Disability Services FY2007-2008 Annual Report

City of San Diego

The Americans with Disabilities Act is intended to "provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against persons with disabilities."

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A Message from the Disability Services Coordinator

It is my pleasure to present the City's first annual report for Disability Services. This report is an introduction to the Disability Services Program and an overview of our mission, services, and strategic areas of focus. It also provides a description of our recent efforts and accomplishments.

Since being appointed as the City's Disability Services Program Coordinator in June 2007, I have spent my time overseeing the City's Disability Services Program and working with staff to manage the City's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and additional federal and state regulations.

My team and I have also worked to formulate and administer policies affecting the disability community, coordinate progress on the City's Disability Access Transition Plan, and track complaints related to access by people with disabilities to City facilities, programs, services, and activities.

With support from the Mayor, and with the assistance of members of the community and City staff from other departments, we have begun to lay a foundation for a more collaborative Disability Services Program. We look forward to making even more progress in the upcoming fiscal year, despite the financial challenges faced by the City.

I hope that you find this report helpful in understanding what the Disability Services Program is all about, who we serve, and what we are doing to turn our vision of a fully accessible City into a reality.

Thank you for your support.

Susan M. Madison
Disability Services Coordinator

Our Mission and Vision

Mission:

To ensure that every facility, activity, benefit, program and service operated or funded by the City is fully accessible to, and useable by, people with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as other federal, state and local access codes and disability rights laws.

Vision:

To be a catalyst in promoting and advancing the rights of people with disabilities in City programs, services and activities.

About the Disability Services Program

History

The City's Disability Services Program was established in 1991 in conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 197,134 people living within the City of San Diego have some type of disability. That's 16% of all San Diego's population. Further, the percentage of the population with disabilities has increased in the past nine years to an estimated 19% of the local population, and continues to increase each day.

Our Team

There are four full-time employees that work as part of the Disability Services Program: the Disability Services Coordinator, the Citywide ADA Compliance Officer, an ADA Construction Estimator, and a Disability Services Analyst. Disability Services is part of the Human Resources Department.

Who We Serve and What We Do

The City of San Diego Disability Services Program is narrowly focused on overseeing and managing ADA compliance for the City's facilities, programs, services, and activities. We do not have jurisdiction over private businesses that are not ADA compliant, nor do we deal directly with topics like jobs (except City of San Diego employment issues) or housing for people with disabilities. Because we understand that those areas are of vital importance to the community, our website has links to agencies and groups that are able to assist with, or respond to inquiries about, those issues.

Disability Services manages and oversees funds that have been allocated for City ADA compliance. While we are not in charge of how slow or fast ADA projects are built, our team does work with other City departments to prioritize projects, provide scopes of work, and manage contracts. We actively track projects focused on bringing City facilities and resources (streets, traffic signals, etc.) into compliance with the ADA.

We are a support for City of San Diego residents and visitors, taking complaints and responding to inquiries regarding access to City buildings, streets, sidewalks, programs, services and/or activities. We also accept complaints from City employees regarding disability-related employment concerns. Further, through the Disability Services Coordinator, we provide a link to City management, serving as a conduit of information to and from members of the disability community.

Our staff also serves as advisors to City departments, helping to educate and support management in making their programs, services and activities accessible, and in making accommodations for employees and customers with disabilities where necessary.

Our Strategic Goals and Objectives

The Disability Services Program strategic plan outlines goals and objectives to track progress towards accomplishing our mission. These goals and objectives remind us of where we want to be and how we intend to get there.

The first of our program's two goals is to **ensure ADA compliance citywide**. To accomplish this goal, we focus on the following objectives:

- Implement and coordinate the City's ADA Transition Plan
- Develop and oversee citywide ADA projects annually
- Manage and coordinate all disability-related complaints and requests citywide
- Provide program management on new construction, alteration projects, curb ramps, sidewalks, and signals
- Provide resources and technical assistance on disability issues to residents and City departments

Our second goal, to **strengthen and enhance trust and credibility between the disability community and the City**, is being accomplished by :

- Promoting disability awareness
- Conducting and attending disability meetings and events

Funding

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2008, the City allocated $10 million annually from sales of underperforming City-owned real estate assets to fund ADA requirements. These funds are in addition to existing Community Development Block Grant funding. Taken together, this funding allows the City to work towards ensuring accountability for the implementation and local enforcement of the City's obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as other federal, state and local access codes and disability rights laws.

Services We Provide

- Investigation of ADA-related complaints
- Monitoring of ADA compliance for the City
- Presentations for community meetings and events
- Dissemination to City departments of current and accurate ADA-related information
- Reports to City officials and the public
- Coordination of accommodations for employees and people with disabilities

About the Americans With Disabilities Act

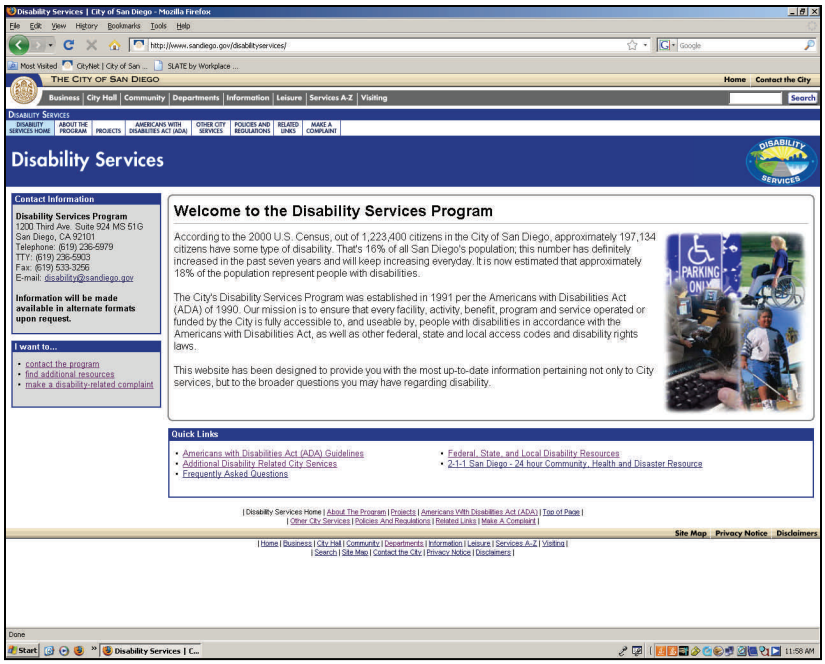
The **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H. W. Bush. The ADA is a wide-ranging civil rights law that prohibits, under certain circumstances, discrimination based on disability.

Disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity."

The Act requires public and private agencies to make facilities and infrastructure universally accessible. ADA improvements are permanent improvements to public sidewalks and facilities and include additional capital projects such as the installation of audible signals at intersections and curb ramps that provide access to streets and sidewalks.

Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities. This requirement extends not only to physical access at government facilities, programs, and events -- but also to policy changes that governmental entities must make to ensure that all people with disabilities can take part in, and benefit from, the programs and services of state and local governments. In addition, governmental entities must ensure effective communication -- including the provision of necessary auxiliary aids and services -- so that individuals with disabilities can participate in civic life.

Spotlight On: The Disability Services Website *sandiego.gov/disabilityservices*



Disability Services staff, in partnership with the City's Web Team, has redesigned the Disability Services Program website. The revised site has been designed to provide those who view it with the most up-to-date information pertaining not only to City services, but to the broader questions they may have regarding disability. The new website contains a host of user-friendly features, including links to:

- Lists of completed and upcoming City of San Diego ADA projects, including curb ramps and audible signals
- City services for people with disabilities, such as therapeutic recreation and adult literacy programs
- Disability-related policies and regulations
- National, state, and local resources on the ADA, disability insurance, accessible beaches and parking, and disaster preparedness for people with disabilities
- Information about how to file a disability-related complaint with the City

Did you know? In Fiscal Year 2008...

- Disability Services surveyed 105 facilities for ADA compliance
- Disability Services managed 40 ADA projects
- Disability services conducted 126 on-site inspections for ADA compliance
- Disability Services received 385 information and research requests on disability issues
- Disability Services reviewed 410 special events for ADA compliance
- $13.8 million was allocated for ADA compliance, up from approximately $1.1 million the year before

Disability Services Program Service Efforts and Accomplishments

- **Held a third Mayor's Disability Forum in July 2007**
- **Hosted an Emergency Preparedness Workshop for People with Disabilities in January 2008 for 100 national, state and local participants and speakers**
- **Conducted an ADA Strategic Planning meeting with City departments to collaboratively plan and prioritize ADA projects**
- **Redesigned the Disability Services website**
- **Coordinated updates to two City Administrative Regulations regarding people with disabilities**
- **Provided technical assistance to departments on ADA obligations and methods to achieve consistent accommodations and programmatic access**
- **Conducted Disability Mentoring Day, pairing high school students and City employees**
- **Received 114 disability complaints from citizens and employees; resolved 46**
- **Gave presentations to San Diego Disability Coalition, Protection and Advocacy, Center for the Blind, Jobtoberfest employers, and People First**

Spotlight On: Curb Ramp Project

Although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was implemented in 1990, the City did not conduct a physical survey of curb ramps, a basic City service that must be accessible to people with disabilities, until 1997. In that year, the City surveyed 2,780 miles of streets, identifying the 20,391 corners that had existing curb ramps and noting the need to retrofit or install an additional 32,520 curb ramps. Existing ramps were added to a Geographic Information System (GIS) program used for capturing, managing, analyzing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. After this initial effort, the mapping of curb ramps stalled; curb ramps installed in City streets since 1997 were not being added to GIS.

Several departments install curb ramps during the course of their construction projects: Engineering and Capital Projects, General Services - Streets Division, Metropolitan Wastewater, and the Water Department. Since curb ramp installation is not centrally managed, data is difficult to locate and coordinate.

The Disability Services Program created a curb ramp internship to address this situation. Management Intern Yvette Noir has entered into GIS those curb ramps which have been installed in the last twelve years, assisting with the review of the City's curb ramp installation data flows and data-gathering. Her knowledge and skills in GIS and computer science are invaluable for Disability Services and the City.

Yvette has also benefited. "Working with the Disability Services team has not only been rewarding, but it has also been a wonderful learning experience," she said.

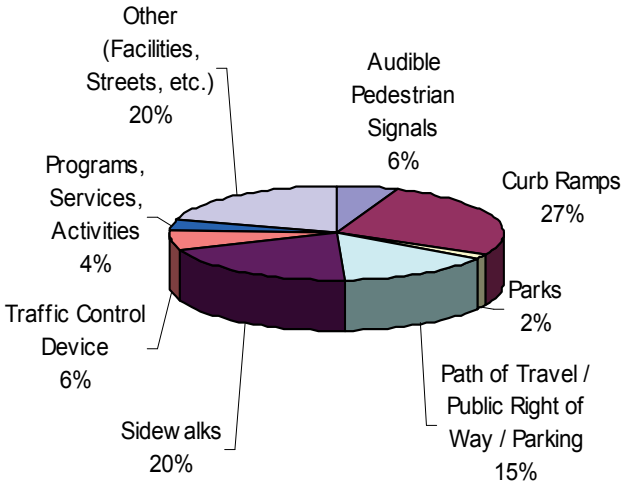
With Yvette's help, the City now has a comprehensive record of the 3,565 identified curb ramps that have been constructed since 1997. The City has now installed approximately 46% of the identified curb ramps surveyed in 1997, and plans to continue to install and retrofit additional curb ramps, which cost approximately $3,200 each.

Summary of Disability-Related Complaints

July 1, 2007—June 30, 2008

Disability Services received 114 complaints during Fiscal Year 2008, of which 46 have been resolved. Complaints fall into the following areas: audible pedestrian signals (7); curb ramps (30); parks (2); path of travel/public right of way/parking (17); sidewalks (23); traffic control device (7); programs, services, activities (5); and other (facilities, streets, etc.) (23).

Complaints by Percentage



"The City has been incredibly responsive and excellent at keeping me informed on the progress of [my complaint]."

Spotlight On: Brock Jones, ADA Construction Estimator

A 19-year City of San Diego veteran, ADA Construction Estimator Brock Jones has been with the City of San Diego Disability Services Program since 2005.

According to Disability Services Coordinator Susan Madison, "Brock is a great team player, consistently displays courteousness in working with other departments, and is always professional in all areas of program management of our ADA citywide projects." Because of his expertise, Brock is the lead for all difficult and lengthy disability complaints as well as the prioritization and oversight of all ADA audible, sidewalk and curb ramp projects annually.

His customer service skills have not gone unnoticed by his coworkers and the public. This year, Brock was recognized by Mayor Jerry Sanders with an Outstanding Customer Service award. This honor recognizes the top 1% of City employees who, throughout the year, go above and beyond standard expectations to deliver exceptional customer service.

Brock's knowledge of ADA regulations and guidelines is unsurpassed. He takes time to understand access issues in depth and provides expertise on both California Building Code and ADA Accessibility Guidelines to departments and contractors to ensure ADA compliance citywide. Brock provides timely answers and solutions that work day after day – all the while being patient and ensuring everyone is valued and is heard equally.

Spotlight On: Emergency Preparedness Workshop for People with Disabilities

"Real planning needs to happen when you're calm and have state of mind."

In January 2008, just months after the devastating October 2007 wildfires, Disability Services hosted an Emergency Preparedness Workshop for People with Disabilities to take stock of previous emergency experiences through an in-depth look at what has and has not worked with emergency planning for people with disabilities, and what needs to be strengthened and improved. The ultimate goal was and is to create a strong, emergency-prepared region that takes into account and incorporates the diverse health, safety and survival needs of people with disabilities and activity limitations in all levels of planning, preparing, responding, and recovering.

Funded with a $5,000 grant from the federal Department of Health and Human Services- the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, the workshop was the result of collaboration among Disability Services, Access to Independence, and The Area Board – State Council on Disabilities.

Attendees included representatives from FEMA; the Red Cross; Congresswoman Susan Davis's office; MTS Para Transit; the County of San Diego; San Diego State University; City departments such as Police, Fire, and Homeland Security; the San Diego Unified School District; and local disability organizations. In all, 100 participants from across the region, state, and nation participated in the workshop, which was facilitated by an expert in emergency preparedness planning for people with disabilities and included presentations by panel members.

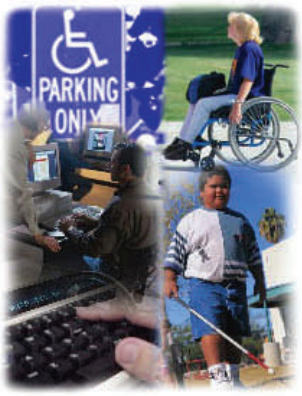
The workshop was a first step towards building and strengthening relationships that foster ongoing communication, coordination, cooperation and collaboration in the areas of sheltering, transportation, communication access, and medical and medications needs.

In Memory of Betty Bacon

Elizabeth "Betty" Bacon passed away at the age of 61 in February 2008. Betty, the former Director of Disabled Student Services at San Diego State University, was an active member of San Diego's disability community for more than 30 years. Betty's involvement with disability began in 1968 when she sustained a spinal cord injury as the result of a parachuting accident. "Actually I fell out of a tree," said Betty of her unusual accident, "But first I fell into it. It was a very tall tree." Betty used a wheelchair as a result. She subsequently completed a B.A. and Masters Degree in counseling at San Jose State University.

Disability Services misses her more than words can say, but her vision will last an eternity. We will miss Betty's will and determination, her kindness and generosity. Her dedication and positive recommendations made the City of San Diego a more accessible and welcoming place for all of our residents. In Betty's own words, "we must work toward a world and a community that includes us all and values our differences."

Disability Services Program Next Steps / Future Initiatives



In our next annual report, for Fiscal Year 2008-2009, we will detail the exciting work we've been doing in a number of areas, including:

- **The formation of a Mayor's Committee on Disability**
- **Incorporating emergency preparedness for people with disabilities into the City's emergency plans**
- **ADA and disability awareness trainings for City staff**
- **ADA survey needs assessment of 184 City-owned facilities**
- **A fourth Mayor's Disability Forum**

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Visit us on the web!

www.sandiego.gov/disabilityservices

About the City of San Diego

The City of San Diego is the eighth largest city in the nation, with more than 1.3 million residents, and represents the commercial, governmental and cultural hub for San Diego County's 2.8 million people.

The City owns, leases, operates and/or manages more than 1,700 facilities, which include buildings; pools; recreation and senior centers; libraries; parks and play areas; golf courses; a stadium used by a professional football team and a major league baseball park; several convention centers; boat docks; museums; theatres; fire, police and lifeguard stations; two airports; and several pump stations, dams and reservoirs.

In addition, the City of San Diego currently has more than 600 projects that are either in the planning, design, budget and/or construction phase. Our existing facilities have either been constructed or altered with a focus on meeting or exceeding the current ADA standards adopted in 1992. Those facilities which are currently in the planning state were designed, budgeted and/or are being constructed with that same focus.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, out of 1,223,400 people living in the City of San Diego, approximately 197,134 (16%) have some type of disability.