

# END DISCRIMINATORY QUALITY ADJUSTED LIFE YEAR (QALY) MEASURES

## What is QALY?

- » **QALY stands for Quality-Adjusted Life-Year**, a flawed scoring system economists use to determine cost-effectiveness of proposed medical treatments. Healthcare payers use the scores to determine who is eligible for healthcare resources.
- » Based on clinical and practical analyses, QALY calculations measure how much a proposed treatment may improve someone's quality of life by **arbitrarily weighing how long that person has spent in different states of health**.
- » Per the formula, a year of “perfect health” is worth 1, while **a year of “less than perfect” health—such as living with a disability or chronic illness—is worth less than 1**. Death equals zero. The final QALY score equals the number of years a treatment may extend a patient's life multiplied by determined quality of life.
- » **These types of scores have no place influencing what conditions and treatments the Oregon Health Plan will cover.**



Using the QALY formula, the Oregon Health Authority currently considers this little girl's life as less valuable than the life of another child without a disability or illness, like asthma.

## Why is QALY Being Used in Oregon?

- » **Oregon has used a Quality-Adjusted Life-Year (QALY) formula over the last 30 years** to determine what would and would not be covered by the Oregon Health Plan.
- » In 1992, the State submitted a Medicaid waiver application relying on QALY to **prioritize coverage and services for those whose lives were deemed of “higher value.”**
- » In 2017, Oregon removed an explicit reference to QALY from its cost-effectiveness framework—but **the Health Evidence Review Commission, which guides the Oregon Health Plan's benefit decisions, continues to rely upon QALY-driven prioritization scores.**



# What Are Impacts of QALY?

- » **QALYs expand existing healthcare inequities** by perversely impacting or denying care to people with chronic disease or disabilities, and older adults.
- » Because of the greater value QALY places on medical treatments that extend the lives of people without disabilities than on those that benefit people with disabilities, these **groups are deemed “less worthy” to receive insurance coverage for new medicines or treatments.**
- » **How to best care for a patient can be negatively impacted as well**, since physicians consider QALY resource allocations when making care decisions.

# Why Are Disability Rights Oregon and Others Concerned about QALY?

- » **QALYs are clearly discriminatory.** The controversial metric intentionally devalues treatments for older people, those with chronic illnesses or disabilities, and people of color to determine whether a treatment is cost-effective enough to be paid for by the Oregon Health Plan.
- » The illegalities of QALY use are well documented, and The National Council on Disability has repeatedly warned **it undermines and violates major U.S. disability and civil rights laws—including the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.**
- » **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services criticized Oregon’s use of QALY** because it “in substantial part values the life of an individual with a disability less than the life of an individual without a disability. This premise is discriminatory and inconsistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

**QALYs are discriminatory—and illegal.**

# How You Can Help

Disability Rights Oregon has been working to get the Oregon Health Authority to stop using QALY scores since the inception of the Oregon Health Plan, with no success. **We need your help.**

## Send a clear message to your fellow legislators:

Oregon has to stop the use of QALY to prioritize what health care treatments are covered. **Devaluing the lives of people with chronic disease and disabilities is unlawful and must end—today.**

# More Information

Meghan Moyer, Public Policy Director  
mmoyer@droregon.org, 503-432-5777

Benjamin Gurewitz, Public Policy Advocate  
bgurewitz@droregon.org, 971-806-7908



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