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## Primary Care Perceptions: Health Services for Vermonters with Intellectual Disabilities

Magalie Carey  
*University of Vermont*

Gia Eapen  
*University of Vermont*

Adam Fakhri  
*University of Vermont*

Taylor Marquis  
*University of Vermont*

Cara Rathmell  
*University of Vermont*

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Magalie Carey, Gia Eapen, Adam Fakhri, Taylor Marquis, Cara Rathmell, Claudia Russell, Nicole Wershoven, Elizabeth Cote, Mike Reilly, and Stephen Everse

# Primary Care Perceptions: Health Services for Vermonters with Intellectual Disabilities

M. Carey<sup>1</sup>, G. Eapen<sup>1</sup>, A. Fakhri<sup>1</sup>, T. Marquis<sup>1</sup>, C. Rathmell<sup>1</sup>, C. Russell<sup>1</sup>, N. Wershoven<sup>1</sup>, E. Cote<sup>2</sup>, M. Reilly<sup>3</sup>, S. Everse, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>University of Vermont College of Medicine; <sup>2</sup>Area Health Education Centers Program; <sup>3</sup>Champlain Community Services

## BACKGROUND

- People with intellectual disabilities (ID) have increased morbidity compared to the general population<sup>1</sup>.
- Lack of practitioner training and experience with this population, as well as inadequate practitioner awareness of available services, creates barriers to care for individuals with IDs<sup>2</sup>.
- Champlain Community Services (CCS) provides developmental services and health care to individuals with IDs in the Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties of Vermont (100 in 2019).
- CCS coordinates one-to-one support at work, home, school, and in the community.

### Study Objectives:

- To learn which services practitioners believe to be most beneficial to patients with IDs.
- To identify barriers to developmental services for patients with IDs.
- To gauge local primary care practitioners' familiarity with CCS.

## METHODS

- A 6 to 10-question branching logic electronic survey was developed using REDCap and emailed to 320 primary care practitioners in three Vermont counties: Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle.
- Results of the survey were quantitatively analyzed using Excel.

### Respondents:

- 83 respondents (26% response rate) from Chittenden County (78) and Franklin/Grand Isle Counties (5):

Type of Practitioner	Specialty
Physicians (63)	Pediatrics (17)
Physician Assistants (8)	Family Medicine (28)
Nurse Practitioners (12)	IM/Adult Primary Care (33)
	OB/GYN (4)
	Other (1)

## RESULTS

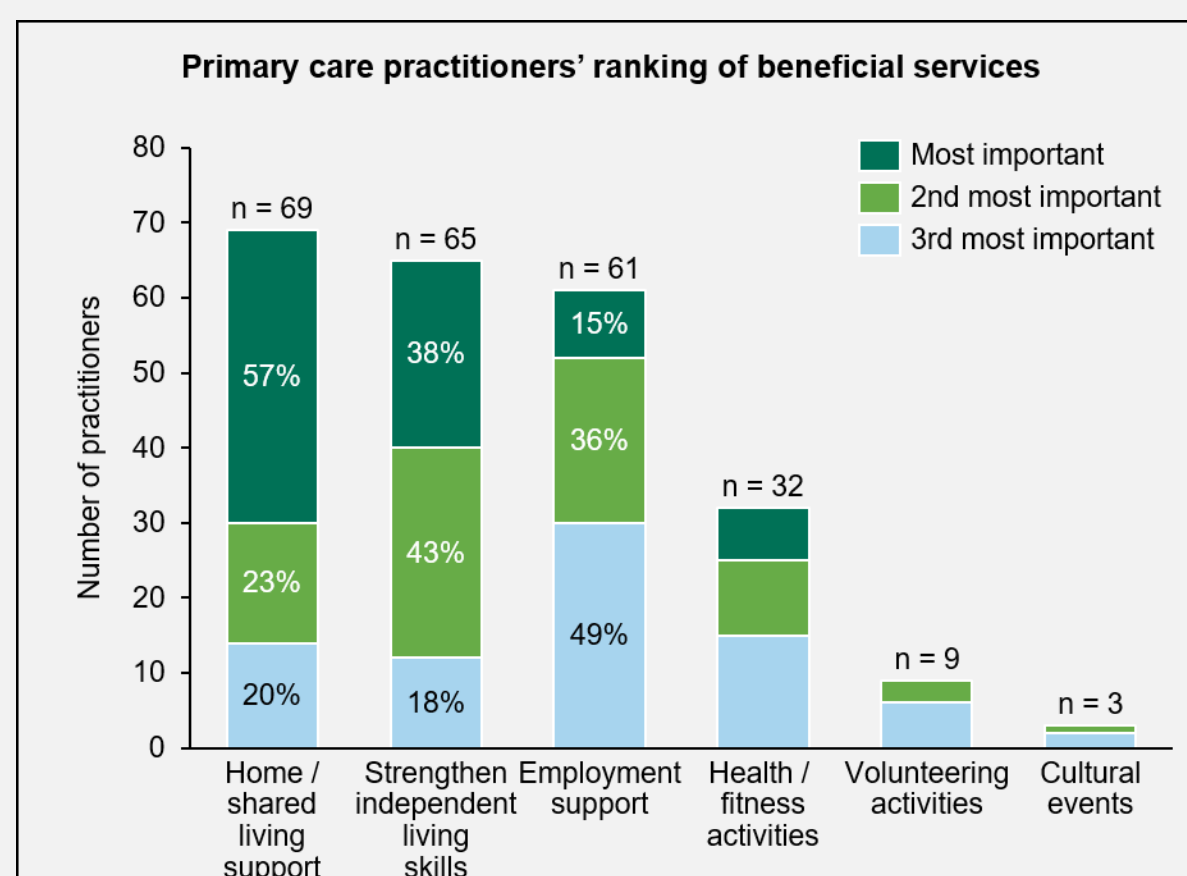


Figure 1: Primary care practitioners' ranking of the top three services most beneficial to their adult patients with intellectual disabilities

### Other beneficial services indicated by practitioners include:

- Case management
- Counseling
- Part-time employment support
- Transportation
- Mental health services
- Support for caregivers
- Medical professionals who will provide care for them
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- Only 29% of respondents surveyed believed that lack of practitioner awareness was a barrier to access.
- Most primary care practitioners surveyed were not familiar with CCS.
- 41% of respondents reported that they have patients not currently using developmental services who could benefit from them.
- Of the top three beneficial services practitioners selected, less than 20% of respondents knew that CCS offered those services

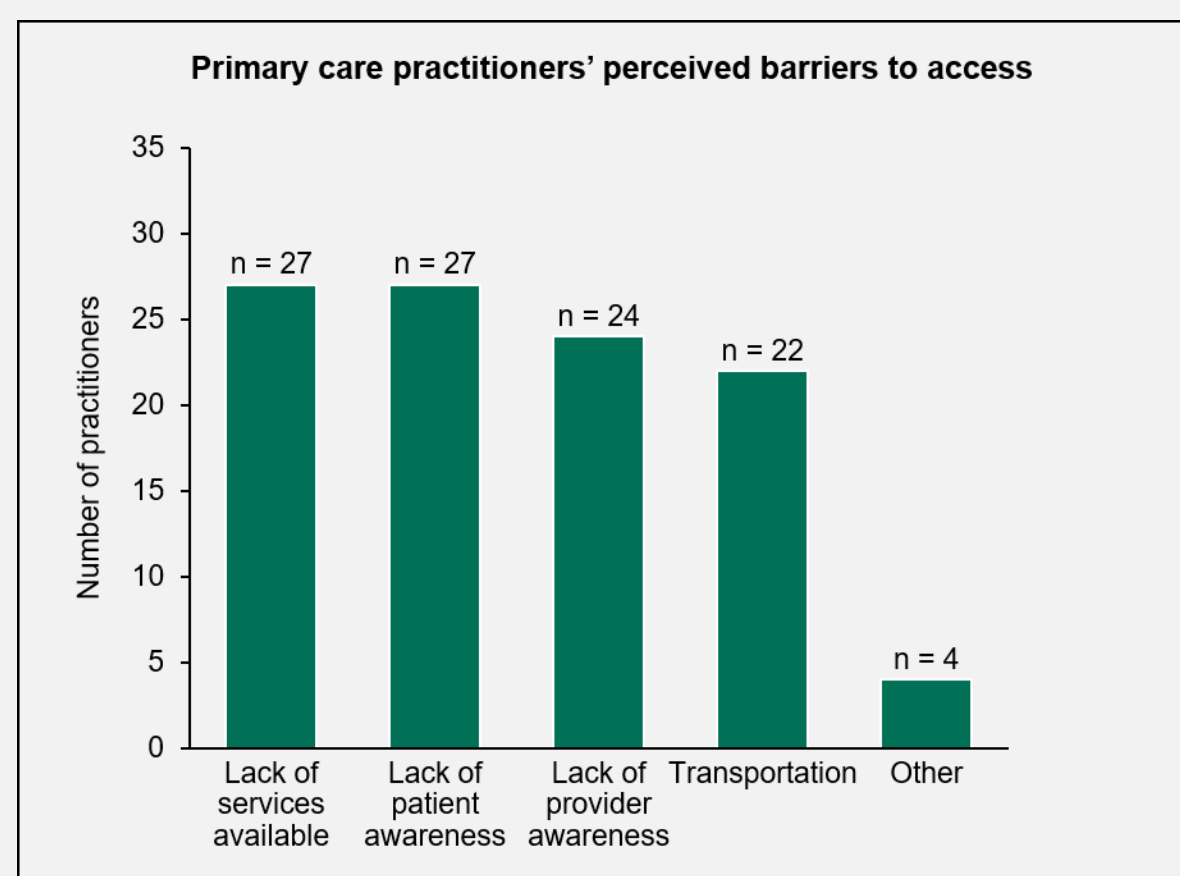


Figure 2: Primary care practitioners' perceived barriers for their adult patients with intellectual disabilities to access support services

### Other barriers to access services indicated by practitioners include:

- Way to get healthy food
- Lack of patient interest
- Parental/caregiver navigation of the system
- Inability to refer patients directly to CCS.

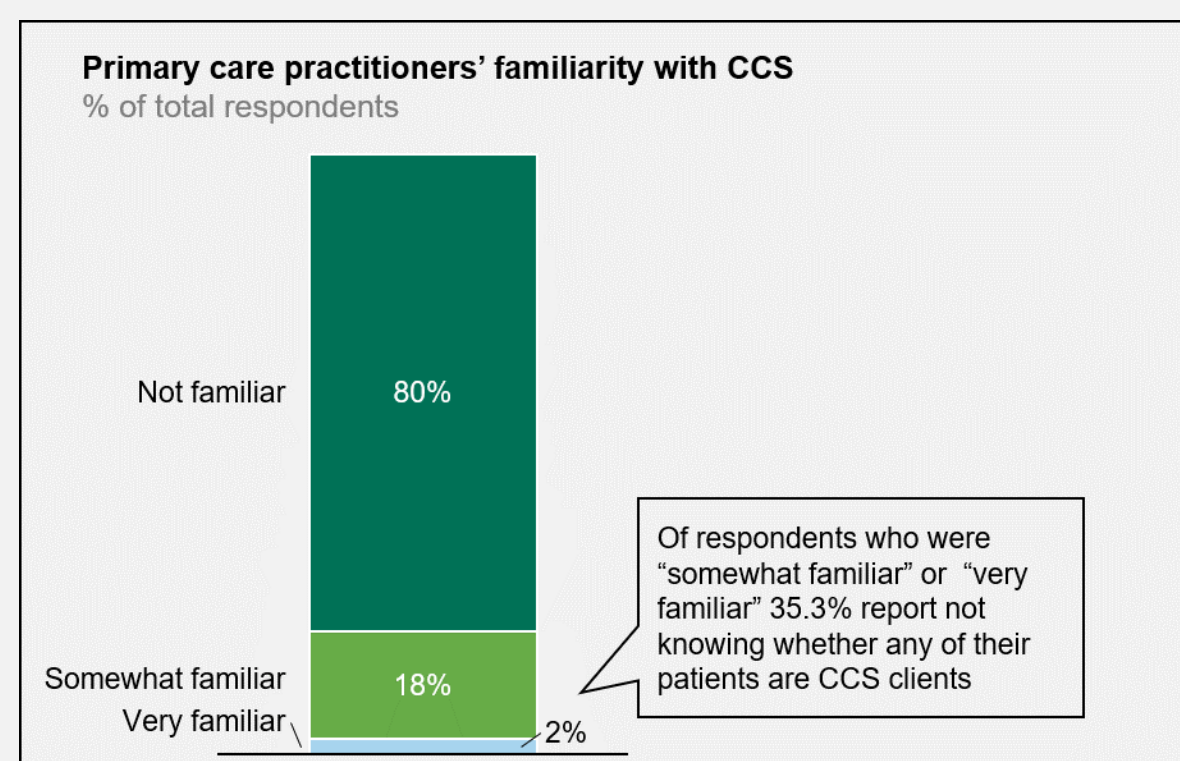


Figure 3: Primary care practitioners' reported familiarity with CCS (n = 83)

## CONCLUSIONS + DISCUSSION

- Lack of practitioner awareness of services is indicated as a barrier for patients with ID<sup>2</sup>.
- Practitioners expressed a need for increased education and training in ID<sup>2</sup>.
- Only a small percentage of respondents believe that lack of practitioner awareness is a barrier to developmental services for patients, yet most are not familiar with CCS.
- Of those who are familiar with CCS, 35% do not know if any of their patients are CCS clients.
- This points to a need to increase practitioner awareness of CCS and other developmental services in the counties served.

### Lessons Learned:

- Practitioners who completed the survey identified home/shared living support, support in independent living skills, and employment support as the most critical services for their patients with IDs.
- Practitioners perceived a lack of available services and a lack of patient awareness to be the most significant access barriers for their patients with IDs.
- Practitioners may be unaware of their knowledge gaps and how those may impact care access for patients with IDs.

### Study Limitations:

- We had a relatively small sample size (n = 83).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- As practitioners have expressed interest in opportunities for education on patients with ID and services available to them<sup>2</sup>, we recommend future focus on increasing practitioner awareness of CCS services.
- An idea to accomplish this is the development and distribution of a one-page flyer about CCS services for practitioner awareness that can also be shared directly with patients and caregivers.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>Beange H, McElduff A, Baker W. Medical disorders of adults with mental retardation: A population study. American Journal on Mental Retardation. 1995;99:595-604.  
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