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# **Oregon Senate Bill 420**

## **Brain Injury Resource Navigation**

Directs Department of Human Services to provide specified services to individuals with brain injuries and to convene Brain Injury Advisory Committee. Requires department to report to Legislative Assembly during odd-numbered year regular sessions on services provided and number of individuals served.

### **Senate Committee On Human Services Public Hearing**

[Watch hearing here \(begins at 54:42\)](#)

[42 written testimonies submitted in  
support](#)

### **Senate Committee On Human Services Work Session**

Unanimous Recommendation:  
Do pass and be referred to  
Ways and Means by prior reference.

April 5, 2023

Dear House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services,

Thank you for scheduling this hearing on Brain Injury in Oregon. It is greatly appreciated. We have eight witnesses ready to testify about various aspects of brain injury in Oregon including a brain injury survivor and his mother, who is also his caregiver, two leaders in the effort to identify and treat brain injury among our state's most underserved populations, a Veteran who is working to identify brain injuries among our Veteran community, and two of the leading medical and academic brain injury experts in the state. I will provide an overview of the problem of brain injury in Oregon, as well as an outline of our efforts to solve those problems. Some time will be spent examining the nuts and bolts of SB 420, the bill that will finally establish brain injury resource navigation in Oregon.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share this information with you. Approximately 84,000 Oregonians live with chronic brain injury, and thousands of other Oregonians live with the short-term, but also devastating, effects of brain injury each year. The testimony you will hear will, I hope, solidify your resolve to help these Oregonians cope with their brain injuries and to provide them with a central brain injury resource navigation office to help connect them with necessary service and support.

Thank you and see you soon.

Sincerely,

David Kracke  
Oregon's Brain Injury Advocate Coordinator  
dkracke@cbirt.org  
Phone: 503-887-7297  
Center on Brain Injury Research and Training, University of Oregon

**Brain Injuries are prevalent.** Over 84,000 Oregonians currently live with chronic, long-term effects of brain injury.<sup>1</sup> In 2020, 13,544 Oregonians sought care at a hospital or emergency room following a brain injury. However, these numbers underestimate the occurrence of brain injuries in Oregon. They do not account for individuals who sought care from urgent care, their primary care physician, or did not receive medical care.<sup>2</sup> Nearly everyone knows someone who has experienced a brain injury.

**A brain injury can happen to anyone and in an instant, it can irrevocably change the course of one's life.** While most brain injuries occur in motor vehicle collisions and unintended falls, brain injuries also occur due to sports injuries, gun-related incidents, assaults, overdoses, near drownings, and workplace injuries. The risk of having a brain injury is significant across all age groups, the risk is highest among older adults.<sup>1</sup> Brain injuries are more prevalent within historically vulnerable populations including individuals who are unhoused,<sup>3</sup> veterans,<sup>4</sup> those with mental and behavioral health concerns,<sup>5</sup> victims of intimate partner violence,<sup>6</sup> and those involved in the justice system.<sup>7</sup>

**Brain injuries increase the risk of complex challenges to physical and mental health.** Physical effects include headache, nausea, difficulties with speaking and understanding, balance and motor control difficulty, and memory problems.<sup>8</sup> Psychological or behavioral health concerns include aggression, anxiety, depression, and issues with impulse control.<sup>8</sup> Without support these challenges make it difficult for individuals to maintain jobs and relationships, significantly impacting their quality of life. Rates of brain injury are high among individuals experiencing homelessness. Recent research that sampled individuals experiencing homelessness found that 71% of total participants reported a history of brain injury and of those, 74% reported an injury occurred prior to experiencing homelessness.<sup>9</sup> Research also indicates that brain injury may be associated with increased risk of suicide.<sup>10</sup>

**The average Oregonian with a brain injury needs 12 different services and supports.<sup>11</sup>** Common services and supports needed post injury include primary care, physical therapy, speech-language rehabilitation, psychotherapy/behavior therapy, vocational rehabilitation, cognitive rehabilitation, vision therapy, and occupational therapy.<sup>7</sup> Additional services needed may include social support, financial assistance, housing assistance, substance use treatment, or other services that support recovery and return to.<sup>12</sup>

**Brain Injury Resource Navigation supports individuals with brain injury and their families in navigating the complex system of services needed post-injury.** Resource Navigation has been shown to improve educational and vocational outcomes, while decreasing levels of disability associated with brain injury.<sup>7,13,14</sup>

**Brain Injury Resource Navigation will save Oregon money while supporting the most vulnerable.** The estimated annual impact of a fully implemented program of Brain Injury Navigation in Indiana is approximately \$249.1 million in wages and benefits, \$30.97 million in taxes, savings of \$80.1 million in reduced disability insurance benefit payments and \$6.6 million in SNAP impact.<sup>15</sup>

# Why we need Resource Navigation

After brain injury, most of the focus is on medical, physical, and emotional healing. Survivors' and families' needs and desires go well beyond medical care, but we often do not know our legal rights, what can be made available to us, or how to find providers who understand brain injury.

- Employment
- Education
- Medical Services
- Social Services
- Mental Health
- Housing
- SSI and SSDI
- Legal Representation
- Transportation
- Support Groups
- Volunteering
- Life Skills Development
- Assistive Technology
- Many Other Services

**Resource Navigators** bridge the gaps for people who need accommodations but are unsure whether they could qualify and may lack resources or knowledge of how to secure them on their own.

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## Who can benefit from Resource Navigation



My name is Cheryl. I now work full-time and advocate for people with disabilities through media arts and community service.

My recovery could have been smoother if I had had more information. My Master's in Speech-Language Pathology helped me in many ways, but I'd had over two decades of sports concussions and mild TBIs. After a serious bike wreck in 2010 when I was 35, my self-awareness was too impaired for me to know I should or even could get help. My doctor did not refer me to rehab until a speech therapist approached me and recommended I ask for a referral.

I tried to return to work, but supervisors offered support without an accommodation plan, which was inadequate. After taking medical leave, I resigned in shame. A **Resource Navigator** could have supported me to recognize my needs were outside the reasonable range.

**"I know I can do this job if you just let me come in only 5 hours a week."**

My physical therapist sent me to a support group for teenagers. I only learned about adult support groups through a flyer. I was later referred to a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

The counselor helped me apply for para-transit, which restored my ability to travel independently. Learning about transportation options sooner through a **Resource Navigator** would have freed my family from driving me to medical appointments during their workday.



Dani lost her friends and her ability to play the sports she loved after waking from a coma with substantial cognitive and physical impairments. She was suspended and expelled repeatedly from multiple high schools for her behavior after the brain injury.

She barely graduated after seven years and continues to struggle to find life direction. A **Resource Navigator** may have been able to steer her toward information and support in such varied areas as dealing with trauma, connecting to other peers, adaptive sports, and advocating for more behavior supports in school.



“I tried to kill myself a few times, a lotta times actually. I walked in roads late at night. I overdosed a few times. I cut myself and hit my head against the walls. I heard if I had any big impact to my head, I could instantly die.”

Dani has held only one job as an adult and is housing insecure. A **Resource Navigator** has the knowledge to assist people with disabilities to find appropriate housing, social supports, positive outlets for expressing oneself, and creating a plan for education and employment goals.



Brandon went from straight As to failing after a severe TBI. Although given an accommodation plan, his supports were not adequate for his impairment level. He did not recognize his legal right to address this.

A **Resource Navigator** could have assisted him to discuss accommodations with his college or help him realize that taking one more year off could have benefited him in working toward his degree.

“At Multnomah Bible College, I feel like there probably could’ve been more interaction with me on a personal level. I got an F because they didn’t teach it to me correctly.”

Brandon was in a supported living facility for several years. He now lives independently in his own apartment but would have preferred to move out sooner.

A **Resource Navigator** might have helped him and his family manage his finances and search for housing with in-home supports to encourage independence sooner. He has become frustrated being a long-term volunteer at a bakery and is only now beginning to seek paid employment more than a decade after his injury.

Deb Patterson  
State Senator /Sendadora Estatal  
District 10 /Distrito 10



## Oregon State Senate /Senado del Estado de Oregon

We, the undersigned, fully support [Senate Bill 420 \(2023\)](#) and encourage everyone to do the same.

[Senate Bill 420](#) will create a **Brain Injury Resource Navigation** program in Oregon that will connect survivors of brain injury with the help they need. The program will provide a warm hand-off between the brain injury survivor and the necessary supports and services. Person-to-person follow-up will take place at regular intervals to encourage integration of these services into their daily life.

Over 84,000 Oregonians currently live with chronic, long-term effects of brain injury ([CDC Report to Congress, 1999](#)). In 2020, 13,544 Oregonians sought care at a hospital or emergency room following a brain injury. This number does not include those who sought help from urgent care, their primary care physician, or did not seek care ([OHA, 2022](#)). Every day people with brain injury struggle to access the crucial services they need to rebuild their lives.

Principles of equity and inclusion will guide the development of **Brain Injury Resource Navigation** programs, ensuring that underserved populations throughout Oregon are prioritized. The inherent challenges faced by Oregon's underserved populations magnify the existing barriers between a brain injury survivor and access to needed supports and services. **Brain Injury Resource Navigation** will help minimize those challenges.

Areas of support will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Medical and therapeutic support
- Employment services
- Housing services
- Disability services
- Veteran services
- Social support
- Food stability
- Caregiver respite

For too long Oregonians with brain injury have struggled without a program to offer them guidance and resources. [SB 420](#) will resolve this and bring Oregon in line with other states that offer similar programs. Evidence-based data demonstrates that **Brain Injury Resource Navigation** improves the lives of brain injury survivors and their families. It will save the state significant resources as those served will see increased quality of life, ability to reintegrate into activities of daily living, and return to employment. It is a true win-win scenario.

We urge all lawmakers to support this incredibly important bill and, by doing so, help the thousands of Oregonians who struggle daily with brain injury. The time is now, and this is the bill that will finally make **Brain Injury Resource Navigation** a reality in Oregon.

Thank you,

[Sign the Letter of Support](#)

[Sign Your Organization's Support](#)

# Support Senate Bill 420!

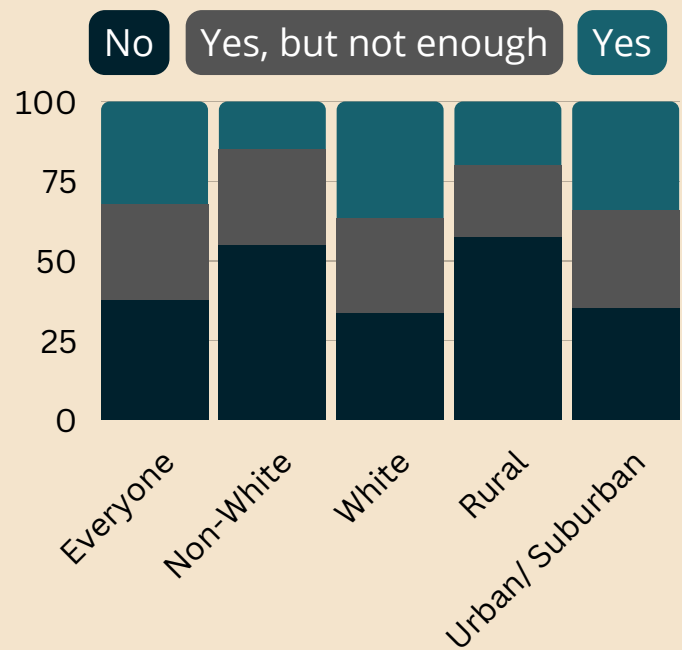
Establish Brain Injury Resource Navigation in Oregon to help people find the services they need.



# 48%

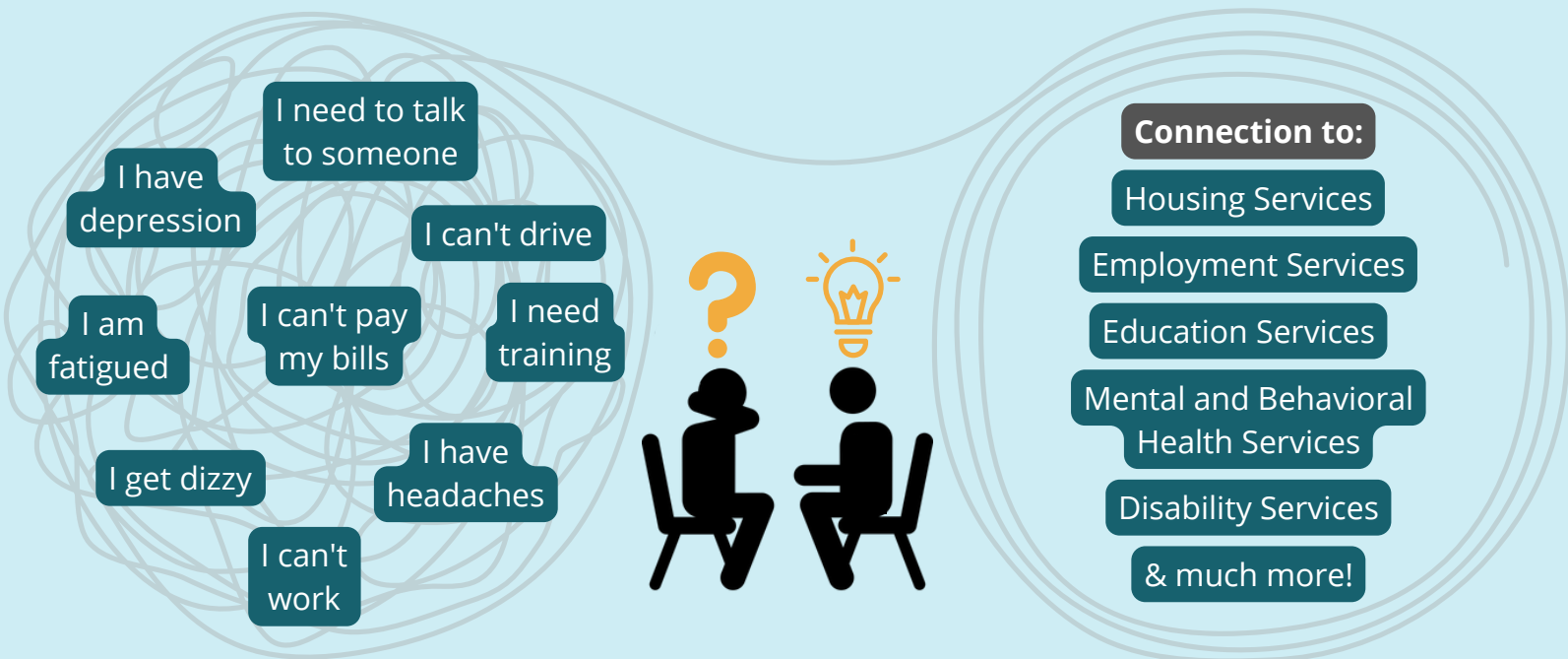
Do not get the support they need because they are not aware of services.

## Were your needs met?



## The average person with a brain injury in Oregon needs 12 services and supports!

Data from the 2020-2021 Oregon Brain Injury Services and Supports Survey. This survey was conducted by the Center on Brain Injury Research and Training with funding from the Administration for Community Living's Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Program.



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Disability  
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INITIATIVE



Bradley Angle, Brain Injury Alliance of Oregon (BIAOR), Brain Injury Connections-Northwest (BIC-NW), Brain Rehab Network, Central City Concern, Corvallis Children's Therapy, Disability Rights Oregon, Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living, Fair Housing Council of Oregon, Gilliam County District Attorney, HBOT CC Heal Medically Naturally, INCIGHT Company, Lane County District Attorney, Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA), League of Women Voters of Oregon, Little Peas Speech Therapy, Malheur Council on Aging and Community Services, Minds in Motion Initiative, Morrison Child and Family Services, Northeast Oregon Network, Options Counseling and Family Services, Oregon Adaptive Sports, Oregon Athletic Trainers Society (OATS), Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (OR-ACEP), Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon Pacific Area Health Education Center (OPAHEC), Oregon Speech and Hearing Association, Origins Faith Community Outreach Initiative, Progressive Rehabilitation Associates, RAPID (Rehabilitation & Athletic Performance Intersecting Disability), RiverWest Acupuncture, Sarah Bellum's Bakery & Workshop, Sonos Neurotherapies, Southern Oregon Education Service District

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