

## **The RISN Center**

### **We can improve healthcare for people with disabilities**

#### **Jennifer M. LeComte**

We can improve healthcare for people with different abilities by just including them in their own healthcare decisions one of the main missions of the RISN Center is to improve access for routine preventative health care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and physical disabilities.

One problem that we identified is access to women's health and reproductive healthcare education as well as routine physical exams, getting our patients access to mammograms, Pap smears and the IHC grant helped us overcome that barrier by creating an educational opportunity for our patients.

#### **Wendy Aita**

We absolutely know from research that people with intellectual disabilities face several healthcare disparities. For example, they often don't receive routine medical procedures. They're more likely to have conditions which are chronic and untreated. Sometimes behavior or fear might get in the way of them receiving the appropriate treatment.

The barriers are really multiple. We have physical barriers. Sometimes they can't even get into the building because of not having access because they're in a wheelchair. Getting a weight can sometimes even just be a barrier because they don't have wheelchair scales or lifts to be able to get onto an examination table.

There can also be barriers related to the training that medical professionals receive they often do not learn about this when they go to school. And then finally there's stigma and anxiety in previous trauma.

#### **Jennifer M. LeComte**

We created a Pap Camp, which is an educational experience to be done with peers, so women with different abilities sitting in the same room learning about sexuality and reproductive health together.

### **Wendy Aita**

Inclusive healthcare means giving everyone no matter whether they have a different sexual orientation, a different race, socioeconomic status, or disability the same access to healthcare in the way that they need to get it. And that might mean making accommodations for them so that their access is equivalent. Not everybody needs the exact same access, but they need equivalent access and that means that we have to be able to pivot and offer something a little bit different when we provide healthcare.

### **Jennifer M. LeComte**

We really do think that the funding from IHC will serve as a model for programs across the states to really include people with different abilities in their healthcare systems at a higher level.

### **Wendy Aita**

It's all about opportunity, giving people with disabilities the opportunity to provide feedback to medical students, increasing access to work with them in their opportunities for residency, and really trying to broaden the mindset of people who are already working in the medical field to know that it's not so different to work with somebody with a disability. We can make them minor accommodations and still provide wonderful treatment