

Options Center for Independent Living
Reference Guide to Independent
A Guide for People with Disabilities
2020-2021

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AMITA Health St. Mary's Hospital is committed to keeping our communities healthy and safe during this difficult time as we continue to care for those who need us most. Now and always, we are here with you and for you. Access AMITA Health St. Mary's Hospital's full range of services by calling 855.MyAMITA or visiting amitahealth.org

Celebrating The 30 Year Anniversary Of The ADA

Signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush, the ADA is a landmark piece of civil rights legislation that works to increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life, including employment. Since its passage in 1990, this landmark legislation has impacted the lives of millions of people with disabilities in the United States through improved access to employment, government services and programs, and goods and services from businesses.

The ADA ushered in a new era of opportunity for Americans with disabilities. Instead of being excluded from opportunities to contribute their skills and talents, Americans with disabilities gained access to places and public services, such as employment and training programs, that were not possible before the ADA.

The Americans with Disabilities Act broke down barriers to opportunity for millions of American workers. On this

anniversary, we recognize and celebrate the access to opportunity created by the ADA. Happy 30th Anniversary!

Options CIL

Options CIL (OCIL) was established in 1989. Our board and our staff are comprised of more than 50% of people with disabilities. We are funded by state and federal grants, private donations, private foundation grants, United Way allocations, memberships and proceeds from fundraisers.

Our main office is located in Bourbonnais, Illinois serving Kankakee County. Our satellite office in Watseka, Illinois serves Iroquois County. OCIL serves individuals of all ages, races, faiths, genders, and disabilities.

We provide five core services, which are: advocacy, information and referral, independent living skills, peer mentoring, and transition. Our mission is to partner with persons with disabilities who want to live independently and participate fully in society.

Through peer support and role modeling, Options team teaches consumers that persons with disabilities have the right and the responsibility to pursue goals of self-determination and self-sufficiency. We serve as a resource and mentor, empowering consumers with the skills to direct their own lives, set their own goals, and plan the necessary steps to achieve those goals.

Options CIL works to bring about positive change in attitudes and accessibility and provides our community with the information and knowledge needed to accept, respect, and accommodate citizens with disabilities.

Options Service Area and Offices

Iroquois County

130 Laird Lane, Suite 103, Watseka, IL 60970

815-432-1332 (Voice)

815-432-1361 (TTY)

815-432-1360 (Fax)

Kankakee County

22 Heritage Drive, Suite 107, Bourbonnais, IL 60914

815-936-0100 (Voice)

815-936-0132 (TTY)

815-936-0117 (Fax)

www.optionscil.org

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Opportunities for Membership

All membership contributions will be used to support the mission of Options and are tax deductible according to

federal income tax laws. All donors will receive a written acknowledgment.

Individual and Consumer – Contributions of \$10 or more. No consumer will be denied membership for inability to pay. All individuals and consumers will be entitled to: Membership Cards, voting privileges at the Options annual meeting*.

Agencies and Businesses – Contributions of \$25 or more (not-for-profit) or \$50 or more (small businesses). Benefits include: Membership certificates, voting privileges at Options annual meeting*, acknowledgement at Options annual meeting.

Corporate Membership – Contributions of \$100 to \$299. Benefits include: Membership certificates, voting privileges at Options annual meeting*, acknowledgement at Options annual meeting, Company name listed in the Options annual Reference Guide to Independence, Company name listed on the Options website.

Philanthropic – Contributions of \$300 or more. Benefits include: Membership certificates, voting privileges at Options annual meeting*, acknowledgement at Options annual meeting, a free business card size ad in our annual Reference Guide to Independence, Company name listed on the Options website with a link to your company website, your company logo on the Options website.

*Members must have been in good standing for at least thirty (30) days prior to any meeting at which ballots are to be cast.

Please complete our Membership Application or call Therese Cardosi at (815) 936-0100 for more information.

Good Shepherd Manor

For almost 50 years, Good Shepherd Manor has provided high quality and compassionate care for the men who live here. This client-centered mission has allowed Good Shepherd Manor to develop the services to meet the needs of our clients regardless of their age-related demands. Now, in the year 2020, as some of the men have aged and new clients have been welcomed, the Manor provides a broad cross section of educational, vocational, leisure, and sports opportunities for the men, along with increased health services that go above and beyond what is mandated and compensated for by State funding.

One of the many wonderful aspects of care that sets Good Shepherd Manor apart from others is the comprehensive Health Care Program that is provided for ALL of the residents. In case you did not already know, here are a few of the highlights:

- The Manor's 7,000 square foot Infirmary
- Nursing staff is available during all waking hours

- The Helen McAllister Group Home, built in close proximity to the Infirmary, is a uniquely designed group home to serve the needs of clients with signs of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
- On average, about 33 men work or volunteer in the community each quarter accumulating about 5,000 hours each.
- 30 men participate in sports and compete in Special Olympics.
- The talented Chorus and Signers program.

Do you know someone who may need Good Shepherd Manor services now or in the future? Would you like to learn more about the services and programs provided? Visit www.goodshepherdmanor.org or contact Erin at 815-472-3090; info@goodshepherdmanor.org to arrange a tour of the facilities and visit the beautiful campus!

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Good Shepherd Manor

Providing a high quality of life and compassionate care for men with developmental disabilities since 1971.

Celebrating 50 years in 2021!

- 13 group homes – 1 of which is uniquely designed for residents with dementia and Alzheimer's.

- Day Program
- Vocational Training
- Infirmary
- Nursing Services
- Special Olympics
- Chorus and Signers Program

For more information follow us on Facebook:

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or visit us on the web at www.goodshepherdmanor.org

815-472-3090

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Report Finds Adults With Disabilities Remain Outside The Economic Mainstream

This report finds that, in the 29 years since the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, ensuring all individuals with disabilities the opportunity to achieve “economic self-sufficiency,” this population still faces numerous financial hurdles and roadblocks to financial inclusion.

Based on data mined from the 2017 FDIC National Survey on Unbanked and Underbanked Households, this insightful report highlights the financial choices and banking habits of adults with disabilities. This is the third report, based on FDIC data, that NDI has released in five years.

“Americans with disabilities face unique financial obstacles and challenges that separate them from their peers without disabilities,” National Disability Institute Executive Director, Michael Morris, said. “Today, with the release of this report, we now have a clearer picture of the challenges they face, but also the significant opportunities to design solutions.” Continued Mr. Morris, “It is essential that policymakers, financial institutions and community organizations rally around the report’s findings and recommendations, and begin to work together to ensure equal access and financial inclusion for people across the spectrum of disabilities.”

The report findings provide an important lens on the financial choices and decision making of Americans with disabilities. Report highlights include:

- Households with a disability were three times as likely to be unbanked as households with no disability (18 percent versus 6 percent). The “disability gap” has increased since 2011.
- Twenty-five percent of households had a bank account, but used a service that either: (1) the bank did not offer; (2) the bank offered, but the household did not qualify; or (3) was offered elsewhere at a lower price or with more convenience.
- Households with disabilities were more likely to rely on bank tellers and less likely to use online or mobile

options. Thirty-seven percent of households with a disability used online or mobile as the primary method to access their account compared with 62 percent of households with no disability.

- Only 38 percent of households with a disability saved for unexpected expenses or emergencies in the past 12 months compared with 63 percent of households with no disability.
- Compared to households without a disability, those with a disability were much less likely to have a credit card, store credit, mortgage or home equity, auto loan or student loan. Almost one in five households with disabilities had an unmet need for credit.

For more information visit
www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org

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Your Right To Vote While In A Nursing Home

If you are living in a nursing home, you still have the right to vote. A number of laws protect your right to vote. The below provides a summary of some of the ways people with disabilities, including older Americans with physical, mental, sensory or cognitive impairments, can exercise their right to vote while living in a nursing home.

Absentee voting

Absentee voting is also known as voting by mail. Anyone can vote using an absentee ballot for any reason.

You have to request an application for absentee ballot by mail, in person or online from your local election authority. You have to fill out the application and return it to the local

election authority, either in person or by mail. You can request an absentee ballot 40 days before the election up until one day before the election if you do it in person, or five days before the election if you do it by mail.

If you apply in person, you may immediately vote your absentee ballot in your local election office. If you apply by mail, you will receive a ballot in the mail. You must fill out the ballot and return it to the local election authority, either by mail or in person. You must use the envelope given to you and you must sign and seal it as instructed. If you return it by mail, it must be postmarked no later than midnight on the night before the election.

You may receive help marking your absentee ballot. If you return your completed ballot by mail, the person helping you must sign the envelope, stating that they assisted you.

Voting in a nursing home

If you live in a nursing home (and have lived there for more than 14 days before the election), you may request an absentee ballot by following the steps described above. In some instances, in-person absentee voting at the nursing home will be arranged.

If that happens, at least two election judges, one from each political party, will come to the nursing home the Friday, Saturday, Sunday or Monday before Election Day and supervise the voting. The hours and days for this voting must be posted in a place in the nursing home that is easily seen.

You will vote using an absentee ballot, and the election judges must return the ballots to be counted.

Voting when you are admitted to a health care facility less than 14 days before an election

If you are registered to vote and are admitted to a hospital, nursing home or rehabilitation center less than 14 days before the election, you can still vote.

You must obtain an “Application for Ballot for Qualified Voter Admitted to Hospital, Nursing Home or Rehabilitation Center” from your local election authority and fill it out.

Your doctor must fill out a section of the application and sign the form, too.

Either a relative or a registered voter who lives in the same precinct as you can go to the election authority’s office to hand in the form. They will be given an absentee ballot to take to you.

You can then vote the absentee ballot and place it in the envelope given to you. You may receive help in marking your absentee ballot. The person helping you must sign the envelope, stating that they assisted you.

The same person who obtained the ballot for you must then return it to the local election authority before 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Assistance with voting

If you need help voting your ballot, you can receive help from any person you choose, as long as that person is not your employer or an officer of a union in which you are a member. You also cannot receive assistance from a candidate whose name appears. The person who is helping you is not allowed to try to influence you to vote in a certain way. That person will have to sign a paper saying that he or she assisted you.

You may also ask the election judges for help. If you do, two election judges, one from each political party, must assist you in the voting booth. You will have to sign a paper stating that you have requested assistance.

Each polling place should also have other things to help you, including:

- Instructions, printed in large type, on display
- A magnifying lens to place over the ballot
- Sample ballots in large type
- A large-handled stylus, if needed
- Information by telecommunications devices for the deaf
- At least one electronic voting machine equipped with accessibility features, including audio mode for people with visual disabilities.

Curbside voting

If you vote on Election Day but cannot enter the polling place because it is not accessible or because you have limited mobility, you may request curbside voting.

Two election judges, one from each political party, will bring the ballot out to you. You must be within 50 feet of the polling place. You will then mark the ballot and give it back to the election judges, who will make sure it is counted inside the polling place.

You should call your local election authority to request curbside voting at least one day before Election Day. This is the best way to make sure that you will be able to vote using curbside voting. It may be possible to arrange for curbside voting on the day of the election, but you should call the election authority to ask.

For more information

Illinois State Board of Elections:

www.elections.il.gov/InfoForVoters.aspx, a public website, contains voting information, lists of Illinois counties and addresses, and phone numbers and websites for various county election authorities.

Equip for Equality's information for voters with disabilities:

www.equipforequality.org/issues/voting

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Thank you to the Times-Republic for their continued
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Aging And The ADA

What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

The ADA is a civil rights law. It was designed to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to work, education, and their community.

How does the ADA relate to older people?

As people get older, many start to develop problems with hearing, seeing, or getting around. Others experience chronic illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, or memory loss. People may have disabilities under the definition in the ADA when age-related changes in function make it more difficult to get around at home, participate in their community, or go to work.

Although people who are aging often don't think of themselves as having a disability, according to the ADA, having a "physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity" means a person has a disability.

More than 30 percent of Americans over age 65 have some kind of disability, and over 50 percent of those over age 75. These may range from difficulties seeing and hearing to walking and thinking. Under the ADA, it isn't the cause of the disability that matters, but what it means in everyday life.

To read the legal definition of “disability,” as stated in the ADA, see the following link:

<https://adata.org/faq/what-definition-disability-under-ada>

What areas of life are included under the ADA?

Work

Employers may not discriminate against you because of your disability if you can do your job “with accommodation.” An accommodation may be required to help employees with disabilities succeed in the workplace by making changes to the work environment or schedule, as long as it is not an “undue hardship” for the employer. For example, a person who is experiencing age-related vision loss can request a larger monitor or a screen reader to help them access their computer screen. Changes like this are called “reasonable accommodations.”

Many people continue to work past traditional retirement age. If you start having problems doing your job because of health or physical problems, you may be eligible under the ADA for workplace accommodations.

Transportation and Travel

Public transportation, such as light rail, transit and busses, is required to be accessible to people with disabilities. www.adata.org 2 2018

Taxi companies are required to provide accessible service. This means that transportation companies cannot refuse service if you use a mobility device such as a walker or a wheelchair.

People with disabilities have protections when flying, including the right to bring a service animal. Accessibility of the airport is covered under the ADA, but the accessibility of the airplane itself is covered under the Air Carrier Access Act:

<https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/passengers-disabilities>

Entertainment and Hospitality

“Places of public accommodation” like restaurants, hotels, theaters, arenas, and museums must be physically accessible to individuals with disabilities. They must also provide “reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures” when requested, so long as it is not an undue burden to the business. For example, a person with some age-related vision loss may go to a restaurant and have difficulty reading the menu. If the customer requests assistance, the restaurant should provide a menu in a format that works for that person, such as large print, or should offer to read it aloud.

Health Care

The ADA requires that health care providers, including medical facilities and dentists’ offices, provide reasonable modifications to patients. The health care provider must provide assistance with communication if needed. This means that they may help you fill out a form or read small print in documents before you sign them. Health care providers must also ensure that you can access medical equipment. For example, they can provide exam tables

that can move up and down to make it easier for patients to sit or lie down for examination.

Public Places

Public places and activities owned and controlled by state or local government like streets, sidewalks, parks, and government buildings are required to be accessible and they must provide requested reasonable modifications. For example, if a city is hosting a town hall meeting, they must ensure that there is an accessible entryway so that people who use mobility devices will be able to enter the building and participate.

Housing

Accessibility in housing is covered under the Fair Housing Act, which is enforced by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Fair Housing Act, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fair-housing-act-2>, applies to buildings with four or more units. Covered buildings must be physically accessible, according to the building code used by the state. In addition, housing providers must provide reasonable accommodations and modifications to tenants with disabilities. A housing provider might provide a designated parking space near the door of an apartment or modify its policies to allow a tenant to pay rent by mail as an accommodation.

More information about the ADA

The ADA National Network provides information, guidance and training on the ADA, tailored to meet the needs of business, government, and individuals at local, regional,

and national levels. You may contact your regional ADA Center by phone or email, or find more ADA resources on the ADA National Network's website.

Call: 1-800-949-4232 Website: <https://adata.org> Email: <https://adata.org/content/email-us>

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River Valley Metro Mass Transit District

What is it, and what do they do?

River Valley Metro Mass Transit District is a public service agency that offers three types of bus services for the residents of Kankakee County.

1. Traditional, or "fixed route", bus service in the urbanized area of Kankakee County. This includes Aroma Park, Kankakee, Bradley, Bourbonnais and Manteno.
2. Commuter shuttle service to Midway Airport and to

the Metra train station at University Park.

3. Service for individuals with disabilities who are unable to independently use fixed route service. This is referred to as Metro Plus service.

Fixed route buses serve more than 350 bus stops from 5:00 am to 9:30 pm Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 9:30 pm on Saturdays, and 8:00 am to 4:00 pm on Sundays and major holidays. Most stops are served once each hour, but a few are served every half hour. All buses are wheelchair accessible. Fare is \$1.00 per trip.

The University Park Metra train station commuter shuttle departs from the Metro Centre in Bourbonnais and makes one stop in Manteno. The shuttle schedule is coordinated with trains arriving at and departing from University Park.

The Midway Airport commuter shuttle also departs from the Metro Centre in Bourbonnais and makes one stop in Manteno. It then runs non-stop to Midway Airport. Our Bus Stop at Midway is located in the area designated for Regional Buses near the Baggage Claims exit.

Free parking for Midway Airport and University Park commuters is available at both the Bourbonnais and the Manteno departures points. Fare is \$2.00 each way.

Metro Plus service requires pre-qualification and operates by appointment. Metro Plus buses will pick you up at your home and take you to your destination. This is a shared

ride service, meaning that multiple individuals' trips are grouped together in an effort to meet all trip requests and improve efficiency. Ride time on Metro Plus is comparable to travel time on the fixed route system, including transfers and wait times. Fare is \$2.00 each way.

Additional details about each of these services are available at RiverValleyMetro.com or by calling 815-937-4287.

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River Valley Metro Mass Transit District

- 11 Local Routes serving Aroma Park, Kankakee, Bradley, Bourbonnais, and Manteno
- 2 Commuter Routes serving Midway Airport and the University Park Metra Station
- Origin-to-Destination service for those with qualifying disabilities

Whether traveling around town or to a Chicago area destination, all River Valley Metro buses are wheelchair accessible. And, if you have a disability that prevents you from using our local fixed route buses, Metro Plus can pick you up!

Metro Plus origin-to-destination service provides local transportation by appointment for people who have a disability that prevents them from using our local fixed route services. Eligibility must be verified through a simple

application process. For details, please visit RiverValleyMetro.com or call 815-935-1403.

Our buses run 365 days a year. Whether going to an appointment, visiting friends, or going out for the evening, Go where you want to go with River Valley Metro!

Fire Safety For People With Disabilities

Quick Facts

Information offered by: NFPA Public Education Division

- Annually there are approximately 700 home fires involving people with physical disabilities and approximately 1,700 home fires involving people with mental disabilities.
- An estimated 700 residential building fires involving individuals with physical disabilities are reported to U.S. fire departments each year causing an estimated 160 deaths, 200 injuries, and \$26 million in total loss.
- Cooking (22%) is the leading cause of residential building fires where a physical disability is reported as a human factor contributing to ignition.

Fire Safety For People With Disabilities

Quick Tips

- Understand your fire risk: Having physical or mental

disabilities doesn't mean you can't keep you and your family safe from fire. Build your home safety plan around your abilities.

- Install and maintain smoke alarms: Smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Test smoke alarm batteries every month and change them at least once a year. If you can't reach the test button on your smoke alarm, ask someone to test it for you.
- Live near an exit: Although you have the legal right to live where you choose, you'll be safest on the ground floor if you live in an apartment building. If you live in a multistory home, arrange to sleep on the first floor. Being on the ground floor and near an exit will make your escape easier.
- Plan your escape: Plan your escape around your capabilities. Know at least two exits from every room. If you a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to ensure you can get through the doorways. Make any necessary changes, such as installing exit ramps and widening doorways, to make an emergency escape easier.
- Do not isolate yourself: Speak to your family members, building manager or neighbors about your fire safety plan and practice it with them. Contact your department's local fire non-emergency line and

explain your needs. They can suggest escape plan ideas and may perform a home fire safety inspection if you ask. Ask emergency providers to keep your needs information on file. Keep a phone near your bed and be ready to call 911 or your local emergency number if a fire occurs.

Contact Options Center for Independent Living if you need assistance with fire safety at (815) 936-0100. We may be able to assist with assistive technology to keep you and your family safe.

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How Does Technology Help People Who Are Blind Or Visually Impaired?

If someone had told me 10 years ago that one day my cell phone would read print documents and describe things to me, I would've laughed and thought this person had watched too many sci-fi movies! This is all to say that today's technology not only makes life easier for everyone, but in the case of those of us with vision loss it allows us to do even the simplest of things others might not have to think about.

Thanks to modern technology, people with vision loss can do numerous things such as write documents, browse the internet and send and receive emails. Screen Reading software and special talking and Braille devices allow those of us with no vision to use computers, cell phones and other electronic devices independently. Similarly, people with low vision can use screen magnification software and devices that will allow them to see letters, pictures and other objects without having to struggle or strain their remaining vision. This technology – commonly known as assistive or adaptive technology – is continually evolving, and has removed many access barriers for people with vision loss.

Besides allowing us to carry out routine tasks at work and school, assistive technology also enables people with visual impairments to be more independent at home. We can now read the mail, listen to audio books, get step-by-step walking directions to unfamiliar places, record important information and so much more with special standalone devices designed for people with no or low vision. There are also devices like talking watches, thermometers, scales, blood glucose and blood pressure monitors that help us live independent and healthy lives.

People with low vision can also benefit from devices that magnify or enlarge objects. This equipment can help them take notes, read small print on electronic devices and watch TV. In other words, simple tasks that might have previously required the assistance of a sighted person can easily be done completely independently by people with some or no vision.

Cell phones and tablets have revolutionized the way people who are blind or visually impaired interact and use technology. Screen reading and magnifying software – like that used in computers – allows us to use these devices independently. However, the unique aspect about cell phones and tablets is that they can serve many of the purposes for which standalone devices and software were previously developed thanks to apps.

Nowadays I can easily do many of the things that previously required special software or devices on my iPhone or iPad. By using a special app called the KNFB

Reader, I can take a picture of a print letter and my phone will read it out loud within a matter of seconds. I no longer carry around a heavy or bulky tape recorder. With an app called Read2Go, I can download books in a matter of minutes or seconds onto my iPad and begin listening to them in no time!

Tablets and cell phones also enable people with visual impairments to do things that were previously impossible, or – at the very least – challenging. It is now possible for the iPhone, for example, to describe the color, shape and size of objects to someone who is blind thanks to an app called TapTapSee. Furthermore, other apps, such as Be My Eyes, connect blind or visually impaired individuals with a sighted person, who will then assist them by describing things. To put it simply, the sighted person (who can be located almost anywhere in the world) can be a virtual pair of eyes for the blind individual.

This is only but a brief explanation of how assistive and mainstream technology has helped and improved the quality of the lives of those of us with visual impairments. Since many types and brands of such technologies exist, it is virtually impossible for us to cover this topic in a single post. Assistive technology sure has opened a lot of doors and removed countless barriers, and I am very excited to see what it has to offer for all of us in the future.

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Age, Hearing Loss, And Communication: What Are My Rights?

People may experience some hearing loss as they age that could affect their ability to communicate and enjoy life. Hearing loss is the most recognizable age-related disability in older adults. Unfortunately, many adults with hearing loss feel isolated or left out and may choose to avoid participating at all. Hearing loss may also affect access to important information from health care providers or legal professionals.

This factsheet explains your rights as a person with hearing loss under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provides an overview of communication access (called “effective communication” in the ADA law) in your community.

Disability and the ADA

While you may think that declining hearing is just a part of getting older, this condition may be significant enough to be a disability under the ADA. Under the ADA, the term “disability” refers to a physical or mental condition that limits one or more major life activities. The ADA offers protections to millions of individuals with disabilities and has increased accessibility so that individuals with disabilities can continue to take part in community life.

Effective Communication

“I wish I could understand better when I attend the movies and theater.”

“I’m not sure what the doctor said about the surgery procedure.”

Effective communication is an important part of the ADA. Under the ADA, the term “effective communication” means that information must be as clear and understandable to people with disabilities as it is for people who do not have disabilities. Clear communication is important because it allows full participation and equal access to activities, services, and events in your community.

Effective Communication in Different Settings

People have different needs for communication in different settings. For example, in brief or simple face-to-face exchanges, written notes may be effective when a person with significant hearing loss asks for a copy of a form to fill out. Using a smart phone might work fine to write and exchange messages with a pharmacist when requesting a prescription. However, complex or lengthy exchanges (for example, when participating as a juror in court proceedings) may require more sophisticated strategies involving auxiliary aids and services.

Auxiliary Aids and Services for Hearing Loss

Under the ADA, you can request auxiliary aids and services that will enhance your ability to participate in your community. The term “auxiliary aids and services” refers to different ways to provide equal access to communication for people with disabilities. Some common aids for hearing loss include assistive listening systems and communication access real-time translation.

Assistive Listening Systems (ALS)

Assistive Listening Systems (ALS) are amplifiers that bring sound directly into the ear. They work by separating the sounds that you want to hear from background noise. ALS can be used by people with different types and degrees of hearing loss. Movie cinemas, theaters, courts, and some medical facilities offer ALS. You just need to ask for them.

Communication Access Realtime Translation or “CART”

Communication Access Realtime Translation or “CART” is a way to convert spoken words to text that can be

displayed on your personal laptop or hand-held device. It is similar to closed captioning which allows you to follow the audio for a TV show or a large, live-recorded event. CART is typically used for important exchanges of information such as job interviews, medical appointments, and court proceedings. Since CART requires a trained professional to type the words to text as well as equipment, you must request CART services and schedule them prior to the start of the event.

Effective Communication for Companions

Under the ADA it is also important to know that auxiliary aids and services may need to be provided to spouses, partners, family members, and close associates with hearing loss. For example, if your spouse has a court appointment, you as a family member with a hearing loss would have rights under the ADA to require an auxiliary aid or service to be able to participate and have full communication access.

Conclusion

Hearing loss can be a frustrating and isolating experience, but it doesn't have to be. Understanding your rights to communication access and the availability of auxiliary aids and services can greatly enhance your ability to communicate and participate in life.

For more information visit the ADA National Network (www.adata.org)

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Autism After High School: Nine Tips To Help Teens Transition To Adulthood

After high school, teens with autism have options for work and education with some modifications.

Approximately 48,500 teens with autism turn 18 each year, and the transition between high school to post-secondary education, college, or the workforce can be a challenging, anxiety-provoking time for both them and their parents.

UT Southwestern partners with Children's Medical Center at the Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities to help teens and families plan for and navigate this big step. Understandably, parents have a lot of in their lives. Understand questions and concerns, ranging from their child's social skills to studying support and finances

Although your teen has different needs compared to peers, it's important to recognize his or her many

strengths, interests, skills, and talents. Finding a way to foster these assets will be key to making your teen's transition to adulthood smoother. Here are some recommendations to help.

Nine tips to help teens with autism become adults:

1. Open the lines of communication

A challenge that parents often face is finding the right time to thoroughly explain the diagnosis of autism to their child. Although it depends on your child's level of functioning, the conversation probably should happen during the teen years. Teens with autism should understand their diagnosis and how it affects them so they can advocate for themselves at school and at work.

In school, that might be a request to waive courses or obtain certain accommodations so they can have positive experiences. At work, teens likely will need to learn how to request modifications or support they've never had to ask for before.

There's always a possibility for a bias or discrimination if they disclose their diagnosis to a school, program, or employer. However, without this information, peers, teachers, and supervisors might misinterpret a teen's behaviors or difficulties.

2. Request an updated autism evaluation

Before your teen graduates high school, ask for an updated autism evaluation. Recent information regarding his or her condition and abilities, either from the school or

from a private psychologist, is often necessary to apply for disability insurance, waivers, and support services.

3. Request a 504 plan

Another thing most parents don't realize is that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and individualized education programs (IEPs) do not follow teens into post-secondary education or college. Instead, you and your child will have to seek out a 504 plan for support services and accommodations such as extra time for test.

4. Plan for the future

When your child turns 18, you must reapply for social security disability insurance. Other financial and legal matters that can affect your child include obtaining health insurance, applying for home- and community-based waivers, and establishing guardianship and a special needs trust in the event something happens to you.

Also, check into setting up an ABLE account, a tax-advantaged savings account to help people with disabilities cover costs related to housing and transportation, services, technology, and health care that's not otherwise covered.

5. Consider your child's strengths

Children with autism tend to be reliable, detail-oriented, and exemplary at following rules when there are clear expectations – all valuable skills for employment. Unfortunately, many work programs pigeonhole those with

disabilities into a specific track or job placement rather than finding a position that is the right fit for their strengths and skills.

When deciding on a program or job, consider your child's strengths and what he or she is interested in and passionate about so that it's a win-win for everyone.

6. Explore all education and work options

Research shows that young adults with autism who do not go to college or enter the workforce miss out on opportunities and support they received while getting special education services in high school. Data from a 2015 report suggest that 26 percent of young adults with autism received no services that could help them continue education, work, or live more independently their e

It can be helpful to weigh your teen's options side by side:

- College: Whether it's a bachelor's or a two-year associate program, your teen can seek support through the school's student counseling center and ask professors for accommodations as needed.
- Cooperative education programs: Cooperative (co-op) education grants students academic credit for work. It's a good opportunity for young adults to learn more about a certain industry, get hands-on experience, and lay the frame to transition to traditional employment.
- Non-traditional post-secondary programs: Designed

for people with developmental disabilities, these programs offer students a college experience and inclusion with peers. Additionally, these programs focus on helping young adults develop social, life, and work skills while encouraging independence

- Vocational and trade school programs: Young adults with autism can have the opportunity to learn a skill or a trade, get on-the-job training, and gain work experience with the supervision and support they need.
- Volunteer or intern positions: Though often unpaid, these positions can help teens with autism identify and strengthen their skills and improve their confidence. These opportunities also can provide on-the-job training and experience to prepare young adults for traditional employment.

7. Talk about sex and appropriate social behaviors

Research suggests that those with autism and intellectual disabilities are at increased risk for negative sexual encounters, such as coercion or assault, due to lack of education about appropriate boundaries. Likewise, young adults with autism might unwittingly make fellow students or co-workers uncomfortable because of their own social behaviors. Parents need to be proactive by educating teens about sex and safety, as well as how to modify or replace their own behaviors to support more positive experiences for themselves and their peers. Autism

Speaks provides a Puberty and Adolescence resource. artthat may be a good place to st

8. Get support to help your teen develop soft skills

Change can be difficult for those with autism. High school is a good time to consider working with a psychologist or counselor who can help your teen develop soft skills, such as interviewing, communicating, decision-making, and managing relationships with others.

9. Start early with soft skills, and practice often

Although some skills might be more difficult than others for teens with autism to master, many can learn self-help, life, and soft skills. They'll likely need ample time and repetition, so start preparing your teen earlier than you might for a typically-developing child and continue to practice and reinforce those skills. When preparing for your teen's transition to adulthood, it's important to recognize that your son or daughter is unique. There are many paths for teens with autism, and it's important to prepare them for the opportunities that await after high school.

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Options CIL'S 5 Core Services

Information and Referral

Options provides current information about any disability related topic to individuals with disabilities, their families, service providers, and the community. Referrals are made to other resources as requested and appropriate.

Peer Support & Mentoring

This involves sharing, problem-solving and exchanging information amongst individuals with disabilities who may share similar life experiences. Options seeks peer mentors to provide positive role-modeling and to share their knowledge if requested by another person experiencing a similar disability.

- “Abilities With Options” peer meetings meet monthly in the Watseka office.
- Independent Crusaders (ICRU) Meetings – Youth peer meeting; meets twice monthly in the Bourbonnais office.
- Vision Information Group – meets twice quarterly, once in the Watseka office and once in Bourbonnais

office.

Independent Living Skills Training

Options CIL provides training as requested by individuals with disabilities to live independently in the community. Training may include self-advocacy, communication, mobility/transportation, community-based living, vocational, self-care, information access, personal resource management, relocation from a nursing home or institution and community/social participation.

Advocacy

Individual advocacy means to advocate for oneself or another person. It means speaking out or arguing for a cause. Options places a high priority on assisting individual advocates in their efforts and believes the key to true empowerment is full knowledge of one's rights. Our team is trained to provide coaching and support to our consumers who want to advocate for themselves. By gaining self-advocacy skills, individuals learn how to communicate and negotiate with agencies, service providers, employers, and others in order to obtain needed benefits, services, or accommodations.

Systems Advocacy is achieved by promoting and effecting positive changes at the local, state, and federal level. Through various public awareness activities, special events, and active participation in the legislative process, Options CIL works to eliminate barriers and achieve equal access and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Transition Services:

- Community Reintegration – Options works with adults with disabilities ages 18-59 who currently live in a nursing home whose goal is to live independently. Qualified individuals are provided with services and support systems needed to move out of nursing homes into their own residence and live independently. Options receives state and federal funding dedicated to providing services that support qualifying individuals with disabilities transition out of nursing home into home and community-based settings.
- Youth Transition – Options strives to empower youth with disabilities to successfully navigate the transition into all aspects of adult life including pursuing post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.
- Nursing Home Diversion –Options supports community living for all individuals with disabilities. We receive various grants and charitable trust donations to provide Independent Living Aids, mp3 to Chair Ra Assistive Technology, and Wheel actively prevent nursing facility placement. Funding is .limited and subject to eligibility guidelines

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My Disability Is Not Your Inspiration

By Heather Long

Being told that you are such an inspiration when you have a disability can be a blessing and a curse. On one hand it is always great to hear how you are positively impacting others' lives. Giving them the inspiration that they can do many positive things in their life, is probably one of the biggest compliments you can give someone. On the other hand, being called an inspiration when you have a disability can be a curse. Why you ask?

As a society, we still view disability as a BAD thing. It is viewed as a hardship. As something that limits people from doing daily activities non-disabled people take for granted or as one person once told me, "your life must suck, because you have a disability." So when people call me an inspiration for achieving something that my non-disabled peers do on a regular basis, it can really be taken as an insult; especially when I don't hear my non-disabled peers being called inspirations for doing the same thing. They are basically agreeing with the statement made about how my life must suck because I have a disability,

and how shocked they are that I could pull off something a non-disabled person achieved.

So why is this such an issue? It is an issue because, society views disability as a BAD thing and it is human nature to think less of the bad thing. That way of thinking lowers one's expectations of someone or something. So, in turn society has lower expectations for people with disabilities and are inspired when they accomplish an everyday task. When you look at it this way, it is easy to see why it can be a curse.

So what can we do to move past this way of thinking? Well first would be to stop viewing disability as a bad thing, a hardship and having lower expectations of and start focusing more on the actual person. They are not their disability, but it is a part of who they become. The word disability really stands for a different ability. A different way of doing things. That is not a bad thing. Sometimes we need people who are used to doing things differently be the ones who show society how something can be changed. They are adaptable and typically are critical thinkers in their own way. To me, those are very positive things.

So, when you think about telling someone with a disability that they are an inspiration, think about why they are an inspiration. Would you tell them they were an inspiration just because they have a disability that must make their life suck? Or is it because what they achieved in life truly

inspires you? In my opinion, the second question is the best compliment.

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A service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Tasks performed can include, among other things, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, alerting a person to a sound, reminding a person to take medication, or pressing an elevator button.

Emotional support animals, comfort animals, and therapy dogs are not service animals under Title II and Title III of the ADA. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained, or untrained, are not considered service animals either. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. It does not matter if a person has a note from a doctor that states that the person has a disability and needs to have the animal for emotional support. A doctor's letter does not turn an animal into a service animal.

Examples of animals that fit the ADA's definition of "service animal" because they have been specifically trained to perform a task for the person with a disability:

- Guide Dog or Seeing Eye® Dog is a carefully trained dog that serves as a travel tool for persons who have severe visual impairments or are blind.
- Hearing or Signal Dog is a dog that has been trained to alert a person who has a significant hearing loss or is deaf when a sound occurs, such as a knock on the door.
- Psychiatric Service Dog is a dog that has been trained to perform tasks that assist individuals with disabilities to detect the onset of psychiatric episodes and lessen their effects. Tasks performed by psychiatric service animals may include reminding the handler to take medicine, providing safety checks or

room searches, or turning on lights for persons with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, interrupting self-mutilation by persons with dissociative identity disorders, and keeping disoriented individuals from danger.

- SSigDOG (sensory signal dogs or social signal dog) is a dog trained to assist a person with autism. The dog alerts the handler to distracting repetitive movements common among those with autism, allowing the person to stop the movement (e.g., hand flapping).
- Seizure Response Dog is a dog trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. How the dog serves the person depends on the person's needs. The dog may stand guard over the person during a seizure or the dog may go for help. A few dogs have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person in advance to sit down or move to a safe place.

Under Title II and III of the ADA, service animals are limited to dogs. However, entities must make reasonable modifications in policies to allow individuals with disabilities to use miniature horses if they have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities.

For more information please visit <http://www.adata.org>

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The ADA And Accessible Ground Transportation

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to both public and private ground transportation providers. The ADA rules that apply to transportation are regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Overview of Requirements

- Both public and private organizations must meet ADA requirements: A public entity entering into a contract or agreement with a private entity to operate transportation services must ensure that the private entity meets all ADA requirements for the public entity.
- Rider information: A public transportation system must provide adequate information on services in accessible formats for persons with different types of disabilities (e.g. information in large print, braille or alternative and electronic format).
- Assistance equipment and accessible features: Equipment and facilities such as lifts, ramps,

securement devices (straps for securing wheelchairs on board), signage, and communication devices must be in good operating condition. If a feature is out of order, it must be repaired promptly. In the interim, an alternative accessible vehicle or option must be available.

- Adequate time to board: Public transit operators must allow adequate time for people with disabilities to board and exit from vehicles.
- Service animals allowed: Service animals may accompany people with disabilities in vehicles and facilities. The DOT ADA regulations define a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability, regardless of whether the animal has been licensed or certified by a state or local government.
- Priority seating and signs: Fixed-route systems (those operating along a prescribed route) must have signs designating seating for passengers with disabilities. At least one set of forward-facing seats must be marked as priority seating (for people with disabilities).
- Operator training: Each public and private transportation operator must ensure that personnel are trained to operate vehicles and equipment safely; properly assist individuals with disabilities in a

respectful, courteous way; and recognize that individuals with disabilities have different abilities and needs requiring different types of assistance.

For more information go to ADA National Network at www.adata.org

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8th Annual Options Empowerment Seminar**

March 2021

8 am – 4 pm

KCC Iroquois Room

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Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the government stay at home order our March 2020 Annual Empowerment Seminar had to be cancelled. We would like to thank the below sponsors of our event for donating their sponsorship dollars to us even though the event did not take place. Thank you for your continued support of Options CIL!

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- Riverside Healthcare

Rheumatoid Arthritis And Body Image

If your rheumatoid arthritis is changing your self-perception, here’s what you can do.

It’s hard to feel good about yourself when you feel like your body has betrayed you. You may face physical limits, chronic pain and changing plans for the future. These challenges force you to reevaluate your body and your relationship with it.

“Body image is how we think and feel about our bodies. But it is just one component of our self-concept,” explains Gerald Goodman, PhD, professor emeritus of clinical psychology at UCLA. “Body acceptance fits into a larger framework of self-esteem.”

Many studies show that women with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) have lower self-esteem, poorer body image, (RA) have lower self)

and are more dissatisfied with their bodies than healthy people with RA experience swelling, women. “Many people experience changes in the shape of their hands and feet, weight gain or loss, and difficulty walking. These body changes can affect how a person views herself and her body,” says Helen L. Coons, PhD, associate professor, department of psychiatry, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora

People with early-stage RA are often as concerned about their looks as those with longstanding disease, even though the disease hasn’t had any outward impacts. A study published in *Arthritis Care and Research* found this to be the case. Louise Sharpe, PhD, lead study author and professor of psychology at University of Sydney in Australia explained, “Participants in the recently diagnosed group had few, if any, observable disfigurements, but had rates of concerns similar to those with chronic RA.”

Consequences of Negative Body Image

According to Coons, any shift in your body and self-perception can be emotionally distressing. Adults who are physically challenged may feel unsupported by others, become self-conscious in public, are critical of their bodies and sometimes isolate themselves, she says.

This distress can progress to depression and anxiety. Studies have linked depression with social anxiety, social avoidance, physical disability and concerns about appearance.

If your disease, pain and body frustration triggers distress, anxiety or depression, Coons urges you to seek help. Your rheumatologist or insurance company can refer you to a psychologist, counselor or social worker with expertise in adults with chronic disease.

Nurture a Positive Body Image

Goodman, Coons and Sharpe share tips for nurturing a positive self-image. Appreciate yourself as a whole person. Don't be defined by your illness.

- Focus on and develop abilities to feel good about things you can do.
- Don't over-generalize. If RA keeps you from doing one thing, don't think you're an overall failure.
- Work toward being accepting of your body.
- Commit to your body in positive ways. Manage weight; be physically active; do activities that promote a positive attitude.
- Distract yourself from RA-related challenges. Read, watch a movie, enjoy hobbies or volunteer.
- Surround yourself with people who support, respect and encourage you. Explore body image issues with those you trust.
- Advocate for yourself and for people with disabilities. Join the Arthritis Foundation Advocacy network.

By: Beth Axtell – For more information go to www.arthritis.org

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