

The ABILITY LINK



disABILITY LINK Quarterly Newsletter

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Picture descriptions:

Shown is a group photo of the disABILITY LINK staff stood in front of a mirror for our annual Consumer Appreciation Party

Social Media



@disabilitylink



**disABILITY
LINK**
the center for rights & resources

Edited and Designed by Jake Key Social Media Specialist

Social Issues within Youth with Disabilities

Youth with disabilities often confront a range of social issues that can impact their well-being and quality of life. These challenges stem from both societal attitudes and practical barriers, making it essential to address and raise awareness about these issues.

1. **Social Isolation:** Youth with disabilities frequently experience social isolation due to a lack of understanding and inclusion. They may be excluded from social activities or face difficulties making friends, leading to feelings of loneliness and alienation.

2. **Bullying and Stigma:** Negative stereotypes and misconceptions about disabilities can result in bullying and stigmatization. Youth with disabilities may be targeted or marginalized by their peers, exacerbating their sense of social exclusion and affecting their self-esteem.

3. **Limited Access to Recreational Activities:** Accessibility issues often restrict their participation in recreational activities and community events. This can deprive them of opportunities for social interaction, personal growth, and the development of friendships.

4. **Communication Barriers:** For those with communication-related disabilities, expressing themselves and engaging in conversations can be challenging. This can lead to misunderstandings and further isolation.

5. **Inadequate Support Networks:** Some youth with disabilities may lack access to support networks that can provide guidance and understanding. This can further isolate them from peers who do not share their experiences.

Cont. on Page 3

Social Issues within Youth with Disabilities cont.

6. Mental Health Concerns: The social challenges faced by youth with disabilities can contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The stress of navigating a world that often doesn't accommodate their needs can be overwhelming.

7. Limited Educational and Employment Opportunities: Social issues can extend into education and employment. Discrimination and lack of support in these domains can further isolate youth with disabilities and limit their future prospects.

Addressing these social issues requires a multi-faceted approach. It involves promoting disability awareness and inclusivity, implementing anti-bullying programs, and ensuring accessibility in public spaces and activities. Additionally, fostering support networks, both within and outside the disability community, can provide essential emotional support and a sense of belonging for these young individuals. Ultimately, the goal is to create a more inclusive and understanding society where youth with disabilities can thrive socially, academically, and personally. And that's just untrue!

For more information, contact Janae Nelson at jnelson@disabilitylink.org or (404) 687-8890 ext. 129.



Photo Description: Shown is Bosede Yasin
Dancing with Tralan and Xyon Banks

Article by Janae Nelson

A Deeper Dive into ADHD

According to the CDC, ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders. Most individuals are diagnosed in early childhood. Individuals may have trouble focusing, sitting still, or impulsive behavior. Individuals with ADHD may experience difficulty processing sensory stimulation from the outside world.

Common triggers of overstimulation in people with ADHD include: taste, sound, smell, sight, and touch. ADHD is treated with a combination of medications and behavioral interventions. This includes physical and occupational therapy, which introduces the individual to sensory stimulation and developing skills on how to respond appropriately.

There are several assistive devices that can be used to support individuals with ADHD. One example is a wiggle cushion. This device can be used to help decrease constantly moving while sitting in a chair to prevent falls and other injuries. Another example of a use of a device is a trampoline. This can support overactive individuals in expending some of their energy. Fidget gadgets are another piece of assistive technology that can be used to help manage anxiety, frustration, agitation, boredom and over excitement. Sensory activities such as moon sand, slime, edible finger-painting, stress ball, texture sticks, and rainbow rice, could be used to assist increase fine motor skills and cognitive thinking.

To learn more about assistive technology tools available for individuals with ADHD, please contact Shuronda Dixon, the Assistive Technology Deaf/Blind IL Specialist, at disABILITY LINK at sdixon@disabilitylink.org.



Photo Description: Shown is Shuronda Dixon working with the Youth Program for a talent show

Article by Shuronda Dixon

Accessibility in the Real World

How accessible are libraries for individuals with disabilities, and why accessible is important?

First, what is accessibility? Accessibility provides ways for people with disabilities to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with electronic information, regardless of their disabilities. Libraries play an important role in ensuring everyone can access information in printed or electronic forms. Having an accessible library removes barriers to accessing information, supports literacy, and offers an opportunity for learning and connecting with resources.

Why is accessibility in libraries so important? The short answer is everyone should have equal access to materials.

GA Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (GLS), formerly GA Library for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS), promotes the use of accessible reading materials for those who are blind or whose physical disability requires audio books or braille.

I recently had an opportunity to interview two of my coworkers. They were asked two questions.

1. How accessible do you think libraries are?
2. What should libraries offer more or less of?

Coworker 1: States without accessible libraries and other vendors, it makes it impossible to gain the skill set to one day live independently. Materials such as audiobooks and braille books are essential due to their disability and allow access to the world. They further state that they are grateful for the resources; they feel more volunteers could be used to support further individuals who may need additional assistance.

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Accessibility In the Real World

Coworker 2: They reported they are grateful to have a personal computer and do not visit the local libraries often. But they have many friends who do, and having an accessible library provides some independence with resources for them. When asked the following question, they replied being in a wheelchair, accessible spaces to move freely around the libraries make it hard to fit in specific areas, and he feels the aisles are too small sometimes. A suggestion was having a vending machine that provides access to books and other materials for individuals who cannot reach them.

Every person, regardless of their disability, should have access to such information in printed or electronic forms of their choice. So, how accessible are libraries for you? I would love to hear your thoughts.

Remember I am Shuronda Dixon, your Assistive Technology Deaf Blind IL Specialist here at disABILITY LINK. For more information, contact me at sdixon@disabilitylink.org or (404) 687-8890 ext. 109.



Photo Description: Shown is James Turner
boarding accessible transportation

Article by Shuronda Dixon

Housing Rights for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have significant protections when they rent living space. To take advantage of these protections, tenants with disabilities need to familiarize themselves with the laws regarding how much information a landlord is entitled to as well as what requests for accommodations might be reasonable—And which ones aren't. Here's a breakdown of what tenants with disabilities can rightfully expect from prospective and current landlords.

The federal Fair Housing Act and Fair Housing Amendments Act prohibit discrimination against people with a physical or mental disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Examples include but are not limited to mobility impairments, hearing impairments, visual impairments, chronic alcoholism (if it is being addressed through a recovery program), mental illness HIV, AIDS, and AIDS-Related Complex, or severe intellectual disability, or a history of such a disability, or who are regarded by others as though they have such a disability.

Landlords are not allowed to question applicants about a disability or illness or ask to see medical records. Even if it is obvious that you have a disability—For example, you use a wheelchair or wear a hearing aid, it is illegal for the landlord to ask for more information about the disability or its severity. The policy behind this rule is simple: No matter how well-intentioned the inquiries, a landlord can't make decisions about where and how you will live on the property that the landlord wouldn't otherwise make if you didn't have the disability.

When Can a Landlord Reject an Applicant With a Disability?

If you had, or have, mental or emotional impairments that constitute a disability, or if you appear to have them, you must be evaluated by the landlord based on your financial stability and history as a tenant, not based on your mental health. A landlord may reject you only if they can point to specific instances of past behavior that would make you dangerous to others (such as a previous landlord stating that you repeatedly threatened or assaulted other residents).

Suppose you can't meet the good-tenant criteria that the landlord applies to all applicants (such as a minimum rent-to-income ratio). In that case, the landlord can reject you on that basis, though landlords must consider a proffered cosigner if your income is the only factor that disqualifies you.

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Housing Rights for People with Disabilities cont.

Landlords must accommodate the needs of tenants with disabilities, within reason, at the landlord's own expense. As a tenant with a disability, your landlord should reasonably adjust rules, procedures, or services in order to give you an equal opportunity to use and enjoy your dwelling unit or a common space.

Does your landlord's duty to accommodate tenants with disabilities mean that you can expect every rule and procedure to be changed at your request? No. Although landlords are expected to accommodate "reasonable" requests, they need not undertake changes that would seriously impair their ability to run their business. For example, if an applicant who uses crutches prefers the third-story apartment in a walk-up building to the one on the ground floor, the landlord doesn't have to rip the building apart to install an elevator. That expense would be unreasonable.

Landlords must allow tenants with disabilities to make reasonable modifications to their living units or common areas at their expense if needed, for the person to comfortably and safely live in the unit. You have the right to modify your living space to the extent necessary to make the space safe and comfortable, as long as the modifications won't make the unit unacceptable to the next tenant or if you agree to (and are financially able to) undo the modification when you leave.

These modifications must be reasonable and made with prior approval. A landlord is entitled to ask for a description of the proposed modifications, proof that they will be done in a workman-like manner, and evidence that you are obtaining any necessary building permits.



Photo Description: Shown is an image of a hand holding a home, symbolizing obtaining housing

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Housing Rights for People with Disabilities cont.

Landlords are entitled to ask for proof that the accommodation or modification you have requested will address your needs. For some disabilities, the solutions are obvious: for example, installing a ramp to accommodate a wheelchair. But other disabilities, especially mental ones, aren't obvious, and the accommodation isn't either—for example, removing doors to accommodate a person who is fearful of closed spaces. Without some proof, your landlord has no way of knowing whether your request is legitimate or a ruse to obtain special treatment.

If you want a specific accommodation or modification and your disability isn't obvious (or if you anticipate an argument with your landlord regarding the necessity of your proposal), have your proof ready before you make your request. Ask your physician or therapist for a letter attesting that you need what you're asking for and that it will meet your needs. To protect your privacy, carefully explain to the physician or other writer that it isn't necessary to explain the disability; it's only necessary to certify that the changes you would like are appropriate to your situation.

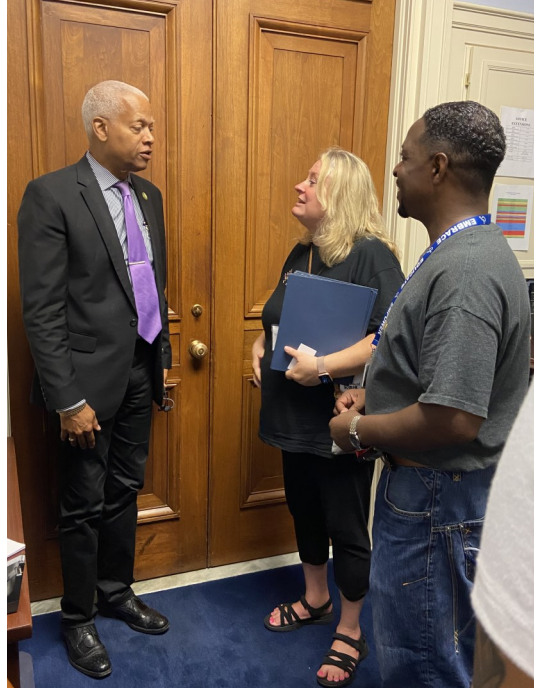


Photo Description: Shown is Kim Gibson and William Thomas advocating for affordable housing

Article by Angela Williams

The Empowering Force of Social Media Networking

In our increasingly digital world, social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, transforming the way we connect, communicate, and share information. For people with disabilities, social media networking offers a unique and powerful platform that transcends physical barriers, providing opportunities for connection, advocacy, and empowerment like never before.

Living with a disability often comes with a set of unique challenges, including physical limitations, social stigmas, and a sense of isolation. Social media networks have become a powerful tool for breaking down these barriers. People with disabilities can connect with others who share similar experiences, bridging geographical distances and forging meaningful friendships. Through online support groups and communities, individuals can find emotional support and share advice on managing their conditions, creating a sense of belonging that can be hard to find offline.

Social media has emerged as a crucial platform for disability advocacy and awareness. Individuals with disabilities and their allies can use these platforms to raise their voices, challenge stereotypes, and advocate for change. Powerful hashtags and campaigns can bring attention to issues like accessibility, inclusion, and equal opportunities, prompting real-world action and policy changes.

One of the most impactful aspects of social media networking for people with disabilities is the ability to share their personal journeys and experiences. Through blogs, vlogs, and social media posts, individuals can educate the world about the realities of living with a disability. By sharing their stories, triumphs, and challenges, they inspire others and foster understanding and empathy within society.

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The Empowering Force of Social Media cont.

The internet, including social media, has become a vital source of accessible information for people with disabilities. Whether it's finding information on adaptive technology, health tips, or legal rights, social media provides a platform for disseminating valuable knowledge. It empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their lives and connects them with resources that can improve their quality of life.

Social media networking is not just about building connections and raising awareness; it's also a gateway to opportunities. People with disabilities can use these platforms to connect with potential employers, mentors, and advocates. They can showcase their skills, talents, and achievements, proving that disability does not define one's abilities or limit their potential.

In an era where social media has become an integral part of our lives, its importance for people with disabilities cannot be overstated. It serves as a bridge to connection, advocacy, awareness, and empowerment. Through these platforms, individuals with disabilities can break down physical and social barriers, educate the world, and advocate for a more inclusive and accessible society. Social media networking has given a voice to the voiceless and, in doing so, has transformed the lives of countless individuals with disabilities, showing that with the right tools, support, and determination, anything is possible.



Picture Description: Shown is consumer Seth Newton working at our computer lab.

Voting as a Person with a disABILITY

Voting is the heartbeat of democracy, ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard. For individuals with disabilities, voting holds profound importance, offering inclusivity, advocacy, and policy influence.

For starters, voting guarantees representation. It empowers individuals with disabilities by allowing us to be part of the decision-making process, promoting inclusivity in our society. Through voting, individuals with disabilities support candidates who prioritize disability rights because those individuals wield influence in shaping laws that affect accessibility, healthcare, education, and social inclusion. Elected officials heed the concerns of their constituents. By voting, individuals with disabilities can champion policies that break down barriers, fostering equality and inclusion.

Voting also highlights the need for accessibility. It prompts improvements at polling stations, emphasizing the importance of accommodations and inclusivity at locations that are necessary to the public. Voting unites the disability community. It strengthens collective action, enabling them to address challenges and advocate for the well-being of everyone, disability or not.

While barriers exist, progress is evident. Mail-in voting, curbside voting, and online registration offer accessible options if local polling stations are not accessible. While we have come a long way, advocacy groups are continuing to work toward a more inclusive voting experience. Voting is a fundamental right, and for people with disabilities, it is a powerful means of empowerment, advocacy, and progress.



Photo Description: Shown is a group photo taken after disABILITY LINK's Voting Rally

Article by Christina Humphrey

Employment Discrimination

In the workplace and employment, disabilities are more than those you can see. Many disabilities are not visible or are unseen, such as mental health (i.e., depression, Obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, etc.). In addition, there are more invisible disabilities such as diabetes, sleep disorders, renal failure, and a host of other disabilities that fall under this umbrella. Some disabilities limit an individual's ability to perform their employment duties to the fullest of their capacity without the proper accommodations, eventually leading to disciplinary actions, including termination. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) "prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government programs and services."

The United Disabilities Services Foundation reports the CDC defines disability as "any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them" (2022). Furthermore, disabilities affect individuals in three ways: impairment, activity limitation, and participation restrictions. Disabilities are both seen and unseen in society. There are four types of disabilities: physical, intellectual, mental illness, and sensory.

Employment discrimination happens more often than we believe it actually takes place. The U.S. Department of Labor has a section dedicated to employment laws on disability and discrimination. There is an Office of Disability Employment Policy for organizations/companies' human resources departments to perform research or investigation into disability discrimination. The U.S. Department of Labor states, "There are five important federal laws that protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination in employment and the job application process: 1) Americans with Disabilities Act, 2) Rehabilitation Act, 3) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 4) Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act, and 5) Civil Service Reform Act.

Employment Discrimination cont.

Individuals with disabilities are standing up for themselves and stopping organizations from discriminating against them. EEOC News reported a jury awarded \$36 million in a disability discrimination case against Werner Trucking Company for refusing to hire or reasonably provide accommodations to a qualified deaf driver (2023). EEOC News reports, "Victor Robinson had the courage to step forward and say what happened to him was wrong," said EEOC Chair Charlotte A. Burrows. "The jury agreed, and their substantial verdict sends a clear message to employers everywhere that our nation will not tolerate disability discrimination" (2023).

The population of individuals with disabilities is no longer allowing companies to push them to the side, especially when there are more than enough and adequate technology to accommodate an individual on the job. For more information on employment services contact Mimi Palmer at mpalmer@disabilitylink.org.



Photo Description: Shown is Katrina Parsons discussing job readiness during our Job Fair

NCIL Conference

This summer, disABILITY LINK had the honor of attending the National Council of Independent Living conference held in Washington D.C. It was an incredible experience to be among so many bright and hopeful peers.

This year's theme was NCIL's 5 for 5 Campaign. The mission statement is "Invest in Community Living & Independence for People with Disabilities! Centers for Independent Living (CILs) (Title VII, Rehabilitation Act, as amended) have been underfunded for decades, leading to individuals with disabilities lacking access to critical services and support! Many areas in the U.S., especially in rural communities do not have access to a CIL. CILs need more funding in order to expand their service areas to address the unmet needs. There have been 1,216,970 Services Provided!

In 2020, CILs transitioned 3,915 individuals from institutional settings to the community. Based on information from the Kaiser Family Foundation, the average nursing home cost is \$105,852 each year, compared to home and community-based supports, which average \$31,100 per year. That equates to a savings of \$292,654,080 annually, or a 231% return on investment. That's 712,223 Successful Outcomes! CILs provide a unique one-stop resource to people with disabilities. Most of our staff, board, and management are individuals with disabilities. This creates responsive, dynamic, and knowledgeable places for people to turn to.

In 2020, 66% of all staff of CILs were people with disabilities, employing 4,575 individuals with disabilities with 1,197 in management of their CIL. Individuals with Disabilities Need Better Access to Comprehensive Independent Living Services. Funding CILs enables individuals with disabilities to live in their homes with their families where they can work, attend school, worship, and participate in other community activities. CILs are hubs of disability information, resources, services, and advocacy. CILs are vital to the whole community. It also creates tremendous savings for taxpayers.

As we all met up with our caucuses, Georgia was proudly the largest showing in the south with 14 constituents! We were honored and privileged to march alongside dozens of CILs from all over the country. This was the largest crowd to march in the Capitol for some time, so it garnered a lot of needed attention to the cause. disABILITY LINK personally visited the offices of each district we represent to really drive home the importance of Centers for Independent living and how they are essential to our communities, and for a brighter, more inclusive future.

Article by Christina Humphrey

Executive Director Message

Dear Friends:

I am sharing my letter from the last newsletter because it is so very important. As we celebrate different disABILITY Rights movements, our mission and values continue to ring true:

"disABILITY LINK is an organization led by and for people with disabilities and promotes choice and full participation in community life."

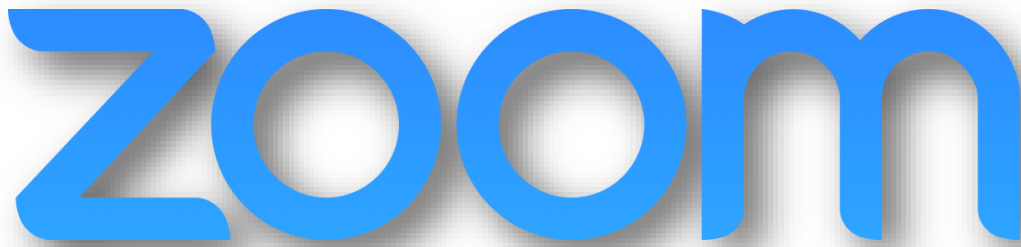
Our Values: disABILITY LINK is a grassroots, peer-led, non-medical organization that:

1. Advocates for human rights, not special rights.
2. Values the inherent worth of each individual, all of whom deserve dignity and respect.
3. Promotes the inclusion and recognition of the talents and abilities of all individuals.
4. Supports self-determination and choice.

While we celebrate, commemorate, and contemplate the collective achievements of the ADA, the Olmstead Decision, Disability Pride Month, and much more, we must remember that we have a long way to go for disability rights and civil rights for all. Justin Dart, the father of Independent Living, reminded us in an article he wrote in 1990 "...But ADA is only the beginning. It is not a solution." This is a reminder that while we have come a long way, we must continue to advocate and be part of the change in the world. As elections are coming up, learn about the candidates, ask those hard questions, and then vote. As Justin Dart stated time and time again, "VOTE as if your life depends on it, because it does!"

Thank you for all you do in the community. I hope to see each of you at one of our events. I especially want to thank those who have supported disABILITY LINK with time and financial support.

Kim Gibson, Executive Director



We are excited to announce that all of our classes held at disABILITY LINK are available through video conferencing. To participate outside of disABILITY LINK office join in from your computer, cell phone or landline phones. Webcams are not required but can be used for participation.

Join from a PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, or Android:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4046878890?pwd=dm9WTjA5aTBmMldscVplVTBqUzFSZz09>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +16465588656,4046878890#

Or Telephone:

US: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 404 687 8890

Or by going to <https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting. Meeting ID is 404-687-8890 and password is 1901. Please note: All video conferencing is recorded. You can join in without signing up.

For additional information and accommodations please contact our office.



Please review the following list of dates for office hours, annual events, and office closings.

Normal Business Hours

Mon. – Thurs. 8:30 AM-4:30 PM

Fridays by appointment only

Workshops

Join us through audio and/or video conferencing for all our workshops

Join us

From personal computer, cell phone or landlines

By calling 1-646-558-8656 or by going to

<https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting.

Meeting ID is

404-687-8890 & password is 1901

Holiday and Office Closures

November 7th, 2023 Election Day

November 10th, 2023 Veteran's Day

November 23rd and 24th, 2023 Fall Break

December 18th, 2023 through January 2nd, 2024 Winter Break

disABILITY LINK is now an application site for SNAP (Federal Nutrition Assistance program). If you would like to learn more about SNAP, to be screened for eligibility, or to apply for food stamp benefits. Please contact our office at 404-687-8890 or visit our office.



"Funding provided in part by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Department of Community Development."



Wish List:

- ♦ Laptops
- ♦ Youth Sponsorship/donations for programs and outings

Reminder to join us for our Annual Family and Friends Picnic at our office on July 15th from 11 am to 1 pm.

Contact Us:

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404-687-8890 Voice

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