

Addressing the Challenges to Care of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Commitment to Quality, Safety and Independence

Introduction

One in every ten American families is directly affected by a loved one with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) during their lifetime. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, between seven and eight million people – or three percent of the population – is currently living with IDD.

Most people with IDD can either live completely independently or receive sufficient care and support from family. However, more than 1.75 million people with IDD require assistance beyond what families and friends can provide. (Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc.)

ResCare has been helping people live their best lives and achieve quality outcomes since 1974. Today, we are proud to employ 45,000 compassionate employees in 42 states who work every day to provide quality care to the 60,000 individuals we serve. ResCare leaders continually create, review, pilot and launch technologies and processes confirmed to improve outcomes. These efforts are all to support the ultimate goal – to enhance the independence of each individual. This document describes the history, challenges, solutions and future of care for individuals with IDD – a future built on the experience, leadership and vision of ResCare.

A Shift to Independence

Until the late 1960s, institutional living was the widely accepted solution to care for people with IDD. Widespread reports of overcrowding – the average facility housed more than 1,400 residents – and frequent gaps in treatment triggered reform.

Beginning with the 1971 adoption of the ICF/MR program, a nationwide shift away from institutional care to community-based programs was underway. The movement was supported by the 1981 home- and community-based services (HCBS) waiver authority and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Finally, the Olmstead Supreme Court decision in 1999 stating that persons with IDD have a right to choose and to reside in the least-restrictive setting possible completed the country's adoption of community-based homes as the care model of choice.

Commitment to Health and Safety

According to the National Council on Disability, "A plethora of research has evaluated the outcomes associated with community care on quality of life, behavioral outcomes, life satisfaction, competence in activities of daily living, and challenging behaviors. The studies, regardless of the analytic technique or country of origin, overwhelmingly find that living in the community yields positive results." While the advantages of community-based living are many, significant challenges still face families, clients, and providers.

Health

The Center for Health Care Strategies notes that the physical health factors associated with developmental disabilities often manifest as chronic health conditions as people with IDD age. The more common manifestations include difficulty eating or swallowing, dental disease, gastro esophageal reflux, esophagitis, respiratory disease and infections.

In order to meet these challenges, ResCare is committed to a high-tech, high-touch approach in which the combination of well-trained direct care staff working with the most advanced tools improve health and behavioral quality outcomes. These tools include:

- Pharmacy Alternatives – one of only a few pharmacies in the nation specializing in serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A review of 91 unique studies reveals a nearly 20 percent error rate in medication adherence for people with IDD. The most common errors include omitted doses, medications not taken as directed, taking the wrong medicine and preparing the medicine incorrectly. This service offers pharmaceutical systems and packaging technology designed to reduce medication errors for populations under our care.
- Rest Assured – offers telecare and remote monitoring services to provide customized, interactive support in real time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Dechoker – advanced rescue device that removes airway blockages that the Heimlich maneuver cannot. Choking is the fourth-leading cause of death among people with IDD. ResCare’s pilot choking-prevention program included this technology and intensive food preparation training. Given the success of the pilot program in 138 facilities, dechokers are being purchased and placed in all 2,600+ ResCare facilities across the country. ResCare is the only provider known to have so widely adopted the technology.

Safety

Safety is always a concern when serving adults with IDD in a residential setting. ResCare deploys prevention-focused, quality measures to ensure the safety and welfare of the people we support, in addition to the employees who take care of them.

Using its home state as a pilot, ResCare launched its Kentucky Safety Initiative in all of its residences for clients with IDD in 2017.

- Each residence has been equipped with a personal emergency response system, which connects the direct support professional with the monitoring center at the push of a button.
- Dechoker devices are being placed in all residences in Kentucky and in community-based homes across the country.

These measures have been installed without guarantee of reimbursement from the HCBS waiver.

Behavioral Health

In addition to physical health concerns, the incidence of depression and other behavioral health issues is more pronounced among individuals with IDD, a fact made more challenging due to the decreased ability to fully describe or convey complex emotions.

ResCare has developed a full array of behavior services for healing the mind, body and spirit. Trained clinicians including psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers treat emotional and behavioral problems often triggered by trauma or stress. Other therapies, such as physical or occupational therapy and speech/language add to the client’s quality of life and level of independence.

Cost-Effective Care and Quality Outcomes through Connected Home

As care for persons with IDD shifted from institutions to home-based community living, concerns about oversight and quality assurance were common among families and institutional care providers.

That’s why we’ve invested in and are leading the industry with our integrated suite of care-management solutions, called Connected Home. The Connected Home includes medication management, remote monitoring,

telehealth, data analytics and reporting tools that analyze health and safety information. This data informs the development of personalized care plans and helps to prioritize care delivery in real time.

ResCare has also adopted the Best in Class[®] (BIC) Quality Assurance and Compliance program. BIC is a quality improvement and measurement system that is industry-recognized for improving quality and safety outcomes. BIC is revised and updated each year. ResCare employees are trained and outcomes in scores of categories are measured through the program. BIC focuses on individual outcomes above and beyond compliance with local, state and federal regulatory requirements. Our goal is to ensure every individual we serve receives the right care at the right time in the safest environment possible.

Advocates for Change

With choice of residential living defined as a right, demand for care in that setting has grown exponentially in the 43 years since ResCare began operation. ResCare now serves more than 60,000 clients each day; approximately half of them are persons with IDD. The convergence of growing demand, shifting demographics, mounting regulations and stagnant state and federal budgets has created an industry-wide workforce crisis.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, demand for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) is expected to increase by 48 percent over the next decade. Given current funding levels and restrictions, the industry struggles to retain the most qualified workers and is not rewarded for developing or implementing technologies to ease the demand on personnel.

As the nation's largest private provider of IDD home-based community living and supporting services, ResCare has and will continue to advocate and educate on the need for a high-quality and stable workforce in partnership with state and federal agencies.

ResCare has taken unprecedented steps in the industry above and beyond regulations to bring new safety procedures to homes in the communities we serve. For example, ResCare has led the charge to encourage states to include electronic monitoring, such as Rest Assured smart home monitoring system, telehealth, and Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS) as additional options under the HCBS waiver. These tools can be useful in detecting and quickening response to safety and emergency situations for both our clients and employees. Several states are already on board.

Solutions: A Glimpse into IDD Support for Tomorrow

ResCare is committed to working with partners to create solutions with people, training and technology that advance the industry to improve outcomes.

ResCare is developing and testing additional programs and services to assure quality and enhance independence. These include telecare, smart monitoring services, vocational services, and academic education programs. The common link: a commitment to the well-being and safety of those we serve. Soon, ResCare's vision of a Connected Home will be a reality. Health care partners, DSPs and family members will be able to access real-time integrated information on progress in a client's daily living plan, health metrics, and activities to best inform decisions and improve quality and outcomes moving forward.

In short, ResCare will continue to lead the industry with innovation by remaining focused on its purpose: to provide a customized and connected care environment at home or in a home-like setting that helps people achieve independence and to live their best life.