decrease in IVR calls resulted from changes in IVR functionality. With January 1, 2014 program changes, as well as October 1 implementation of a new eligibility system, the existing IVR required updating in order to provide accurate information. The IVR informational menus and options as well as 24 hour per day availability were discontinued, while phone line hours and staffing were increased.

Monthly Averages, October 2013 to December 2013

IVR Calls	Calls routed ACD line	Calls connected to agent	Wait time
42,095	36,150	86%	2.06 minutes

To ensure optimum services for consumers calling the MinnesotaCare program helpline, staff considers and monitors several factors daily:

- The number of agents required daily to handle anticipated consumer calls. This provides the ability to plan and ensures that helpline agents can promptly handle consumer calls within the predetermined performance standard.
- The number of agents available to provide coverage for open hours of the phone line. MinnesotaCare Operations runs two shifts of staff with start times separated by two hours in order to provide ten hours of phone coverage. Staff members are apportioned to an ongoing shift to allow for acceptable levels of coverage at all times.
- The scheduled time an agent is to take lunch and breaks; this allows staff to adequately provide phone coverage during the lunch hours and busy times during the day.
- Each agent’s performance. This information helps staff to ensure availability and to confirm that agents are answering and handling consumer calls efficiently and effectively.

Note: In addition to calling the MinnesotaCare program helpline, consumers may visit the MinnesotaCare office in person to make both MNsure and MinnesotaCare/Qualified Health Plan premium payments and/or meet with an agent between 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. each working day.

Recent Improvements

- The MinnesotaCare program helpline enhanced its Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system effective September 16, 2013 to better serve consumers calling regarding their coverage in relation to MNsure as well as general inquiries.

- The new IVR system streamlined the call flow for consumers calling the MinnesotaCare program helpline by routing the call directly to the appropriate agent based on the menu options selected. This change in call flow warranted the incorporation of agent tier levels in call handling. This process improves customer services and provides prompt handling of consumer calls.
- The previous automated IVR system was disabled in early November 2013 as its functionalities did not align with the MNsure system.

Future Improvements

The initiatives below are efforts to enhance efficiencies and effectiveness of the MinnesotaCare program helpline to better serve customers.

- **Upgrade Customer Relations Management (CRM) contact tracking system.**
The new 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.**
Provides the ability to measure quality assurance and establish call recording of consumer calls. These analyses will assist in evaluating and developing staff training to enhance agents' customer service skills.
- **Upgrade Workforce Management system.**
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**
Improves technological tools for phones and agent desktop application.
- **Provide ongoing customer service training for agents, including in-person training, workshops and presentations.**

IV. Disability Linkage Line®

Disability Linkage Line® is a free, statewide information and referral source for disability-related questions available at 1-866-333-2466. 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 during regular business hours, Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Voicemails are accepted 24/7. Trained, certified options counselors answer calls. Options counselors are certified by DHS to provide the service and, in addition, need to be certified in Information and Referral Services (CIRS) by the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS).

V. Disability Linkage Line®: Data and Evaluation

The Disability Linkage Line® and the other partners in the MinnesotaHelp Network use a 24/7 integrated call distribution and messaging system (ACD) called Revation for all incoming calls. The system provides triage to send callers to appropriate subject matter experts or options counselors during special initiatives or other requests for information. All callers speak with an options counselor either by waiting in queue or leaving a voicemail message that is returned. Each call is automatically routed to available options counselors located at five regional sites throughout the state.

In calendar year 2013, the Disability Linkage Line® received 44,313 inquiries, serving 23,173 people. The average hold time was 2.42 minutes.

Monthly Averages, Calendar year 2013

Total Inquiries	Clients Served	Wait time
44,313	23, 173	2.42 minutes

Prior to live assistance with callers, options counselors undergo rigorous training in call center services as well as the wide range of disability-related topics. The pre-service training will continue to expand as Disability Linkage Line® continues to serve as a point of first contact for disability services.

Customer Needs and Inquiries

In 2013, callers asked most frequently about

- health insurance coverage (n=37,191)
- public benefits (n=4,858)
- housing/shelter (2,748)
- financial assistance (n=2,724)
- legal/advocacy (n=2,448)
- individual and family supports (2,208)
- employment/volunteering (n=1,461)

Customer Satisfaction

Callers participate in customer satisfaction surveys. Of those who responded

- 99% said they would recommend Disability Linkage Line® to a friend;
- 96% reported that the information they received was helpful;
- 88% of respondents noted they connected directly to an options counselor; and
- 9% left a voicemail messages and these calls were returned within one business day.

Current Initiatives

Health Care

In 2013 people with disabilities were automatically enrolled into a Special Needs BasicCare (SNBC) plan or had the choice to opt out. Disability Linkage Line® served as the point of contact for questions in either opting out or choosing a plan. Disability Linkage Line® also provides support for Medicare Part D enrollment. Of the 37,191 health insurance counseling topics discussed with callers

- 21% were related to SNBC (n=7,792)
- 19% were related to Medicare Part D (n=7,116).

Economic Advancement

Disability Linkage Line® provides support to people interested in exploring work to increase income or access to health care. In 2013 phone counselors discussed work 2,843 times with callers. Of those, the top five topics included

- Disability Benefits 101 (n=1,047)
- Work Incentives (n=545)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (n=280)
- Work force center (n=188)
- General employment questions (n=143)

There were also 4,566 topics related to Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD).

“Talk to an Expert”

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 2013, Options counselors responded to 1,394 db101.org chats and emails.

Community Living

The Disability Linkage Line® is embedded into DHS community living initiatives - First Contact (started 11/1/13) and Moving Home Minnesota (late fall, 2013).

The Disability Linkage Line® specialists provided strategic outreach and follow up services to about 752 people who left an institution.

Quality Improvement and Evaluations

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

- Monitors call center data available through a “real time” dashboard - agent availability, average hold time, calls handled, hang ups, call time, and voicemails.
- Reviews recorded calls to ensure calls are answered correctly and handled according to protocols.
- Records in detail each contact through a client tracking system (Resource House) which works with MinnesotaHelp.info giving access to information on over 16,000 programs.
- Monitors call center staff availability to answer calls promptly.
- Streamlined access to important benefit information through the state MN-ITs system to minimize transfer errors.
- Contracts with a national work and benefits specialist to develop quality framework and provide quality assurance activities.
- Provides ongoing training including in-person training, workshops, and presentations and continue to expand and implement pre-service training.

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 utilized by the Disability Linkage Line® will be integrated so that an options counselor can go directly from the client tracking tool (Referral) into other important tools such as Disability Benefits 101.
- **Complete a comprehensive web-based, pre-service training program.**
- **Expand the Disability Linkage Line® network to include specialist positions around Community Living and Work and Benefits.**
- **Develop and embed agent discussion framework to build Disability Linkage Line® call interventions around quality of life indicators.**

- Implement triage questions to build stronger community living interventions.
- Insert conversation guides within technology tools to support the agent in providing consistent service throughout the system.