

City of Birmingham

The Mayor’s Office on Americans with Disabilities  
**ADDRESSING CITIZEN’S CONCERNS**

## Disability Rights Advocacy



Globally, many of the world’s one billion individuals with disabilities struggle for access to education and employment, for the right to live in the community instead of being locked up in institutions, to express their sexuality and have children, and to participate in political and social life. Recognition that people with disabilities should be treated as equal members of society is a relatively recent development. In the U.S., the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 became the international gold standard for protecting disability rights.

We advocate for individuals to draft and implement national legislation supporting the rights of people with disabilities. The Mayor’s Office on Americans with Disabilities educates local officials, school administrators, employers, and community members about the rights of people with disabilities, and supports the development of inclusive schools, hospitals, and services. Have you ever questioned whether or not you should open the door for someone ahead of you who is in a wheelchair? Or have felt uncomfortable sitting next to someone with an apparent physical disability? These experiences are very common and ones that many of us have worked through. The need for people to be educated about people living with disabilities is ever growing in our society. At some point in all of our lives, we will be confronted with a situation where we will have to serve the needs of someone who has a disability. Sadly, stereotypes and prejudice impact the way in which we interact with and serve others who have disabilities. Individuals with physical and mental disabilities often face increased violence and discrimination, yet they remain invisible in their communities. **The last day to register to vote is October 24, 2016. Become an advocate, make a difference, register and vote in all elections.**



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## Accessibility



People with disabilities face a multitude of obstacles in their physical environment, particularly in developing countries. These barriers can prevent them from attending school, working, accessing services like healthcare, and participating in community activities.

Creating a barrier-free environment is key to including people with disabilities as equal members of society. When steps are taken to remove physical barriers, society as a whole—including children, older people, those with chronic

diseases, or even parents pushing strollers—can benefit.

The Americans with Disability Act made more businesses and people incorporate accessibility into all of its programs, and run projects wholly devoted to improving physical accessibility. Several entities today work with development stakeholders, local communities, and governments to reduce barriers for people with disabilities. This might entail making schools and health centers physically accessible, building accessible homes for people with disabilities following natural disasters, or developing physically accessible public transportation.

## Socially Inclusive

Since the passing of the Americans with Disability Act in 1990, ADA has worked to empower people with disabilities to assume a full, social role within their families and communities. At the City of Birmingham, we believe that people with disabilities should have equal access to rights, opportunities, and services and be protected from discrimination, abuse, and neglect. Sadly, many of the world's more than one billion people with disabilities are routinely denied even the most basic human rights, particularly in today's society.

To encourage the personal and social development of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, ADA works to re-establish, revitalize, and foster social ties, and to improve access to social services, as well as cultural activities and sports. The Mayor's Office on Americans with Disabilities works with family members, school administrators, community members, and local leaders to ensure they understand the importance of including people with disabilities in activities and decision making. We also work with local government officials, disabled people's organizations, social clubs, and other groups to organize inclusive sports, games, and other leisure activities.

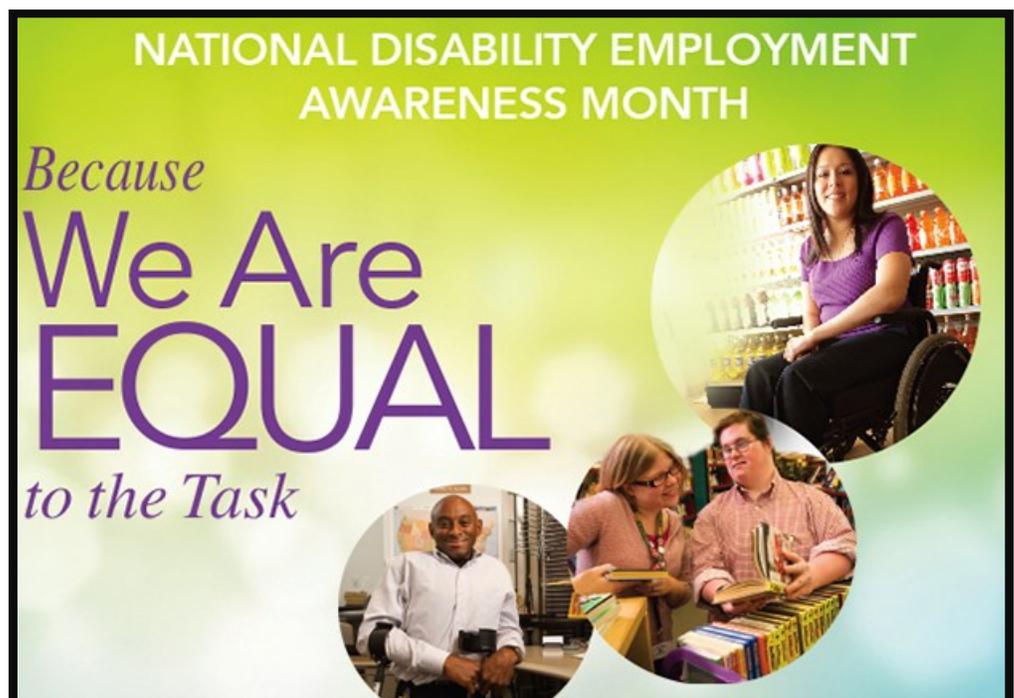
## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Disability Employment Awareness month is this October. We acknowledge the importance of employment for all people, especially those who have been historically denied the right to work. We also acknowledge how brothers and sisters support each other in employment.

Held each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is a national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. Disability History Month is celebrated as a week-long event in different states across the nation, and in most during the third week in October. "Because We Are EQUAL to the Task," was once used as the theme for disability history month.

NDEAM's roots go back to 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988 Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to "National Disability Employment Awareness Month."

By fostering a culture that embraces individual differences, including disabilities, businesses profit by having a wider variety of tools to confront challenges. The City of Birmingham proudly makes inclusion a core value. We know that inclusion works. It works for workers, it works for employers, it works for opportunity, and it works for innovation. When given opportunities, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are able to work for the same employers and have the same experiences as others. By partnering with local businesses of all sizes and in all sectors of our local economy, we can provide a more inclusive, diverse workforce in the City of Birmingham.



How to contact us:

Linda Coleman-Madison  
ADA Director

Phone: 205-254-2079

E-mail:

[linda.coleman@birminghamal.gov](mailto:linda.coleman@birminghamal.gov)

LaQuita Cade, ADA Adm. Asst.

[laquita.cade@birminghamal.gov](mailto:laquita.cade@birminghamal.gov)

205-714-8683

Fax 205-297-8303

ADA Advisory meets bi-monthly  
second Friday



Working to Open Doors to  
Accessible City Services

## **ADA Advisory Committee**

*Chair – John Duplessis— SSTE Employment Program*

*Wendy Hicks– VA Medical Center*

*Lorine Kelly—MAX Transit (VIP Para transit)*

*Dan Kessler, Director- Disability Rights and Resources*

*Graham Sisson– Governor’s Office on Disabilities (GOOD)*

*Yolanda Spencer- Alabama Department of Rehab Services*

*Myra Shamburger- Alabama Department of Rehab Services*

*Maria Lyas-Young - Birmingham City Schools*

*Greg Silas, Emergency 911*

*Kathy Lovell- ADA Disability Manager, Regions Bank*

*Michelle Belcher – Manager Liz Low Vision Center*

## **Happiness and Disability**

Have you ever thought to yourself: "I'd rather be dead than disabled?" It's not an unusual reflection. Disability, in everyday thought, is associated with failure, with dependency and with not being able to do things. We feel sorry for disabled people, because we imagine it must be miserable to be disabled.

As a matter of fact we're wrong. It's sometimes called the "disability paradox." Surveys reveal people with disabilities consistently report a quality of life as good as, or sometimes even better than, that of non-disabled people. (BBC News Magazine, 2014)

