

GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS
Program Year 2012

GOAL: “To reduce geographic barriers to accessing health and health care for the people of New Hampshire”

New Hampshire’s beautiful rivers, mountain ranges, and lakes define our lives and the history of our towns. They can also create barriers between our residents and the activities and services that improve their health. Many of us rely on public transportation or family and friends to get us to and from health care visits, food shopping, work, and family and community events. Access to oral, mental, primary and specialty health care can be a significant challenge, whether it’s a few blocks or several hours away. The Endowment has approached the issue of geographic barriers by focusing on both ends of the problem – seeking better ways of moving the people to services and seeking better ways of getting the services to where people can access them.



Investment to date: \$3,946,267
Number of grants to date: 74¹

Theme Outcomes

- A comprehensive and sustainable body of science- and evidence-based knowledge about geographic barriers in New Hampshire, New England, and in the United States
- A health system in New Hampshire in which geography is not a limiting factor in health or access to health care
- Strengthened State and local policies that reduce the impact of geographic barriers to health and access to health care in New Hampshire

Theme Strategies

- Supporting the development and dissemination of data/information/best practices about geographic barriers in New Hampshire and in the United States
- Supporting communication, education, and advocacy efforts to increase awareness of and action on issues of geographic access
- Developing and implementing new models, such as in transportation and telehealth, to reduce the impact of geographic barriers on health and access to health care
- Fostering collaboration among key transportation and health stakeholders to increase cost-effective geographic access
- Supporting efforts to create State and local policies that will reduce the impact of geographic barriers on health and access to health care
- Building relationships that inform and strengthen national and local strategies and leverage knowledge and resources to reduce the impact of geographic barriers on health and access to health

¹ Due to recategorization of some early Endowment grants during this year, the total value of investments and total number of grants is smaller for PY2012 than it was in PY2011.

Progress

Over the past year, the Endowment has realized the following accomplishments:

- Funded an annual statewide Community Transportation Summit that brought together more than 160 people representing a wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit entities to learn about the growing need for transportation services and to engage in discussions about existing community transportation efforts in the state.
- Continued to support the establishment of Regional Coordinating Councils and Regional Transportation Councils in 4 regions of the state.
- Helped develop a volunteer driver program in Sullivan County that was launched in July 2010 and serves 15 towns. The program's 17 volunteer drivers have provided 266 one-way trips between December 2010 and August 2011 largely to seniors and individuals with disabilities; 95% of these rides were for medical purposes. Another program with 45 volunteers serving 13 towns in the Eastern Monadnock Region has provided 3,710 one-way trips since beginning in 2008; approximately 80% of these rides were for medical purposes.
- In collaboration with the NH Charitable Foundation, the AARP, the Institute on Disabilities, and the Conservation Law Foundation, funded the establishment of a statewide advocacy coalition that brings together traditional and nontraditional constituencies to advocate for reshaping NH's approach to transportation policy along core guidelines of sustainability, diversity, and flexibility.
- Supported collaboration between Riverbend and the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center to evaluate the effectiveness of the Health Buddy[®] home telemonitoring technology for people with severe mental illness who also suffer from a co-morbid medical condition. The project has completed its second phase of data collection. The third phase will be funded through a grant from Bosch HealthCare.
- Supported improvement and expansion of integrated primary care and behavioral health care services for rural NH children, families, and adults through creation of an evaluation model that has resulted in local and cross-site data collection and evaluation and creation of a model for ongoing evaluation to advance integrated health care policy in the state.

Current Funding Interests

Over the coming Program Year, the Endowment anticipates completing its investment in the geographic barriers theme area although it will continue to identify and fund opportunities in policy, convening and technical assistance after that time. Transportation funding priorities for PY2012 will include applied research to assess current and future needs for transportation, public policy education and advocacy on community transportation, and convening and technical assistance projects that support a strong, coordinated system of community transportation options for NH residents, especially those that are vulnerable and underserved. The Endowment also continues to look for opportunities to support telehealth demonstration projects with a focus on rural and underserved communities, to strengthen the capacity of the field to utilize telehealth solutions, and to support policy efforts to promote telecommunications infrastructure and reduce reimbursement and licensure barriers. Because equipment, hardware, and information-technology infrastructure can be costly for some telehealth initiatives, the Endowment encourages applicants to pursue a mix of funding partners for these capital costs.

The Program Directors for the Geographic Barriers theme are Kim Firth (telehealth) and Mary Vallier-Kaplan (transportation) at kfirth@endowmentforhealth.org and mvpkaplan@endowmentforhealth.org or (603) 228-2448, Endowment for Health, 14 South St., Concord, NH 03301. A listing of the Endowment Geographic Barriers grants is available at www.endowmentforhealth.org