

DHERN October 2026 Newsletter

DHERN Announcements

- **Disability data is on the chopping block. Take action by October 19:** The CDC wants to overhaul the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), the nation's flagship source of data on health, health care access, and health behaviors. For disabled people, it's one of the few places we show up in the numbers at all.
 - a. The proposed 2028 redesign would gut that picture:
 - i. **Adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities could vanish from the data.** The questions that identify adults with IDD would be cut, even as the child survey keeps its IDD questions.
 - ii. **Key disability details disappear.** Mobility equipment and assistance, fatigue, age of disability onset, and detailed cognition and upper-body function would all be dropped.
 - iii. **The survey goes online-first.** Households would self-complete on the web or on paper before any interviewer follows up, and disabled people are less likely to have the technology that requires.
 - iv. **The remaining disability measure is a problem.** The survey still relies on a disability screener that research shows severely undercounts disabled adults.
 - b. If these changes go through, researchers, advocates, and policymakers will lose the data needed to track health and mortality disparities among disabled people. We can't address what we can't count.
 - c. **Take action now:** Public comments shape what happens next, and they don't need to be long or technical. Even a few sentences about why this data matters to you, your work, or your community make a difference.
 - d. **[Submit a comment by October 19](#)**
 - e. **New to this?** [Read the CDC's description of the proposed changes](#)
 - f. [Helpful crosswalk of disability data in current and proposed survey](#) is on the HSRI website
 - g. **Want to see what others are saying?** [Browse the comments already posted](#)
 - h. *DHERN has submitted our own comment, and you're welcome to draw on our concerns. But please put your thoughts in your own words. Agencies typically give*

little weight to copied or form-letter comments, while individual, personal comments carry far more influence.

- **Save the date for the annual Paper Award Competition Presentations** on March 2, 2027, 1:00-3:00pm ET! Each awardee will share a summary of their paper.
 - a. We will provide two awards. The nominee must be the first author on the paper (co-authorship is permitted with student or faculty co-author(s)). The primary focus of the paper should relate to disability health equity, broadly defined. The paper must have been published or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal in 2025 or 2026, and the nominee must have been at one of the following levels of education/training at the time the paper was published or accepted for publication: undergraduate student, graduate student, postdoctoral researcher. Papers submitted for a DHERN paper award in a prior year are permitted to be resubmitted for consideration if published in 2025 or 2026.
 - b. Each awardee will receive a \$500 honorarium for presenting their paper at the DHERN meeting on March 2, 2027, 1:00-3:00pm ET.
 - c. One entry is permitted per nominee. Self-nominations will be accepted. **The deadline for nominations January 15, 2027**
 - d. Email published paper to sdlandes@syr.edu. Cover letter is not required. If the paper's connection to disability health equity is not obvious, you are invited to include a brief (up to 200 words) description of how the paper addresses disability health equity.
- Send in your nominations for the DHERN 2027 Public Impact Award!
 - a. This annual award honors an individual for outstanding contributions that have improved lives through disability health equity research. Public impact in disability health equity research may be demonstrated through community-engaged research and advocacy, education and mentorship of future professionals or stakeholders, research that has influenced policy, and/or the effective translation of research into meaningful public benefit.
 - b. **Nomination Process** To nominate an individual, please submit a nomination letter and the nominee's CV by January 15, 2027. The nomination letter should clearly describe the nominee's disability health equity research public impact and explain why they merit recognition. Self-nomination is permitted.
 - c. If multiple individuals wish to support a nomination, they should be included as co-signers on a single letter. Nomination letters should not exceed two pages. Please do not submit materials beyond the nomination letter and CV.
 - d. **Award Recognition** The awardee will deliver a keynote presentation on "The State of Disability Health Equity Research" at the virtual DHERN Awards Meeting on March 2, 2027, 1-3 PM ET and will receive a \$500 honorarium for the presentation.
 - e. Nominations should be emailed in pdf format to sdlandes@syr.edu.

- The *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* is seeking submissions for a special issue on “Improving Health Outcomes for People with Intellectual Disability: Inclusive Research, Responsible Inclusion in Research, and Equitable Clinical Trials for People with Intellectual Disability.” The call welcomes research focused on improving the inclusion and representation of people with intellectual disability in health research and clinical trials. [Learn more about the call for papers here.](#)
- *Disability and Health Journal* is seeking submissions for a Special Issue on global disability health equity, focusing on implementation science and applied research that generates practical evidence for improving health systems, services, and outcomes for people with disabilities. The Special Issue welcomes original research and brief reports examining disability-inclusive policies, programmes, interventions, implementation strategies, and system-level changes, with particular interest in research conducted in meaningful partnership with people with disabilities and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), as well as research from low- and middle-income countries, the Global South, and other underrepresented settings. The submission deadline is May 15, 2027. [Learn more and submit here.](#)
- The 2026 National Survey on Health and Disability (NSHD) will launch in October! The NSHD is an ongoing survey of adults with disabilities that asks about health, health care, health insurance, housing, transportation, community participation, and other aspects of daily life. Adults age 18 and older who live in the U.S. and have a disability and/or health condition are invited to participate. The survey takes approximately 20–30 minutes and will be available online in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language, as well as by phone. [Learn more about the 2026 NSHD and sign up to receive the survey link here.](#)
- If you would like to contribute to our work advancing disability health equity research, connecting researchers and trainees, and fostering the inclusion of disabled people in these efforts, you can [make a donation](#) to help sustain DHERN’s mission.
- Share your recent publications, upcoming events, job opportunities with the DHERN community! To contribute to the next newsletter, please send details to us at dhern@jh.edu by the 28th of October.

Study Recruitment

- Kristin Walker, a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Stony Brook University, is recruiting deaf autistic adults for a dissertation study examining their experiences with mental health therapy and research accessibility. Participants must be deaf or hard of hearing adults who are 18 or older, have been diagnosed as autistic, have sought or received mental health therapy, and live in the United States. Participants will complete two brief surveys (5–10 minutes each) and a 1-hour Zoom interview. Participants can communicate using ASL, written or spoken English, or AAC, and other communication

options may be discussed. [Click here to see if you qualify](#) or contact Kristin at kristin.walker@stonybrook.edu. [An ASL version of the study flyer is available here](#), and an [in-depth introduction to the research is available here](#). This study is approved by the Stony Brook University IRB #2025-00735. Please do not share this study on public social media or publicly accessible online spaces; sharing directly with potentially eligible deaf autistic individuals is welcome.

Health Affairs Featured Article

- Anderson, A., Huynh, C., and Ettman, C. K. (2026). [Medicaid Asset Limits and Enrollment Among Older Adults And People With Disabilities](#). *Health Affairs*. 45(6)
 - Amid recent federal and state reforms to update asset limits and a new federal home equity cap of \$1 million taking effect in 2028, Medicaid continues to be a primary source of coverage for low-income and high-need populations. Recent data shows that 1.5 million older and disabled adults were income eligible for Medicaid but were not enrolled, potentially because of financial asset limits. The continued use of asset limits at current levels—and the potential unintended consequences of that use—warrants renewed policy attention. Updating asset limits could streamline access without significantly expanding eligibility to higher-wealth groups.

Member Submissions

- Umucu, E., Lee, B., & Vernon, A. (2026). [Inclusive Digital Health Strategies for Persons with Disabilities: A Scoping Review](#). *JAMA Network Open*, 9(9), e2633867.
 - This scoping review examined worldwide evidence on disability inclusion and health equity in digital health technologies. The review identified key strategies for advancing equitable digital health, including accessibility by design, participatory codesign with people with disabilities, representative datasets, and sustained government commitment. The authors highlight the importance of involving people with disabilities in the design and evaluation of digital health technologies and addressing accessibility and health equity from the beginning of the development process.
- Verstegen, C. (2026, September 29). [Refugees With Disabilities Are About to Lose an Important Lifeline. Here's What Illinois Advocates Are Doing to Help](#). *Borderless Magazine*
 - This article examines the upcoming loss of Medicaid coverage for refugees in Illinois, including refugees with disabilities, as federal eligibility changes take effect October 1. The article highlights how Medicaid has served as an important

healthcare safety net for refugees navigating medical conditions, disabilities, and the challenges of resettlement. It also explores the experiences of refugees who have relied on Medicaid and the efforts of community organizations to connect individuals with alternative healthcare, disability, and social-service resources as coverage changes.

- Landes, S.D. (2026, September 21). [Block Trump's Push to Lock Up Disabled People](#). The Progressive.
 - This op-ed examines recent federal actions and policy changes affecting disabled people, with a focus on the potential erosion of disability rights and protections for community-based living. Dr. Scott Landes discusses developments involving the *Olmstead* decision and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, showing that changes to federal disability policy could make it easier for states and institutions to move away from community integration and toward more restrictive settings. The piece also highlights the broader consequences these policy shifts could have for disabled people's rights, autonomy, and access to community-based services.

From,
The DHERN Team

To receive the DHERN newsletter, please email dhern@jh.edu with the subject line "subscribe."
To stop receiving the DHERN newsletter, please email dhern@jh.edu with the subject line "unsubscribe".