

I would be happy to share my experience. But I wish to remain anonymous. I used to live in a nearby state which offered little or no support for disabled people. I had experienced a head injury and two strokes. I wasn't diagnosed until 6 years later, from 2004 to 2010. In the meanwhile I moved to Vermont. I was working in a law firm when I was injured. My employer fired me rather than support me with worker's compensation. I couldn't collect unemployment. I had a biopsy in 2005 that was my third and this time the results were diagnosed as 'atypia' or preliminary cancer. After one year I found employment through a temp agency, but my son noticed something wasn't right. I continued to work, but I began to notice memory loss and chronic pain. In 2010, after 6 years of visiting at least 9 specialists, a female orthopedic physician's assistant listened carefully as I described my history and the pain. She recognized that what I described was not orthopedic pain, but neurological. She scheduled a brain MRI and a visit to the neurologist. The brain MRI finally conclusively revealed a traumatic brain injury and two strokes. My neurologist has since declared me permanently and totally disabled as my short term memory has never returned. I cannot keep memories longer than a few weeks to maybe a few months, unless the event is documented, such as the above history. Collecting my medical records and reconstructing a timeline and then memorizing it, is not the same as a recollection. I live in the moment. I develop coping strategies, skill sets and time management to compensate for the losses because of the cognitive impairment. I keep regular therapy sessions, going on now for nearly 8 years. It helps me deal with the loss of the quality of life I had before. The State of Vermont has in place support programs such as Section 8 housing, food stamps and Medicaid, Medicaid being the most important. I lost hearing in both ears, have sleep apnea, chronic pain from the spinal injury I suffered as well. If it were not for the Vermont Medicaid supplemental insurance, none of the tests, cat scans, MRI's, surgeries, hearing aids or C-Pap machines expenses would have been covered by Medicare. Only Vermont Medicaid insurance paid for the necessary visits, and testing and equipment in order for me to have the dignified lifestyle I have now, off the street, and provided for. I strongly urge the representatives to strengthen rather than weaken the provisions in Vermont Medicaid, to cover the costs that Medicare does not pay for, which are beyond the budget of anyone living on a Social Security disability income. Secondly, having a cognitive impairment makes the current system of application by phone through Economic Services nearly impossible for me to navigate. In fact, in 2010, I had to call other state agencies for assistance to apply. Since that experience, my case is now flagged for face-to-face interviews only, in the office. I contribute to my community in different capacities and activities. I was a facilitator for a brain injury group and heard many similar stories from survivors, that the need for adequate health care insurance, such as Medicaid, was vital to obtain an accurate diagnosis, which can ONLY be achieved through an MRI. I regularly visit my chiropractor and my therapist who both accept Medicaid insurance. Very

sadly, not all physicians will accept Medicaid insurance. Thus there are many people who cannot get an accurate diagnosis or treatment who might subsequently be eligible for work. In conjunction with creating a stronger Medicaid program, more physicians and specialists need to accept Medicaid recipients as clients, rather than discriminate against them. Health care is a human right. Even having Medicaid, recipients are still denied service, and thus are denied treatment and healing. This encumbers the social safety net with clients who might be able to work. Most distressingly, recipients die because they cannot receive treatment. That is not my Vermont. I was born here in Vermont. Vermonters take care of each other. Make it worthwhile for physicians and specialists to accept Medicaid recipients in their practice. Right now, not only are we denied treatment, I have had providers insult me when I answer the first question they ask, even before they ask my name, What is your insurance? If it is Medicaid, they are not even polite when they deny service, and sometimes their behavior is more than deplorable. Demonizing recipients has to stop. Strengthen the Health Advocate Agency to respond in a pro-active manner to those professional medical personnel who discriminate against Medicaid recipients.