CCDA California Commission on Disability Access

Fall 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 12

Access Forward

CCDA Fall Newsletter

Upcoming Public Events:

CCDA Industry Specific (Hospitality) Webinar
February 9, 2027
10-11 a.m.

CCDA Executive Committee Meeting
March 3, 2027
1:30-3 p.m.

CCDA Full Commission Meeting
March 24, 2027
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

CCDA Commission to Community Event
March 25, 2027
10 a.m.-12 p.m.

CCDA Education and Outreach Committee Meeting
April 7, 2027
1:30-3 p.m.

CCDA Legislative Committee Meeting
April 28, 2027
1:30-3 p.m.

CCDA Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting
May 12, 2027
1:30-3 p.m.

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CCDA Update:

In September, the California Commission on Disability Access (CCDA) partnered with the Civil Rights Office of Monterey County to host a hybrid Commission to Community event. The gathering brought government officials, local business leaders, and community representatives together to discuss regional access challenges and identify opportunities for collaboration. Following opening remarks from CCDA and the Civil Rights Office, CCDA Vice Chair Commissioner Scott Lillibridge moderated two panel discussions.

The first session featured Mayra Ortiz, Software Engineer with the Monterey County Information Technology Department, who presented on the County's Website Accessibility Initiative and its efforts to follow Section 508 standards and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Vice Chair Commissioner Lillibridge then led a discussion about commonly overlooked accessibility barriers in digital services and the challenges of developing and implementing the initiative. The second panel focused on collaboration and regional perspectives on accessibility. Participants included Eric Driever, representative of the Division of the State Architect (DSA); Steven Macias, Chair of the Monterey County Commission on Disabilities and Executive Director of the Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County; Richard Vaughn, Economic Development Manager for the County of Monterey; Monica Lal, President and CEO of the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce; Colleen Bailey, President and CEO of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce; and Lourdes Uranday, Principal Consultant and CEO of Lourdes Uranday Consulting. Together, the panelists and attendees explored opportunities to address accessibility barriers and strengthen partnerships among government agencies, businesses, and community members.

Building on these conversations, CCDA will return to Monterey County for its Full Commission meeting on March 24, 2027, followed by a Commission to Community event on March 25. Both gatherings will provide opportunities to explore regional accessibility challenges and collaborate on solutions that advance access and inclusion.

CCDA Update continued:

In October, CCDA convened its final Full Commission meeting of 2026 at the DSA's Los Angeles Regional Office. The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on the work of CCDA's subcommittees throughout the year and consider how their efforts support the Commission's 2025–2030 Strategic Goals. By bringing these activities together, Commissioners reviewed progress across the Commission's priorities and opportunities to advance disability access throughout California. The meeting also marked important leadership and organizational milestones, including the approval of a new name for the Accessibility Advisory Committee, formerly known as the Checklist Committee, and elections for CCDA Chair and Vice Chair. A particularly meaningful moment was a tribute to longtime Chair Commissioner Christopher Downey. Through a special video, fellow Commissioners Executive Director April Dawson Rawlings and former Executive Director Angela Jemmott recognized his dedication, leadership, and lasting contributions to CCDA. As Commissioner Downey transitions to the role of Immediate Past Chair, he will offer historical perspective and guidance to the Commission.

On Oct. 21, CCDA partnered with the Pacific ADA Center to present the third and final webinar in its 2026 Lunch and Learn series. The session examined accessibility trends reflected in aggregated Orange County data from 2019 to 2025, including accessible interior and exterior paths of travel, and toilet, lavatory, and bathing facilities. By examining these findings, participants had an opportunity to better understand recurring access challenges and consider areas where improvements may be needed. The webinar continued CCDA's efforts to provide stakeholders with educational resources that support greater awareness of disability access. On Nov. 4, CCDA will partner with the City of Los Angeles Department on Disability (DOD) and the Los Angeles Public Library to host a Commission to Community event at the Los Angeles Public Library's Central Library. The event will bring together local stakeholders for a presentation by DSA and a panel discussion focused on accessibility and inclusion in Los Angeles.

As CCDA looks ahead to 2027, the Commission will continue building on the work of its subcommittees, educational initiatives, and community partnerships to advance disability access throughout California. The Commission thanks its Commissioners, partners, presenters, and community members for their continued contribution and look forward to carrying this forward in the year ahead.





Commissioners in the Community:



Vice Chair Commissioner Scott Lillibridge

Vice Chair Commissioner Scott Lillibridge moderated CCDA's third Community to Community Event of 2026 in Monterey County, leading two panel discussions with government officials, local business leaders, community representatives, and event attendees. The discussions focused on disability access and addressing issues relevant to both Monterey County and California as a whole. Drawing on his professional background in civil engineering and the built environment, Commissioner Lillibridge helped guide conversations around accessibility and encouraged dialogue among panelists and attendees. The September forum provided an opportunity for community members, businesses, and government representatives to share perspectives and discuss accessibility challenges affecting the region. Building on these conversations, CCDA will return to Monterey County on March 24, 2027, for a Full Commission meeting, followed by a Commission to Community event on March 25, with Commissioner Lillibridge returning as moderator. The upcoming event will continue the dialogue around disability access and provide another opportunity for community members, businesses, and government representatives to share perspectives and explore ways to advance accessibility throughout the region.

Commissioner Highlights:



Commissioner Olivia Mae. M. Asuncion, AIA

Since being appointed by Gov. Newsom to CCDA in September 2025 and officially sworn into CCDA in October 2025, Commissioner Olivia Asuncion has brought her professional experience as a Project Architect to the Full Commission and Education & Outreach Committee. Her current appointment term with CCDA extends through January 2028.

As a Commissioner, she furthers CCDA's commitment to promoting disability access, particularly in the built environment, through her extensive background in architecture and project management. Her focus on accessible, and universal design shows a strong commitment to accessibility for the disability communities in California and worldwide.

Outside of CCDA, Commissioner Asuncion's work and advocacy extends beyond California. She is recognized on a national level as a board member for the U.S. Access Board as a Presidential appointee. Additionally, she was recently appointed to the California Building Standards Commission by Gov. Newsom in March 2026 as a Public Member/Person with a Physical Disability.

Commissioner Asuncion's expertise with construction and architecture in California can be traced to her project management contributions with Bay Area non-profit organizations on the Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley, and later a post-occupancy evaluation of the building in collaboration with the University of Oregon.

As a disability advocate and leader, she led a project as part of a Fulbright Program Student Research Award that studied the accessibility of the built environment and education in the Philippines. Her most recent accomplishments include the 2025 American Institute of Architects Young Architects Award and recognition in the 2024 San Francisco Business Times' 40 under 40. The culmination and recognition of her expertise in architecture gives Commissioner Asuncion a unique perspective that fulfills a crucial role on the Commission leading to the further development of educational resources related to construction-related disability access.

Her dedication and commitment to advocating for the disability community through equity and inclusion in the built environment can't be overstated. From her vast and varied professional experience in inclusive architectural design, Commissioner Asuncion brings a wealth of knowledge to the Full Commission and Education & Outreach Committee guiding CCDA's ongoing projects and mission for the state of California.

CCDA Projects:



Pacific ADA Center Webinar Featuring CCDA Executive Director

On Oct. 29, CCDA Executive Director April Dawson Rawlings served as a presenter in the Pacific ADA Center Webinar titled "Beyond Compliance: Accessibility as Good Business" where she presented collaboratively with other accessibility experts in discussing why accessibility is good for businesses and how businesses can get started on building a better guest experience for customers with disabilities. The recording will be available soon on the Pacific ADA Center YouTube Channel.



CCDA Brochure Translations

CCDA has translated its brochure into 18 languages to provide improved support for California's diverse disability and business communities. These translated guides are now available in the following languages: Arabic, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, Farsi, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Punjabi, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese.

To read, including downloadable versions of the CCDA Brochure, visit:

CCDA Brochure Translations

www.dgs.ca.gov/CCDA/Resources/Page-Content/California-Commission-on-Disability-Access-Resources-List-Folder/CCDA-Brochure



Ventura County Hosts the 3rd Annual California Government and Disability Summit

Ventura County hosted the 3rd Annual California Government and Disability Summit from Tuesday, Sept. 1, through Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026. This year's theme, "Access That Moves Us," brought together people from local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses across California to share ideas, build connections, and work toward a more accessible and inclusive state. To kick off the summit, CCDA Operations Manager Abigail Ridge hosted a fun and interactive networking bingo activity that engaged and connected the audience. Each attendee received a bingo card filled with statements and experiences related to disability access and inclusion. The goal was simple: find someone who could answer "yes" to each statement and complete the card. However, the activity was about more than just getting bingo. It gave attendees a chance to meet new people, share their experiences, learn from one another, and discover common interests in accessibility and inclusion. The activity was a hit by helping break the ice and set a welcoming and collaborative tone for the days ahead. Over the next few days, attendees took part in sessions focused on finding new ways to address accessibility barriers and make progress towards inclusion. Through shared experiences, ideas, and conversations with people from diverse backgrounds and organizations, the summit created opportunities to learn from one another and work together toward a more accessible California for all.



2026 - 2027 CCDA and DSA Webinar Collaboration Series Accessibility Across Industries Series: Understanding Accessibility Requirements Under ADA Title III and the California Building Code

In 2026-2027, CCDA and DSA are collaborating to produce four webinars focused on an educational overview of industry-specific accessibility requirements under ADA Title III and the California Building Code (CBC). Each webinar will focus on the accessibility requirements in specific industries identified in CCDA's aggregated data in trending construction-related accessibility violations. Stay tuned for updates on upcoming webinars and registration details!

CCDA Projects:



2025 CCDA Annual Report to the California State Legislature

CCDA is proud to announce that the 2025 CCDA Annual Report to the California State Legislature has been published! This report outlines CCDA's ongoing efforts to implement Government Code Sections 14985.5 and 14985.6. CCDA compiles an annual report to the Legislature on disability access issues and compliance with data collection. This report also provides an overview of the work of our commissioners and staff, completed and ongoing projects, and outreach efforts.

To view our 2025 CCDA Annual Report, visit:

2025 CCDA Annual Report

www.dgs.ca.gov/CCDA/Resources/Page-Content/California-Commission-on-Disability-Access-Resources-List-Folder/CCDA-Annual-Reports-to-Legislature-?search=annual%20report

National and Community Disability Awareness Observances

September:



National Service Dog Month

National Service Dog Month is observed in September of each year to celebrate the work that service dogs do that help individuals with disabilities. Service dogs are trained to perform specific tasks that support their handlers' independence and help them with daily activities. These tasks include guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, providing physical support and assistance to induvials with mobility disabilities, alerting people to certain medical conditions, and aiding those with other disabilities.

Under Title III of the ADA, places of public accommodations that are open to the public must allow individuals with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animals, even if a "no pet" policy is in place.

National Service Dog Month provides an important opportunity to recognize the important role service dogs play in promoting access and independence.



Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month

Spinal Cord Injury Awareness is observed each September to increase awareness of spinal cord injuries (SCI), advocate for people who have an SCI, and promote strategies to prevent further injuries. An SCI occurs when the spinal cord is damaged, which can affect communication between the brain and body. Nearly 18,000 Americans sustain a spinal cord injury each year.



World Alzheimer's Day and Month

September is World Alzheimer's Month, with World Alzheimer's Day observed on Sept. 21.

This year's campaign theme, "The Earlier You Know, The More You Can Do: A Dementia Diagnosis Matters," highlights the importance of awareness, early diagnosis, and access for people with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

National and Community Disability Awareness Observances

September:



International Day of Sign Languages

Sept. 23 is International Day of Sign Languages, recognizing the importance and diversity of sign languages used by Deaf communities around the world.

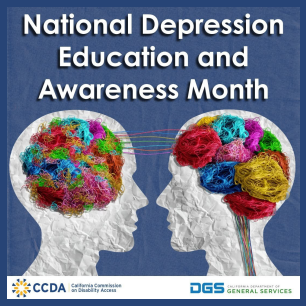
This day is an opportunity for businesses to learn about sign language and promote awareness of communication access. Building understanding and providing accessible communication can help create welcoming experiences for people with disabilities.



International Week of Deaf People

International Week of Deaf People takes place Sept. 21 – 27. This year's World Federation of the Deaf theme is "Declaring Deaf People's Human Rights," calls attention to the importance of recognizing and protecting the rights of Deaf people.

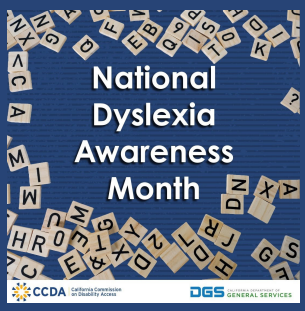
October:



National Depression Education and Awareness Month

In 1994, the U.S. Congress recognized October as National Depression Education and Awareness Month. This observance aims to increase public awareness, reduce stigma, improve access to mental health care, and promote education about depression.

Depression can vary in severity and may affect people differently. It is a medical condition that can influence a person's feelings, thoughts, behavior, and ability to manage everyday activities. Access to support and early intervention can help people manage symptoms and support their overall well-being.



National Dyslexia Awareness Month

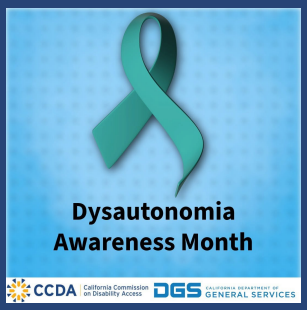
In 2015, the U.S. Senate recognized October as National Dyslexia Awareness Month, building on a 1985 presidential proclamation that originally recognized the month as "Learning Disabilities and Dyslexia Awareness Month."

This observance aims to raise public awareness about dyslexia, promote early screening, and encourage schools, agencies, and other establishments to provide appropriate accommodation and support.

Dyslexia is a lifelong learning disability that can affect reading, spelling, and language processing. People with dyslexia may experience differences in reading fluency, spelling, or connecting letters with the sounds they represent. With support that meets their needs, people with dyslexia can build confidence and succeed in school, work, and everyday life.

National and Community Disability Awareness Observances

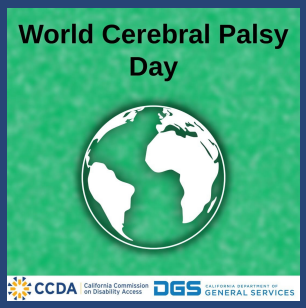
October:



Dysautonomia Awareness Month

October is Dysautonomia Awareness Month. Dysautonomia is an umbrella term for disorders that affect the autonomic nervous system, which regulates body functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, digestion, breathing, and temperature regulation. Nearly 70 million people worldwide are estimated to have some form of dysautonomia. People with dysautonomia may experience a variety of symptoms, which can differ from person to person. While there is currently no cure for many forms of dysautonomia, treatment and symptom management may help people manage their symptoms.

The official color for Dysautonomia awareness is turquoise and symbolizes education, support, and advocacy for research and treatment.



World Cerebral Palsy Day

World Cerebral Palsy (CP) Day is observed every Oct. 6 to celebrate the global cerebral palsy community, raise awareness, and promote more inclusive world. More than 50 million people worldwide have CP.

CP is a group of lifelong conditions that impact movement and posture. People with CP have different mobility, communication, or support needs, and each person's experience is unique.



Learning Disabilities Awareness Month

October is Learning Disabilities Awareness Month. It is an opportunity to increase understanding of learning disabilities and recognize the diverse experiences of people with learning disabilities.

Learning disabilities can involve areas such as reading, writing, mathematics, language, attention, or other learning-related skills. People with learning disabilities may have difference ways of receiving, processing, and communicating information.



Rett Syndrome Awareness Month

October is Rett Syndrome Awareness Month. Rett Syndrome is a rare genetic neurodevelopmental condition that occurs exclusively in girls. It occurs in approximately 1 in 10,000 female births.

People with Rett syndrome may experience differences in communication, movement, breathing, sleep, and other areas. Each person may have different support needs.

National and Community Disability Awareness Observances

October:



Selective Mutism Awareness Month

October is Selective Mutism (SM) Awareness Month. Situational Mutism is an anxiety disorder in which a person may be unable to speak in certain social situation despite being able to speak in other settings. It typically begins in childhood but can sometimes continue in adulthood.

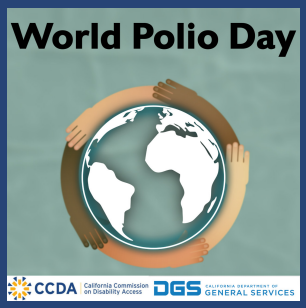
People with SM may communicate in different ways depending on the situation, including through gestures, facial expressions, writing, or other forms of communication.



Blind American Equality Day

In 2011, President Barack Obama recognized Oct. 15 as Blind Americans Equality Day, building on the 1964 presidential proclamation that established “White Cane Safety Day.”

This observance recognizes the contributions, independence, and rights of people who are blind or have low vision, while highlighting the importance of accessibility and equal opportunity. By identifying and addressing barriers to access, we can help foster inclusive environments where people with disabilities can access services, participate fully in their communities, and live independently.



World Polio Day

World Polio Day, observed annually on Oct. 24, raises awareness about polio prevention and the importance of vaccination. Before the development of effective vaccines in the 1950s, polio caused widespread illness and paralysis among children and adults. Since the launch of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988, vaccination efforts have helped prevent an estimated 20 million cases of paralysis in children.

World Polio Day is also an opportunity to recognize the importance of accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities, including those living with the long-term effects of polio.

National and Community Disability Awareness Observances

October:



Invisible Disabilities Week

Invisible Disabilities Week takes place Oct. 18–24 and raises awareness and promotes understanding of disabilities that may not be immediately apparent to others. This week is an opportunity to challenge stereotypes, recognize the diverse experiences of people with disabilities, and promote greater inclusion and accessibility. The sunflower is an internationally recognized symbol associated with non-visible disabilities.



International Stuttering Day

International Stuttering Awareness Day, observed on Oct. 22, raises awareness and promotes understanding of stuttering, a speech difference experienced by people around the world. This day is an opportunity to challenge stereotypes, reduce stigma, and recognize the diverse ways people communicate.



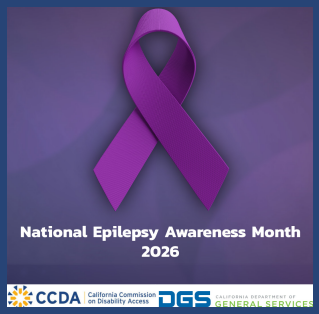
World Stroke Day

World Stroke Day is observed annually on Oct. 29 to raise awareness of stroke prevention, recognizing symptoms, and support services. A stroke happens when blood flow to part of the brain is blocked or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. A stroke can affect movement, speech, vision, memory, or other cognitive or physical functions.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 795,000 people in the United States experience a stroke each year, making stroke a leading cause of disability among adults. Strokes may result in visible or non-apparent disabilities, and accessibility needs can vary from person to person. Disabilities do not reflect a person's limitation, value or potential, but rather reflect the diverse ways people interact with the world.

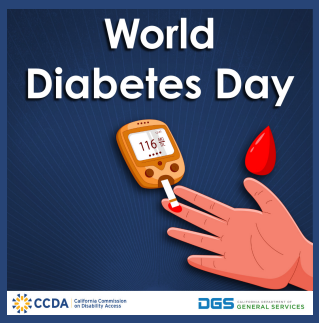
National and Community Disability Awareness Observances

November:



National Epilepsy Awareness Month

November is National Epilepsy Awareness Month. This month is dedicated to supporting people with epilepsy while challenging misconceptions and reducing stigma around the neurological disorder. This year's theme is, "Where Community Sparks Hope", recognizing that the importance of community can help build hope through supporting one another.



World Diabetes Day

Observed each year on Nov. 14, World Diabetes Day raises awareness about diabetes, including prevention, recognizing symptoms, and the importance of education and access to health care.

Diabetes is a health condition that affects how the body uses glucose, a type of sugar that provides energy. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the immune system attacks the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas and can develop at any age, although it often begins during childhood. Type 2 diabetes, the most common form, develops when the body does not use insulin effectively and may eventually produce less of it. Many people around the world have type 2 diabetes without knowing it, highlighting the importance of awareness and early detection.

Because diabetes affects each person differently, the tools and support needed to manage the condition vary. Some people use insulin, medication, blood glucose monitoring devices, or service animals to help manage their health and daily activities. Access to appropriate tools, resources, and accommodations can support people with diabetes in maintaining their independence and participating fully in their communities.

On World Diabetes Day, we recognize the importance of awareness, accessibility, and inclusion in helping people with disabilities engage in all aspects of community life.



Disability Access and Community Resources

Disability Rights California

Disability Rights California (DRC) is the agency designated under federal law to protect and advocate for the rights of Californians with disabilities. DRC works in litigation, legal presentation, advocacy services, investigations, public policy, and provide information, advice, and referral and community outreach. For more than 40 years, DRC has worked in advancing the rights of Californians with disabilities in education, employment, independence, health and safety, and has grown into the largest disability rights organization in the nation. For more information visit DRC website:

DRC Website

www.disabilityrightsca.org

Department of Rehabilitation - Disability Access Services

The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Disability Access Services (DAS) was established in 1992 to promote disability rights in state government and DOR Partnerships in the community to improve the employment, independence and equality of people with disabilities in California. DAS provides information, consultation, and training, including accessibility guidance for employers and businesses, technical assistance with reasonable accommodations and program accessibility, support with the creation and remediation of digital documents, and more. DAS has translated its brochure into 18 languages and will be available soon! For more information visit DOR DAS Website:

DOR DAS Website

www.dor.ca.gov/Home/DAS

Resources for Promoting Disability Access



CCDA and DSA Retail Accessibility: Understanding ADA Title III and California Building Code Accessibility Requirements for Stores and Shopping Centers

This webinar session served as the first of a four-part educational webinar series being produced by CCDA in collaboration with DSA in 2026–2027 that explores accessibility requirements across four different industries and highlights common accessibility considerations in places of public accommodation. The session, “Retail Accessibility: Understanding ADA Title III and California Building Code Accessibility Requirements for Stores and Shopping Centers,” examined accessibility throughout the retail customer journey, including parking areas, exterior routes, entrances, sales floors, service counters, and checkout areas. Video recordings will be available on CCDA's YouTube Channel.

CCDA and DSA Retail Accessibility Webinar Recording

www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1tx5hdY6sw&t=12s



Certified Access Specialist

A CASp has the expertise to identify which accessibility standards apply to a business/property based on its age and history of renovations. While licensed design professionals, such as architects or engineers, can assess a facility for accessibility, only a CASp can offer services that grant a business “qualified defendant” status in the event of a construction-related accessibility lawsuit. Taking the proactive step of hiring a CASp can reduce a business or property owner's potential liability and offer important legal protections if an accessibility claim arises. For more information visit DSA's website:

Division of the State Architect CASp Program

www.dgs.ca.gov/CCDA/Resources/Page-Content/California-Commission-on-Disability-Access-Resources-List-Folder/Division-of-State-Architects-CASp-Program



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Want to get involved with CCDA? Attend our public meetings and events to learn about our latest activities. To view the latest event calendar, visit our website: www.dgs.ca.gov/CCDA

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