Advocate Training:

The Intersection of Civic Engagement and Disability

Foreword

This manual is brought to you by the Enable Project, a coalition that brings together non-profit and social justice organizations and their staff to create channels for integration of people with disabilities within their organizations and movements. This manual is designed to guide organizations on how to integrate and include people with disabilities in ongoing civic engagement. Doing so can empower people with disabilities to take advantage of their rights and participate in social justice and political movements. As a society, we all benefit when everyone is able to participate and contribute.

Acknowledgments

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Disability Independence Group
(305) 669-2822
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New Florida Majority
(305) 754-0118
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Florida Bar Foundation Legal Services Summer Fellow 2018, Kelly Hawk

Funding Organization

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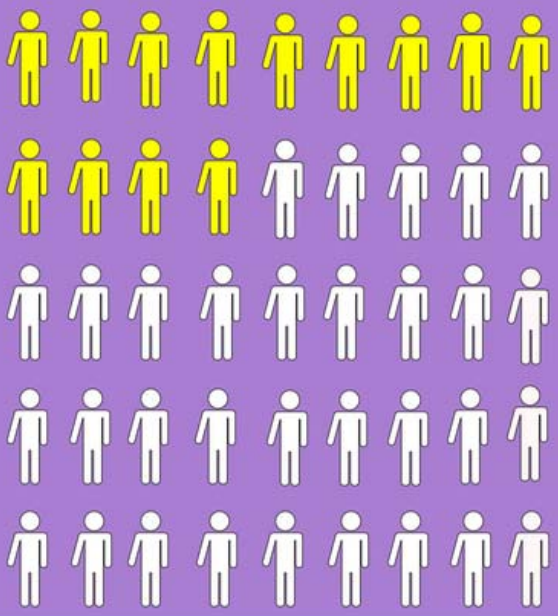
Disclaimer

Any reference to a specific organization in this manual is not an endorsement of that organization's activities or opinions. Language in this manual is designed to be clear and inclusive as well as to reflect the law accurately. Words may be included to describe legal terms which are not inclusive. The use of these words in this manual is for educational purposes and is not an endorsement.

This manual is meant to provide general guidance. It is not intended to be legal advice and should not take the place of legal advice. When in doubt about how to proceed, seek legal counsel.



Miami

Miami is home to 453,579 people. 29.4% of the city's population has a disability. Roughly 13 people out of every 45 people in Miami has a disability.

In Miami-Dade County, people with disabilities make up 25.7% of the population.

20.66 million people live in the state of Florida. 16.5% of those people have a disability.

Florida

1 in 6 eligible voters has a disability. Only 45.7% of those voters turned out in the 2016 Presidential Election. 19 million did not vote in the 2016 election.

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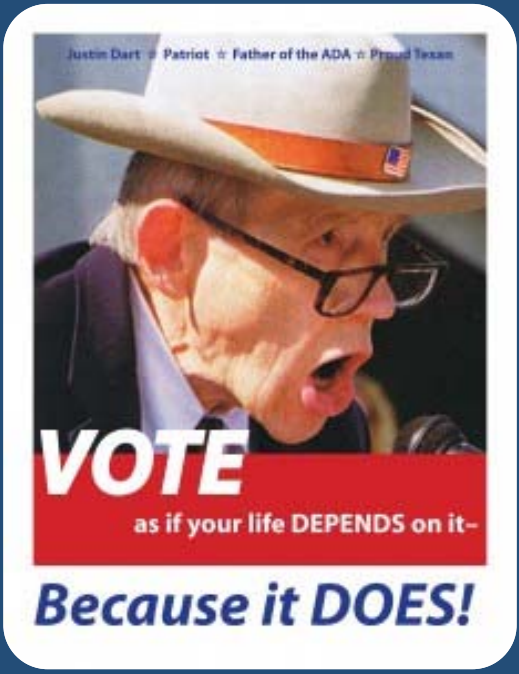
Note: This manual includes active hyperlinks. Items written in yellow will link you to the definition in the glossary or to other sections of the document. Items that are underlined connect to external websites.

Purpose of This Manual and Training

One in every five Americans has a disability.[i] The rights of these individuals to participate in civic engagement are recognized in national laws[ii] and internationally by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.[iii] Civil rights movements, including the Disability Rights Movement, are more successful when they include the people they impact.[iv] Historically, many people with disabilities do not participate in civic engagement activities, including political and social justice movements. This is often due to disabling barriers such as lack of access and education.[v]

The overall purpose of this manual is to educate social justice organizations in the process of integrating and empowering people with disabilities. It is important for these organizations to work alongside people with disabilities to enhance civic engagement. This document provides tools for achieving this goal. The training will introduce you to the history of disability rights, the basics of interacting with people with disabilities, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. It will show you how to check if your organization is disability friendly and then offer tips and resources for your organization to become more accessible and inclusive.



Disability Etiquette

Disability History and Update

This is a brief introduction to the history of disability rights. For more information, see this web series on the subject.

During the 1700s and 1800s, people with disabilities had no rights. They were treated like a burden and often sent to live in asylums or jails where they received very poor treatment.

The separation of people with disabilities from those without disabilities continued into the mid-1900s. It was not until 1975 that Congress passed laws to include people with disabilities in the community. One of these laws gave children with disabilities the right to be educated in public schools alongside children without disabilities.[vi] In 1990, that law was updated, and it is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).[vii]

The Disability Rights Movement has fought to improve accessibility and inclusivity for people with disabilities. One of the movement's greatest successes is the Americans with Disabilities Act or the ADA. The ADA was passed in 1990 and established civil rights and protections for people with disabilities. Now people with disabilities can get accommodations to help them have a full and equal opportunity to participate in society and businesses cannot exclude them just because of a disability. [viii]

Nonetheless, people with disabilities continue to face attitudinal and social barriers that stand in the way of full integration. As a society we have come a long way, but we are not finished yet. Even today, people with disabilities face alarming rates of abuse and discrimination.[ix]

Here are just a few of the ways that people with disabilities are still discriminated against today:

- Pay-rates below minimum-wage[x]
- Electric shock devices to control behavior[xi]
- Surgeries to manipulate puberty and development[xii]
- Termination of parental rights[xiii]

Disability Language

As more people with disabilities integrate into the community, introductory language changes to reflect how they want to be addressed. This manual uses People First Language which places the person before the disability. People First Language focuses on the person, not the disability. Many people believe that People First Language is one way to show that you accept and respect the person. It can also help change the way society talks about people with disabilities by focusing on what they can do.[xiv]

The chart below shows the differences between language that puts disability first and language that puts the person first. [xv]

Don't Say	Do Say
Differently abled, challenged	Disability
The disabled, handicapped	People with disabilities
Retarded	Intellectual/developmental disability
She is schizophrenic/crazy	She has a diagnosis of schizophrenia OR She has a psychiatric disability
Handicapped or disabled parking/bathroom	Accessible parking/bathroom
He is crippled	He has a mobility disability
She is wheelchair-bound or confined to a wheelchair	She is a wheelchair-user OR She uses a wheelchair
Hearing impaired	Deaf or hard-of-hearing
He's mute	He is unable to speak/ is non-verbal
Normal person	Person without a disability
Dwarf/midget	Little person
Paraplegic	Has paraplegia/ a mobility disability

Nonetheless, you should remember that people with disabilities are a diverse group. You cannot refer to them as one entity or presume to know what each person prefers. Therefore, an individual's preference may be different from the language you see here.[xvi] Many people in the Deaf and Blind communities, as well as parts of the Autistic community, prefer being called Deaf, Blind, or Autistic. It may be offensive to call them a person who is deaf, a person with a vision impairment, or a person with autism.[xvii] In addition, some disability rights activists refer to themselves as "disabled people." This reflects their belief that they are disabled by societal barriers and their determination to focus on the removal of those barriers. [xviii]

When advocates need to use potentially offensive legal language, they should explain that the law uses the language even though it is now considered inappropriate.

When we regard people as unique individuals with different personalities, life experience, and preferences, we are more likely to treat them with respect. A good rule of thumb is to let the person be your guide and use the language each individual prefers.

You should **not** use some words, even when you see them in official documents. The most extreme example of this is the r-word (retard).[xix] You may see government or legal documents with the r-word or with descriptions of "handicapped" or "disabled" people, which may be inappropriate. As an advocate, you should try to use appropriate language even when the law does not.

The r-word is an offensive slur. Commit to ending the use of the r-word by taking the Spread the Word to End the Word Pledge.

Ask Before Giving Help

Always ask before giving help. Sometimes people with disabilities may need help, but other times they may not need or want it. You also may not know what the person needs or how to help him or her.[xx] Thinking you know more about a person's needs based on false assumptions is a form of ableism.

People with disabilities may not tell you about their disability or their accessibility needs when you first meet them; you can and should ask if they have any accessibility needs. This shows that you are open and accommodating. Asking about a person's disability can feel uncomfortable. Below are some general guidelines for asking about accessibility needs.[xxi]

Don't Ask	Do Ask
What happened to you?	Do you have any accommodation/accessibility needs?
Personal questions (How do you use the bathroom?)	Is there anything we need to know to better serve you?
Let me get that for you.	Can I help you? How would you like me to help you?

Ask general questions about service and access. Do not ask specifics about the person's disability or how the disability happened. This information is personal and not necessary for you to do your job. Ask everyone, and don't make assumptions about who needs what. You cannot always see a person's disability.[xxii]

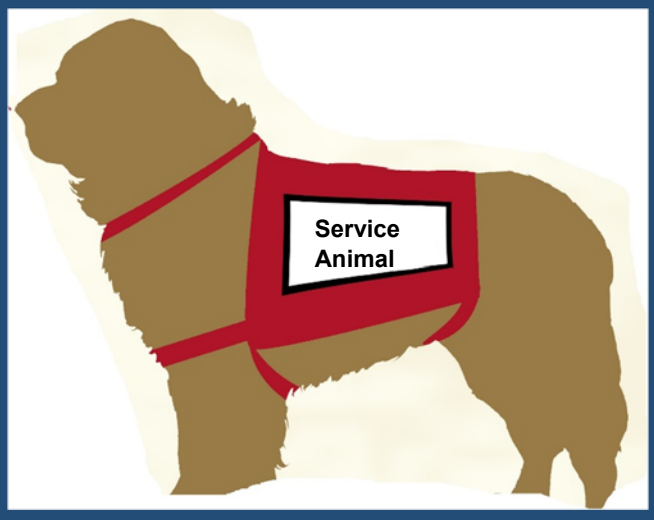
Service Animal Etiquette

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), people with disabilities may have a trained service dog (or miniature horse) with them at all times, including in all public accommodations and government buildings. Service animals can only be excluded from places when there is a legitimate safety concern (an operating room may need a sterile environment), it is not housebroken, or it is misbehaving. Misbehaving does not necessarily mean making noise. A service dog, for example, may be trained to bark to alert a person of an oncoming seizure.[xxiii]

A public accommodation can only ask two questions about a service animal:

- Is this animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has this animal been trained to perform?[xxiv]

Respect the person's service animal just as you would the person's personal space. Do not distract the animal while it is working by petting it or calling its attention to you, and do not touch the animal without asking its handler for permission.



Other Tips[xxv]

- Treat adults like adults.
- Call people by their names.
- Offer to shake hands.
- Make eye contact.
- Talk to the person, not his or her interpreter or companion.
    - Do not say: “Ask her what she saw” to an interpreter. Say: “What did you see?”
- If a person uses sign language and is still signing, that means that he or she is still speaking. Do not talk over that person’s signing. This may mean that you need to look up periodically from your notes so that you do not accidentally talk over the person.
- Ask if you can help and how.
    - And accept “no” as an answer.
- When working with wheelchair users, sit at their level so they can comfortably maintain eye contact. If that is not possible, stand at a slight distance, so they can make eye contact without straining their necks.
- Have a clipboard handy if you expect the person to fill out forms or provide signatures.
- Don’t ask private questions you wouldn’t ask anyone else.
- Don’t pretend to understand someone if you don’t. Ask for clarification.

When communicating with a Deaf person using an interpreter, the Deaf person may be looking at the interpreter and not you. You should still be addressing and looking at the person you are speaking to.

When using a sign language interpreter, make sure that you’re using the right type of sign language. There are thousands of different sign languages.

- Don’t make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do.
- Don’t lean on a person’s wheelchair.
- Don’t touch a person or his or her mobility devices/supports without permission—including to push someone in a wheelchair.
- Do not pat someone on the head.
- Do not make corny jokes or nicknames.

Integrate, Don't Exploit

Be sure that your organization is integrating people with disabilities to really include them, not just to have the appearance of diversity. People with disabilities should be treated like people, not used as stories to gain political leverage or symbols to rally your cause around. This is also true for other minority groups. By being more inclusive, you not only benefit from the perspectives of people with disabilities, but also improve your organization's reputation with the disability community. This increases the likelihood of further integration of your organization.[xxvi]

The difference between exploitation and inclusion can be difficult to understand. Exploitation can sometimes look like an organization is making an effort, and people often think that is enough.[xxvii]

Exploitation	The Problem	Integration
Bringing a person with a disability to an event and letting someone else explain why the event/cause is important to him or her.	Someone is speaking for the person. This is particularly bad if other people are telling their own stories	Let the person tell his or her own story, in his or her own way. Let the person explain why your organization is good in his or her opinion.
Picking a disability-related cause for your organization to address.	This does not involve people with disabilities in the decision-making process.	Integrate people with disabilities into your planning teams. Ask what issues or policies would make a difference to them.
Inviting your friend with a disability to join your board.	This is a tricky one. It's not necessarily bad. While it is a good idea to include someone with a disability on your governing board, be sure you're not picking someone out of convenience. Avoid tokenizing one person.	Include multiple people with disabilities on your board. Look for people who are active and want to be involved. Consider including people from different backgrounds or with different kinds of disabilities to get more perspectives.

The most important thing to remember is respect.[xxviii] Here are some guidelines[xxix] to avoid exploiting people with disabilities:

- Avoid changing your tone or language when explaining things. While you might want to used simplified language and speak clearly, you do not want to sound like you are talking to a child.
- Do not make assumptions about what people with disabilities care about. You might not guess that a person who uses a wheelchair may want to hear about improving the running trails in the local park. That person may use those trails too. Do not assume that a person with a disability is only interested in disability-related issues.

- Listen. This applies to people without disabilities too. If the person you are trying to help tells you that the great idea you had isn't what he or she needs, then work with that person to figure out what will be helpful. When you make decisions for people without including them, you risk alienating them and wasting resources.
- Engage with people from all different backgrounds. People with disabilities in urban areas may have different concerns than people who live in rural areas. Both matter.
- Don't pick a disability voice to include out of convenience. You may know a person with a disability who has great ideas, but try to engage the people you might have overlooked.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Understanding the ADA is an important part of being a good advocate for persons with disabilities. For a more in-depth explanation of the ADA, see ADA National Network's ADA Q&A page.

The ADA is a law which protects the rights of people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination based on disability. The ADA defines disability differently than other laws or the way the average person on the street might define it. To be considered a person with a disability under the ADA, a person must have "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities…, a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment."[xxx] The ADA addresses employment discrimination, access to state and local government programs, and access to public places.[xxxi]

Employment

The ADA protects people with disabilities from discrimination in the workplace. This prevents employers from refusing to hire people because of their disability or fire them if they need an accommodation. An employer also cannot ask a candidate if they have a disability or about that disability during a job interview.[xxxii]

The person with a disability must still be otherwise qualified to get the job. This means that the person can still perform the job's essential functions. However, the person may need a reasonable accommodation—a change to the usual way a job is done to allow the person with a disability to do the work.[xxxiii]

If you have a question about reasonable accommodations, visit the Job Accommodation Network.

Some examples of reasonable accommodations are:

- Providing a sign language interpreter for a Deaf person
- Allowing a person to work sitting down rather than standing

State and Local Government

State and local governments cannot discriminate against people with disabilities. This includes access to public transportation, government owned buildings, and programs like Food Stamps. Programs run by the government or programs receiving money from the government cannot have eligibility criteria that exclude people with disabilities. Also, the buildings or locations that house these programs must be accessible. This means that, at a minimum, there must be a way for the person to get into the place, such as a wheelchair ramp and wide doorways.[xxxiv]

Compliance with the ADA ensures baseline access, but not full inclusivity. Advocates should focus on accessibility and universal design.

Access to Public Accommodations

A public accommodation is a privately-owned entity that is open to the public, such as a restaurant, a store, or a doctor's office. Places of public accommodation must follow the ADA's accessibility rules. Places like private membership clubs and religious organizations are not required to follow these rules, although we should encourage them to be inclusive.[xxxv]

Public accommodations do not have to completely change the way they do business or pay a lot of money to become ADA compliant, but they do have to make some adjustments. For example, most restaurants do not carry Braille menus. A reasonable accommodation in this case is to have a waiter read the menu to customers with visual impairments.[xxxvi]

Surveying Your Organization

The best way to make your organization more inclusive is to figure out whether or not it is accessible by surveying the organization and its facilities. Even if a building inspector or government official has said that your organization is in compliance with the ADA, you should still perform this survey.

Remember: ADA compliance does not mean that your organization is fully accessible and inclusive.

First, ask the following questions about your organization:[xxxvii]

- Does your organization currently work with people with disabilities?
- Does your organization provide training on working with people with disabilities to its staff and volunteers?
- During client intake, do you ask about accommodations or accessibility needs?
- Does your organization have a statement about employment discrimination and the rights of employees with disabilities?
- Does your organization have a policy or statement about working with clients with disabilities?
- Does your organization have a point of contact for accommodations or an ADA coordinator?

Second, use this checklist to see if your organization's facilities and events are ADA compliant.

Creating Opportunities for Civic Engagement

When thinking about how to create a full and equal opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in civic engagement, do not simply create a separate opportunity. You are not designing different materials or events for people with disabilities. You are making adjustments to integrate them in existing opportunities.

One way to think about this is through the lens of universal design. Universal design is the idea that things (buildings, education curriculum, documents, etc.) can and should be created in a way that is practical, accessible, and aesthetically pleasing for everyone.[xxxviii] An example of universal design in action is automatic doors. Even though they are accessibility features, everyone is able to use and enjoy them.

Accessible Language[xxxix]

No matter who you are working with, you want to make sure that your message comes across clearly. In order to be universally accessible, when working with people with and without disabilities, use simplified language. This applies whether you are speaking or writing. Here are a few more ways to help make sure that your message is accessible.

- Use lists instead of long sentences.
- Use everyday language instead of longer words.
- Be clear about who you are talking to or about.
- Be consistent in the words you use.

Checking Readability Using Microsoft Word

Click “File” in the upper left corner →

Select “Options” on the left side. This will open a new window. →

Select “Proofing” on the left side of the new window→

Under the heading “When correcting spelling and grammar in Word,” check the box next to “Show readability statistics.” →

Click “OK.” Now when you run spell check, Word will show the reading level of your document.

- Avoid acronyms, unless they are very common or you explain them first.
- Use short sentences.
- Provide definitions for terms that people might not be familiar with.
- Use as few words as you can. Cut out unnecessary words.
- Use the readability feature on Microsoft Word to help you figure out the reading level your document, speech, or presentation. The ideal reading level is between grades 5 and 8.
- Present the information in multiple ways. Some people learn better with written words, pictures, or audio. Others may need a combination of those.
- Avoid sarcasm.

Written Materials[xl]

Whenever possible, provide digital copies of written materials. This allows people to adjust the format as needed or to have a digital screen reader read the document aloud to them. Follow these tips to make written documents more accessible:

- Use a 14-point type font or larger.
- Use a layout with plenty of blank space. Avoid using large chunks of words.
- Use clear headings.
- Use bold for important information. Italics and underlining can be harder to read.
- Use a font that is clear and simple, like Verdana or Arial. These fonts are sans serif fonts so are easier to read.
- Include pictures to help show the main idea. Simple, easy to interpret pictures are best.
- Have materials available in alternative formats. You can download symbols here to put on documents to indicate that the document is available in a different format.

Types of Alternative Formats

- Braille
- Large print (18 pt. or larger)
- Audio
- Digital

- Avoid using PDFs or scanned materials. Screen readers read scanned documents as images and don't read the information out loud. If you're going to use PDFs, make them accessible by following these tips here.
- Do not use the enlargement function on a copy machine to make the document larger. This may make the document fuzzy. When making large-print documents, use a word processor and make the font at least 18-point.
- Use a font and background with high contrast. Dark colors on light backgrounds usually work. Use an accessibility checker like WebAim to test the colors.
- Don't put text on top of pictures or complicated backgrounds. Use simple, solid-color backgrounds.
- Make your registration or intake paperwork available in alternative formats. When not possible, provide instructions for other registration options.
- When preparing materials for a meeting in advance, give participants an option to ask for materials in an alternative format.
- Use matte paper rather than glossy.
- Print on one side and avoid thin paper that allows images or text to bleed through.

Websites[xli]

Most of the tips about written materials also apply to material available on the internet. Some web-specific tips are to:

- Create a button on your website that allows people to switch the contrast settings or font sizes.
- Use skip navigation.
- Use alt text to describe images.
- Caption all videos included on your website.
- Use descriptions for links instead of just writing "here."
- Don't use images of text or PDFs. Screen readers have difficulty recognizing and reading the text.
- Label form fields so that screen reader users know that there are forms to fill out and what information goes in which boxes.

- Use clean, clutter-free designs. These will be easier for people with cognitive disabilities as well as screen reader users to navigate.
- Make sure that your web designer is familiar with website accessibility features.
- Take advantage of the free resources available online to check your website accessibility.
- If you change where something is located or if you change your website significantly, be sure to explain clearly that there has been a change.

Resources to Check Your Website Accessibility

Section 508

WebAIM

Accessible Web Studio

WC3: World Wide Web Consortium

Web Accessibility Initiative

Paciello Group

Social Media

Here are a few tips on using social media for outreach with people with disabilities:[xlii]

- Use multiple social media platforms. Everyone has their own favorite, and some may be more accessible than others depending on the disability.
- Allow for anonymous posts when discussing issues concerning disability. That way people can post about their concerns without revealing personal information.
- Include a feedback button and ask about how your organization can be more accessible.
- Partner with other organizations working with people with disabilities to reach a greater number of people.
- Post a variety of content—text, pictures, and videos.
- Include content created by people with disabilities.
- Use the accessibility guidelines above in the previous two sections when creating content.

Events

Planning a disability-friendly event starts with creating an invitation that shows the event will be accessible. All invitations or promotional materials advertising the event should include the following statement:

> "If you have a disability and may require an accommodation to fully participate in this activity, please call (staff name) to request an accommodation at (phone) or at (e-mail)."

General Tips for Events

When selecting a venue, make sure that it passes this checklist.

- If the venue has barriers to accessibility, assess whether the venue can be adapted to become accessible by reviewing these measures.
- Make sure there is space for service animals to relieve themselves and to get water.
- Provide well-lit spaces or adjustable lighting options.
- Provide access to a quiet room nearby.
- Have everyone use microphones during presentations—even guests who are asking questions—and/or have presenters repeat audience questions into a microphone.

When possible always ask a focus group of people with disabilities for tips on making events more accessible. If you can't talk to anyone in person, go to the comments section about an event on social media or on a disability rights organization's page. Read what people are already saying is a problem.

- Include clearly-marked accessible seating in multiple locations. Allow people to choose their own seats. Make sure that there is working-air conditioning.
- Provide agendas and itineraries in multiple formats. Make announcements when important events are about to take place or when things are moved.
- Let people know as soon as possible when there are changes so that they can make adjustments.
- Provide sign language interpreters.

- Use chairs with arms.
- Use tables when possible and make sure that the tables are of varying heights and not all tall tables.
- Orally describe the room, including the location of exits, restrooms, and refreshments for people with visual disabilities.
- Avoid the use of strobe lights or fog machines.
- Encourage guests not to wear fragrances.
- Allow for written questions.
- Give plenty of time for people to move from place to place.
- Give frequent breaks every hour or 45 minutes.
- Make sure the visual aids are easy to see from all areas of the room. In large rooms, use multiple screens when possible.
- Use a public-address system or provide audio devices.
- Have a designated accessibility point of contact. Make sure that person is easily identifiable and has been trained in providing accommodations to people with disabilities.

Serving Food at Events[xliii]

- Make sure dining tables are an appropriate height for wheelchair users.
- Avoid long, loose tablecloths. These cause problems for wheelchairs as the tablecloths can get caught in the wheels. Bind the tablecloths so they are not loose.
- Leave space between tables for wheelchairs and other mobility devices.
- Allow space between seats at a table for people to move.
- Provide straws and light-weight cutlery options.
- If there will be a self-serve buffet, make sure the buffet tables are low enough. Have staff available to help if necessary.
- Give the guests the option to request meals that meet dietary restrictions (vegetarian, gluten free, nut free, etc.)
- Clearly mark foods that contain allergens (nuts, dairy, gluten).
- Clearly mark foods that meet dietary restrictions.

Participation in Your Organization

One of the best ways to create a full and equal opportunity for civic engagement for people with disabilities is to include them as members of your organization. Remember from the section "Integrate, Don't Exploit" that actually hearing from people with disabilities is a good way to make sure you are meeting an actual need. People with disabilities can participate in rallies, marches, phone banks, and other activities.[xliv]

Here are a few things to keep in mind when including people with disabilities in organizational activities:[xlv]

- Pick march routes or canvassing routes with well-paved, flat pathways.
- Have the option for people to remain in one place while protesting or collecting signatures.
- Make sure there are accessible bathrooms available for all genders along routes when you are on the move.
- Give different options for ways to volunteer based on comfort level: in-person, over the phone, mobile, or stationary.
- Give people the option of working as a group or working individually.
- Keep solar shields, signature guides, and a selection of magnifiers at your organization for people with visual impairments to use.

> "I went to a protest at an airport & everyone was crowded standing around listening to speakers & I ended up having to sit on the floor in the middle of this chaos (since I can't stand for extended periods of time) & risked getting trampled on—having designated seating would totally have prevent this."
>
> -Stacie, Commenter on Rooted In Rights, "How to Make Your Social Justice Event Accessible"

Engaging People with Disabilities

Your organization likely has worked on recruitment in the past. Many of the recruitment measures your organization is already using apply to engaging people with disabilities. You may, however, be unfamiliar with where to find people with disabilities who are interested in your organization.

One way to reach more people is to partner with other organizations. Organizations that serve people with disabilities will be more familiar with the disability community in your area. Reach out and let them know what you are doing. They might be willing to help connect you with their clients.[xlvi]

You can partner with these organizations by doing events with them. They may also be able to help you use social media to connect with persons with disabilities in your area and recommend people to you or your organization to their clients.[xlvii] Be respectful of other organization's solicitation policies. Don't use any organization's facilities or social media to promote your own cause or organization without their permission.

Most importantly, become an organization that people with disabilities want to work with. Create a reputation in your community as welcoming and accommodating of all people. When you have a welcoming reputation, people with disabilities will be more likely to want to work with you.[xlviii]

For ideas on forming an advisory group of people with disabilities, see this manual on forming advisory groups.

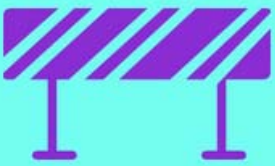
Tips for Creating a Reputation for Inclusivity:[xlix]

- Make sure your facilities are accessible using this checklist.
- Include language that is disability-friendly on your promotional materials.
    - Give contact information for accommodation requests.
    - Offer alternative formats.
- Train your employees and volunteers on working with people with disabilities.

Really?!

Common Mistakes That Ruin Your Reputation With The Disability Community

Designing an event for people with disabilities without making sure it's accessible and then having the target consumers face barriers to participation.



Assuming that all types of disabilities are the same and that all people have the same needs.

Not doing your homework on appropriate accommodations and giving the wrong kind of services.

Assuming that all wheelchairs are motorized and can climb steep ramps. Or, assuming that manual wheelchair users need and/or want you to push them.

Not showing up or giving second-rate services and expecting no one to notice.

Talking too loudly when communicating with people with disabilities.

Glossary

Ableism – Ableism is the term for the systemic bias and discrimination against people with disabilities. It reflects the negative image of people with disabilities that society has created. It also includes the false assumption that people with disabilities are less capable and depend on the charity of others. Well-intentioned actions, such as rushing to help a person in a wheelchair without asking, are often examples of this false belief.[l]

Accessibility – Generally, something that is able to be used or understood. In this manual, we mean something can be used or understood by a person with a disability.[li]

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – A law that requires the government and public places to make accommodations so that people with disabilities can use those spaces or services.[lii]

Alt text – A word or phrase in a document that describes an image to users.[liii]

Disability – A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity.[liv]

Essential functions – The basic duties that an employee must be able to do in order to perform a job.[lv]

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – A law that protects the rights of students with disabilities to a free, appropriate public education.[lvi]

Magnifiers – These are tools which enlarge images or words. These are particularly useful for people who are blind or have visual impairments and may be electronic devices or glass/plastic lens.[lvii]

Otherwise qualified – When a person can get services, take part in public programs or activities, or do their job with or without fundamentally changing the rules or practices.[lviii]

People First Language – Appropriate and respectful language that is used to talk to or about a person with a disability. The goal of Person First Language is to focus on the person over the disability.[lix]

Public accommodation – A place of business that is generally open to the public. Even privately owned entities are public accommodations.[lx]

Reasonable accommodation – A slight change or modification to a job, service, or facility that allows people with disabilities access or enables them to enjoy the facility or service.[lxi]

Screen reader – A program that helps people with vision problems use a computer.[lxii]

Service animal – A dog or miniature horse that is trained to help a person with a disability through duties such as pulling a wheelchair, picking things up, or reminding the person to take their medications.[lxiii]

Signature guide – This is a tactile tool to help people with visual impairments know where to sign. It is shaped like a credit card with a rectangle cut out of the center for people to sign within.[lxiv]

Simplified language – Language between a 5th and 8th grade reading level that is easy for everyone to understand.[lxv]

Skip navigation – A system that gives easier Internet access to users with disabilities.[lxvi]

Solar shields – These are special glasses designed to cut down glare from light, both indoor and outdoor. The frame cups the eye, so that no glare gets in, and the lens are tinted differently for different uses.[lxvii]

Universal design – A structure that is easily accessible to people of all ages, sizes, and abilities or disabilities.[lxviii]

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The Enable Project

People with disabilities make up a significant percentage of the State of Florida, Miami-Dade County, and the City of Miami. The Enable Project recognizes the need for greater access to services for people with disabilities in order to promote inclusion in existing social justice organizations. The Enable Project is a three-pronged approach to promoting a better community for people with disabilities:

- Training social justice organizations to work with people with disabilities at the intersection of disability and civic engagement;
- Training advocates to help people with disabilities apply for Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits; and
- Training attorneys to handle Social Security disability appeals.

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