



ADDRESSING CITIZENS' CONCERNS

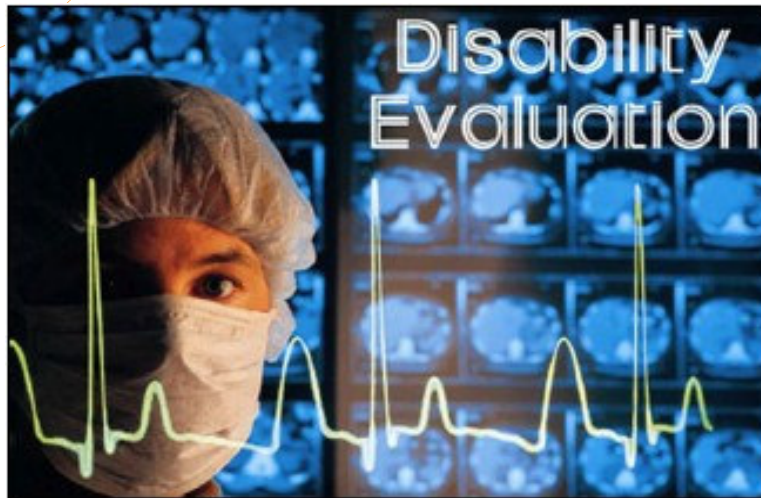
VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1 2010

WHAT DOES THE 2010 CENSUS MEAN FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

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HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY



Aside from using Census data to reapportion congressional seats to states, more than \$400 billion per year in federal funding is distributed to state and local governments.

Accurate representation and funding are especially important to people with disabilities because this population relies on many government, community and social service programs. However, without an accurate count, vital community services such as health care, transportation and other assistance programs may not be adequate. In the past, some of these individuals did not participate in the census because of misinformation or reasons related to their disability or circumstance.

The City of Birmingham is aggressively working to educate and make citizens aware of the importance of completing the 2010 Census form and returning it. The Mayor's Office on Americans with Disabilities is reaching out to people with disabilities to help ensure that they will be represented in our nation's capital, as well as in their own communities.

Did you know?

51.2 million - Have some level of disability. They represent 18% of the population; 12% of the total population is severely disabled.

11% - Percentage of children 6 to 14 who have a disability, about 4 million children.

72% - Percentage of people 80 and older with disabilities, the highest of any age group.

Using or Needing Assistance

10.7 million - Number of disabled people 6 and older who need personal assistance with activities of daily living (such as taking a bath or shower)

2.7 million - Number of people 15 and older who use a wheelchair. Another 9.1 million use an ambulatory aid such as a cane, crutches or walker.

Addressing Citizens' Concerns

2010 Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Foundation Pageant



For over 30 years, the Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Pageant has had the distinct honor of crowning the contestant that will represent the entire state of Alabama. This title comes with the privilege of becoming a spokeswoman for the disabled as well as the responsibility of becoming a voice for the handicapped. With past winners such as Xaveria Anderson, Tristan Write Burrows, and Miriam Witherspoon, one can see that these women were not only crowned for their stunning beauty, but for their ability to become an advocate for the disabled. As the 2007 state title holder, Xaveria Anderson stated, "The woman who wears the crown has the ear of lawmakers and a platform that can change lives."

With such a strong impact that this title brings to the voice of the handicap population, it's sad to say there was no representative from the state of Alabama. Mrs. Anderson went on to say, "Young disabled girls see this pageant and take notice of how their voice can be a positive opportunity to bring change to the lives of others if they only had the chance to compete in the pageant."

Because she refuses to see this pageant fall by the wayside, Mrs. Anderson recently gained authorization from the national organization and was named the coordinator of the Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Pageant. This year's pageant will be held at Lakeshore Foundation in Birmingham on March 13th, however, she is scrambling to get enough contestants to assure a successful turn out.

The winner of the Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Pageant will represent the state in the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant held in Long Beach, California. Joanne Pearson, a Huntsville single mother, will be a contestant and hopes to wear this year's crown. Knowing that, if she wins, she will be a voice for the disabled, she said, "If I can be a voice for advocacy, it would be phenomenal to see change in this state." She continued, "If it is going to take a pageant to do that, so be it. Making this state and the people more aware of the needs of disabled people would be an awesome power."

It is because of women like Joanne Pearson, along with a host of other women that strive for change in the handicapped community, that coordinator Anderson refuses to let the Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Pageant die. She continued by saying, "We have to get the word to all cities. This is the Alabama state pageant and we need women from the entire the state."

Again, the pageant will be held at the Lakeshore Foundation on March 13th from 9:30 – 4:30. For more information on how to contribute or to become a contestant, please contact Xaveria Anderson at www.mswheelchairalabamafoundation.org



Xaveria Anderson
2007 Pageant Winner
and Pageant Coordinator

Social Security Adds 38 New Compassionate Allowance Conditions

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, announced that the agency is adding 38 more conditions to its list of Compassionate Allowances. This is the first expansion since the original list of 50 conditions - 25 rare diseases and 25 cancers - was announced in 2008. The new conditions range from adult brain disorders to rare diseases that primarily affect children.

"The addition of these new conditions expands the scope of Compassionate Allowances to a broader subgroup of conditions like early-onset Alzheimer's disease," Commissioner Astrue said. "The expansion we are announcing means tens of thousands of Americans with devastating disabilities will now get approved for benefits in a matter of days rather than months and years."

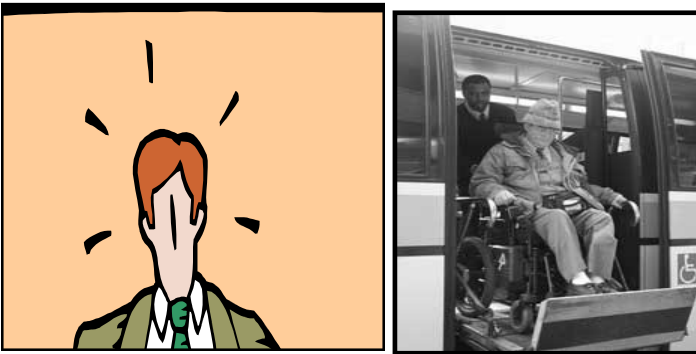
Compassionate Allowances are a way of quickly identifying diseases and other medical conditions that clearly qualify for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability benefits. In developing the expanded list of conditions, Social Security held public hearings and worked closely with the National Institutes of Health, the Alzheimer's Association, the National Organization for Rare Disorders, and other groups.

"The diagnosis of Alzheimer's indicates significant cognitive impairment that interferes with daily living activities, including the ability to work," said Harry Johns, President and CEO of the Alzheimer's Association. "Now, individuals who are dealing with the enormous challenges of Alzheimer's won't also have to endure the financial and emotional toll of a long disability decision process."

Social Security will begin electronically identifying these 38 new conditions March 1st. For more information, log on to www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances.



Disability Bill Would Eliminate Long Term Transit Problem



Transit riders who are disabled and depend on public transportation have complained for years about unauthorized vehicles parking in handicap parking spaces and blocking access to bus stops. Current law states, "It is unlawful for unauthorized vehicles to park or block a handicap parking space that is designated for persons with disabilities." This is a crime punishable with a fine up to \$500.

For persons with disabilities the issue of denying access extends to private parking spaces such as shopping centers, or apartment complexes where handicap signs are posted. However, even in the City of Birmingham, before law enforcement officers can enforce the city's ordinance, a smaller sign or rider,

must be posted underneath the handicap sign with the city ordinance # and the fine. Otherwise if it posted on private property the police cannot enforce the ordinance.

If **SB 157** by Senator Dixon became state law it would make it unlawful for any person to park a vehicle on public or private property in a parking place designated for individuals with disabilities unless the vehicle displays a disability license tag or window placard. Senator Linda Coleman added an amendment to address the problems disabled transit riders face when a motor vehicle blocks access to public transportation. The amendment makes it unlawful and a violation for a person to block access to a public transportation bus stop if the vehicle prevents access to public transportation by persons with disabilities. The minimum fine shall be \$50 for the first offense and \$200 for the second offense with a maximum of \$500. In addition, the person could also be required to do court ordered community service.

Disability advocates want stronger laws have suggested adding a photo to the placards of the person with the disability so law enforcement officers will know if the person with the disability is in the vehicle.

We are on the web!

**Office Of Americans
with Disabilities**

How to contact us:

Linda Coleman, ADA Program Director

Phone: 205-254-2079

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www.birminghamal.gov

The ADA Committee meets every Second
Friday, 10:00 AM
2nd Floor City Hall



ADA Advisory Committee

Chair – John Duplessis –Easter Seals, Navigator Program

Vice Chair - Lorne Kelly—MAX Transit (VIP Para transit)

Committee Members

Xaveria Anderson– Ms. Wheelchair Alabama 2007

Trisstun Wright-Burrows-Ms. Wheelchair America/Alabama 2005

Twanna Carter– VA Medical Center

Walter Daniels— Retired Educator

Cindy Jones— Alabama Industries for the Deaf & Blind

Dan Kessler–Director, Independent Living Resources ,Birmingham

Mike Norris– Independent Living Resources/Greater Birmingham

Charles Priest, Director, Alabama Head Injury Foundation

Graham Sisson– ADA State Coordinator, Alabama Rehabilitation

Ron Talley, ASSISTECH Group

Myra Thompson– Social Security Administration Disability Specialist

Rudy Roussel, Jr.- ADA Program Coordinator, City of Birmingham

Linda Coleman– ADA Program Director, City of Birmingham

Stand up for your community

2010 Census - Fill it out and return it.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Free VITA Income Tax Preparation

Date: February 10th & 17th and March 24th & 31st

Location: Birmingham Career Center

3440 3rd Ave. South

Birmingham, Al. 35222

Time: 10:00 am—3:00 pm

Contact Info: (205) 994-1943

PLEASE CALL TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Foundation Pageant

Date: March 13th

Location: Lakeshore Foundation

4000 Ridgeway Drive

Birmingham Al. 35209

Time: 9:30 – 4:30

Contact Info: Xaveria Anderson (205) 520-5881

www.mswheelchairalabamafoundation.org