

November 2024



Fall Scoop



An Accessible, Barrier-Free California = Inclusive and Equal Opportunities and Participation for All Californians!

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Driving Progress – The ADA and the Evolution of Inclusion Webinar

On October 29, CCDA and the Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia (SILCGA) co-hosted a webinar featuring a screening of “Inclusion: The Story of the Americans with Disabilities Act.” The documentary explored the journey behind the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the advocacy efforts that led to securing equal rights and opportunities for millions of Americans with disabilities.

Throughout the screening, CCDA’s Education and Outreach Committee Chair, Commissioner Dr. ElHessen, moderated the discussion, asking panelists insightful questions about the ADA’s impact in their lives. The panel featured a group of disability rights leaders and advocates: Executive Director of SILCGA Shelly Simmons, Executive Director of the National Federation of the Blind Anil Lewis, SILCGA Mobility Policy Coordinator Jordan Hall, and Executive Director of CCDA April Dawson Rawlings. The panel of disability rights leaders and advocates shared their insights on the ADA and the impact it has made to pave the way to a more accessible, barrier free society for all.

Upcoming Meetings

Executive Committee

March 05, 2025
1:30 – 3 p.m.

Full Commission

March 26, 2025
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Education & Outreach Committee

April 9, 2025
1:30 – 3 p.m.

Legislative Committee

April 30, 2025
1:30 – 3 p.m.

International Day of People with Disabilities | December 3



The International Day of People with Disabilities, celebrated annually on December 3, is a global event that promotes building a more inclusive, accessible, and equal world for everyone. This day was established in 1992 by the United Nations and focuses on raising awareness of the rights, challenges, and contributions of people with disabilities. By sharing stories and highlighting the accomplishments of individuals with disabilities, it can help to challenge stereotypes and change how society views people

with disabilities. Rather than focusing on limitations, it encourages us to recognize the talents, leadership, and creativity that people with disabilities bring to the world.

The focus on equal access can encourage business owners and operators to take real steps to make sure buildings, workplaces, and public areas are accessible to everyone. Whether it is installing ramps, offering sign language interpreters, or protecting the rights of people with disabilities in the workplace, these changes are essential. Businesses that commit to accessibility and inclusive practices often see better customer loyalty and satisfaction. The International Day of People with Disabilities serves as a reminder that creating a fair and accessible world is a shared responsibility. It calls on all of us to play a part in building a society where people of all abilities feel valued, empowered, and able to thrive.

Cutting Edge Assistive Technology

iAccess Life is a mobile app that enables users to rate and review public venues. CCDA interviewed Brandon Winfield, co-founder of iAccess Life, who provided more details behind the creation of this cutting-edge assistive technology. iAccess Life was designed to empower individuals with disabilities and provide a platform for users to rate and review the accessibility of public places like restaurants, bars, and lounges. This mobile app aims to give individuals with disabilities the information they need to confidently navigate public spaces while encouraging businesses to improve their accessibility practices.

During the interview, Mr. Winfield reflected in the process of creating iAccess Life. Early on, an initial agreement for the mobile app development fell through and forced the team to rebuild the app from scratch. They were able to get it running and iAccess Life is now an accessible tool that can help to create a more inclusive society for all. iAccess Life takes a user-focused approach, "We do our best to field emails and messages from our customers and work to implement any valid criticism we get," Mr. Winfield explained. This commitment to improvement and user feedback has led to exciting innovations, including the launch of "Voice by iAccess Life." This tool compiles visitor feedback into an easy-to-use dashboard, helping businesses identify trends and make meaningful changes. The first customer to use the tool was the Atlanta Zoo; and they can work to improve accessibility based on real-time visitor input. iAccess Life allows users to share their experiences, contributing to improvements in public spaces and supporting the goal of a more barrier-free and accessible society for all.



Commissioners in the Community: Sarahann Shapiro



Commissioner Sarahann Shapiro is the California Business Properties Association (CBPA) representative at CCDA and works to help business owners understand accessibility rules and find practical ways to follow them. Her main goal is to build trust and encourage understanding between the business and disability communities, which have sometimes faced conflicts over accessibility. “The best way I know to bring people together is to give them an opportunity to listen to one another and find common ground,” Commissioner Shapiro says,

highlighting how CCDA works to create open conversations that benefit both sides.

Commissioner Shapiro’s top priority is to make sure business owners know what’s expected of them to be ADA compliant. Many businesses want to follow the law but may not understand the details. For example, a parking lot may be compliant when built but can shift over time, leading to issues. Small changes, like a tree root pushing up pavement, can make a parking spot inaccessible without the business owner or operator knowing. She also explains that simple business decisions, like adding tables in a restaurant or a seasonal display in a store, can block paths that need to stay clear.

Commissioner Shapiro recommends that businesses obtain a Certified Access Specialist (CAsp) inspection to identify potential problems early. For example, she advises her clients to hire CAsp-certified architects when making building changes to ensure the finished spaces are accessible. In her own visits to properties, she helps property managers and business owners spot small adjustments that can make a big difference. Commissioner Shapiro’s efforts help bridge gaps in understanding, providing guidance that can help save businesses from costly legal issues while making business spaces more accessible and welcoming for everyone.



**California Business
Properties Association**
Protecting commercial real estate for over 50 years

Update to CCDA Legal Portal

Prior to 2024, reporting an inaccessible website through CCDA's Legal Portal was limited to one dropdown option: "Website Inaccessibility." While this option identified the existence of the issue, it did not specify which areas of the website were creating access barriers. For example, was it because the text was too small, the navigation was difficult, or images lacked alternative text (alt-text) descriptions? Without more specific categories, CCDA could only log that a website was inaccessible, but not the specific barrier that was creating the lack of access.

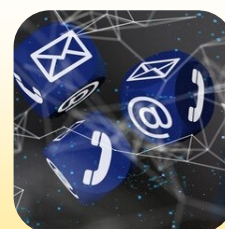
CCDA collaborated with partners to launch a new website category, complete with 18 unique dropdown options describing common website accessibility barriers. Some of the new categories are "Website does not have appropriate titles", "Inappropriate use of color/visual image on website", or "Documents available for download on website are not accessible". This update allows CCDA to identify the specific issues individuals with disabilities may encounter, which can help CCDA to better track website accessibility barriers. Our improved tracking and reporting can enhance CCDA's ability to promote accessible website design, supporting web accessibility compliance and making digital spaces more inclusive for all.

CCDA Guides to Accessible Parking Available Now!

CCDA produced two Guide to Accessible Parking: one for business owners and operators, and the other for the construction industry. Topics in the Business Owners and Operators Guide include guidance on using the toolkit, understanding the importance of accessibility, and defining key terms. CCDA, in collaboration with the Contractors State License Board and industry experts, developed the construction industry guide to promote compliance with accessibility requirements in the construction of public parking lots. These toolkits provide awareness, summarize requirements, and offers resources to help avoid these complaints. Both Guides to Accessible Parking are available to download on our website.

CCDA Scoop Resources

- ◇ **Driving Progress – The ADA and the Evolution of Inclusion | October 2024 | YouTube**
https://youtu.be/WSR_EcQddzs?si=3kYYgKhKbXbphgcF
- ◇ **Cutting-Edge Assistive Tech | iAccess Innovations**
<https://www.iaccess.life/about/>
- ◇ **Guides to Accessible Parking | CCDA**
<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/CCDA/Resources/Page-Content/California-Commission-on-Disability-Access-Resources-List-Folder/Guide-to-Accessible-Parking>



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