

# Disability Inclusive Healthcare: A Health Professional's Guide



Avi Ranadive, Rutgers School of Dental Medicine  
 Sarah Yu, Rutgers Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy  
 Leah Cherukara, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School  
**Site Preceptors:** Paul Muniz PhD & Andrea Racioppi, Family Resource Network



## Host Organization

The Family Resource Network



**Mission Statement:** To provide a personalized, humancentric approach to helping families with disabilities find the right resources and support for every step of your journey.

- The Family Resource Network (FRN) is a comprehensive family-focused umbrella of three affiliate organizations...
  - Autism Family Services of New Jersey
  - Caregivers of New Jersey
  - Epilepsy Services of New Jersey
- FRN has more than 50 programs and services available for New Jersey residents living with epilepsy, autism, intellectual, developmental, physical disabilities, and chronic illness that has been affecting lives of thousands of families for the past 53 years.

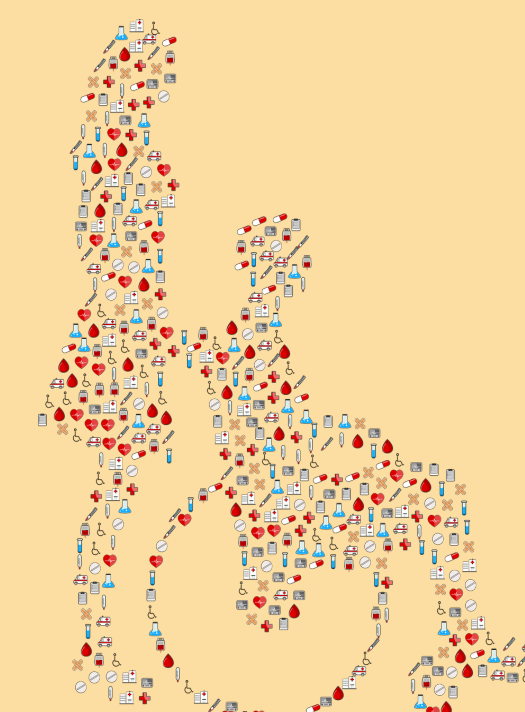
## Project Need

- Problem-oriented nature of medicine
- Offensive, biased terminology
- Lack of education among health professionals
- Societal stigma

**1 in 4 adults (18-44) with a disability in the U.S. do not have a consistent medical provider**

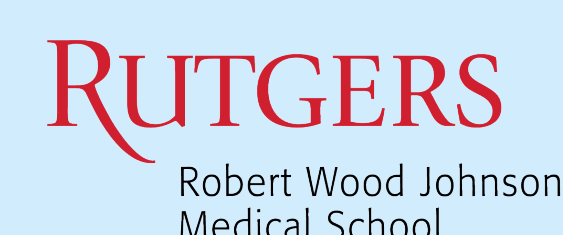
## Future Implications

- Help healthcare workers understand barriers to healthcare
- Empower healthcare teams to provide accessible, personalized care
- Eliminate stigma around disabilities in the healthcare field
- Enable all patients to feel comfortable in general healthcare offices



## Acknowledgements

- Our site preceptors Paul Muniz (Senior Vice President, FRN Community Engagement) and Andrea Racioppi (Vice President, Epilepsy Services), the CEO of FRN Liza Gundell, Nina Lemelin at Autism Family Services of New Jersey, as well as all the employees at the Family Resource Network who were welcoming and always offered their guidance
- Our Equity in Action Summer Internship (EASI) Co-program Directors Sarah Kelly and Maria Pellerano for their hard work in organizing insightful seminars and site visits
- The EASI program appreciates the support from the Office of the RBHS Chancellor, the participating schools, the Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities at RWJMS, and the community sites that made this possible



## Our Project

**Overview:** We developed pamphlets that address how health professionals can dismantle barriers to providing effective and equitable healthcare in communities.

### Physical Barriers

- Planning with the patient and healthcare team to:
  - Reduce sensory stimulation
  - Install adjustable tables
  - Provide interpretive services
  - Extend appointment times
  - Locate accommodating transportation
  - Develop accessible parking spaces that allow space for car-ramps
- Healthcare workers should be educated via disability competence training to reduce the stigma that it is difficult to work through these physical barriers; with proper communication, patience and planning with the patient and the healthcare team, several patients can be provided for under your general care and do not require the difficulties that are associated with seeking specialized care



### Informational Barriers



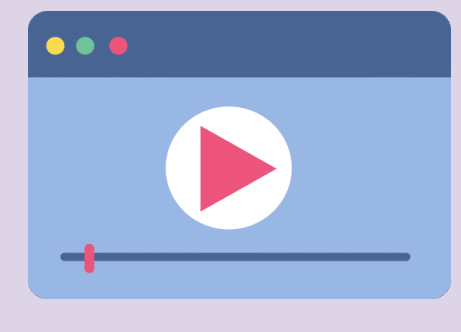
Follow website accessibility guidelines (e.g., large font, "alternative text" images)



Create large-print forms with double-spacing, simple fonts, and elementary language use



Know how to access auxiliary aids (e.g., Braille resources, assistive listening devices)



Have visual aids and video/audio recordings available (e.g., to explain a diagnosis)

### Communication Barriers

- Make eye contact and speak directly to the patient
- Use age-appropriate language and tone
- Do not interrupt or rush a patient's response
- Always ask the patient for permission to touch them
- Walk the patient through the physical exam or procedure step-by-step.

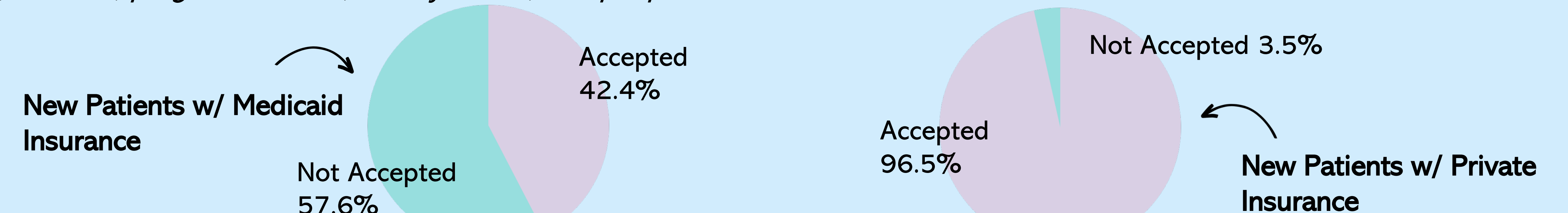
### Communication Methods

- NJ Relay/CapTel
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices
- Caregiver Facilitation



### Policy Barriers

**What is Medicaid?** A federal and state-funded program that provides healthcare coverage to millions of Americans including low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults, and people with disabilities



Lack of acceptance towards those with Medicaid poses **unnecessary restrictions** on patients' access to healthcare.

### Attitudinal Barriers

- Start off with "Need to Know" questions instead of "Want to Know" questions
- Do not assume that one disability means that the patient has another
- Respect the patient's privacy by not prompting the patient to disclose their disability forcefully
- Do not assume your patient's life experiences, capabilities, or how they feel as it can be variable among people even with the same disabilities
- Do not withhold care due to assumptions about a patient's life with a disability- this can lead to dangerous and life-threatening consequences

