

BEFORE THE
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
CHAIRMAN JIM GRAHAM



OFFICE OF DISABILITY RIGHTS
FISCAL YEAR 2012
PERFORMANCE HEARING

TESTIMONY OF

DEREK ORR,
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF DISABILITY RIGHTS

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11:00 a.m.

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 123
Washington, DC 20004

Good morning, Councilmember Graham and other distinguished members of the Committee and staff. I am Derek Orr, Director of the District of Columbia Office of Disability Rights, and it is my privilege to appear before you today to report on the Performance Outcomes accomplished by the Office of Disability Rights in Fiscal Year 2012 and highlights of Fiscal Year 2013 Performance Measures.

The Office of Disability Rights (ODR), established in November 2007, has a mission to ensure that the programs, services, benefits, activities and facilities operated or funded by the District of Columbia are fully accessible to, and useable by, people with disabilities. ODR is responsible for ensuring that District Government is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, its amendments and other Federal and District disability rights laws.

To accomplish this mission, our office provides training, guidance, technical assistance, policy recommendations, and rapid informal dispute resolution to District agencies, consumers and residents with disabilities, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

The Office of Disability Rights for the District of Columbia supports, promotes and works to advance to the greatest extent possible the protections available under the ADA to District residents and consumers – specifically, and when applicable on the basis of disability in employment, government programs and services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation.

Hubert H. Humphrey is quoted as saying..."the moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life . . . the children; those who are in the twilight of life . . . the elderly; and those who are in the shadow of life . . . the sick . . . the needy . . . and [people with disabilities]."

The work of the Office of Disability Rights – in active partnership and collaboration with the work of the Health and Human Services cluster under the direction of Deputy Mayor BB Otero, strives to fulfill that moral obligation through a connected fabric of personal, private and public systems. City residents are supported best when all these systems work together.

The Office of Disability Rights has a staff of eight (8) FTE's, with one vacant position. ODR is in the process of actively hiring to fill that position. Presently four (4) ODR staff identify as people with disabilities. In addition to a core staff of 8, ODR works in collaboration and partnership with approximately 60 ADA Coordinators – each representing a District Government Agency. The ADA Coordinators serve as "ambassadors" of ODR to ensure employees across District Government have access to timely information and assistance. On a regular basis ODR provides training to the cadre of ADA Coordinators on the topics of ADA Title I – Employment; ADA Title II – Government Programs and Services; Disability Sensitivity, and Reasonable Accommodations.

The number of District residents with disabilities can be calculated using a variety of analysis and projections. The statistics available and frequently cited references, places the number of people with disabilities in the District at approximately 130,000 or 20%. It is important to point out that a significant number of people may have a functional limitation that meets the definition of “disability” under the ADA – but do not consider themselves to have a disability.

The Office of Disability Rights is proud to report the following accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2012:

- “A Path to Community Living”. This handbook was developed for people residing in long-term care facilities or who may be at risk for long-term care. The handbook was designed as a “self-assessment” tool that walks the consumer through a series of questions related to current living situation, health and medical issues, life style preferences, etc. leading to the creation of a planning document.
- “A Path to Community Living Resource Guide.” The guide (available in digital format only and posted on the ODR website) is a companion resource to the “Path to Community Living” handbook. The resource guide provides information of where consumers can access the services and information needed to create the most comprehensive plan possible.

- ODR Web Videos. Three (3) Sign Language videos were produced to provide an overview of ODR programs and services. The videos cover: 1) About ODR; 2) How to file a complaint and 3) How to request a Sign Language Interpreter.
- Service Animal Guidelines Video. ODR produced a web-video that provides an overview of federal and local policies related Service Animals. The video covers the “Frequently Asked Questions” that were provided to ODR by consumers and providers.
- Web Accessibility. In consultation with SSB Bart Group, ODR created a Section 508 Technical Assistance Manual (508 relates to the Federal Standards for Web Accessibility) to assist DC Government agencies with maintaining and improving the accessibility of their websites during the District’s transition to a new web content management system. The Manual is available for distribution to all agency web content managers once their site has made the transition.
- Training. ODR provided training to 1,070 employees. Topics included ADA Title I, ADA Title II, Voting Accessibility, Disability Sensitivity, Fair Housing Act, Reasonable Accommodations and Labor Relations, Olmstead Community Integration, and Effective Communication.

- Olmstead. ODR coordinated the Districts response to the Supreme Court Olmstead mandate by releasing the document “DC – One Community for All”, a framework for nine District Government agencies to address how to ensure people with disabilities reside in the least restrictive environment possible.
- Informal dispute resolution, technical assistance and information/referral. ODR managed 509 requests for assistance in the areas of employment, accessibility, housing and effective communication

In FY '13, highlights of initiatives planned and in place include:

- Implementation of a “Video Relay Interpreting” station. The station will be available within the Office of Disability Rights. The service would allow for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing who require a Sign Language Interpreter to receive the service upon-demand without having to schedule an Interpreter. This would allow people who are deaf the option for customer service as a “walk-in”. The station would be available to all agencies located at 441 4th Street NW. This is a pilot program.
- In preparation for the 2013 Presidential Inauguration, ODR participated on the task-force led by the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Administration (HSEMA). ODR provided technical assistance with accessibility reviews for the paths of travel from available Metro stops to the National Mall.

- In addition, ODR developed and presented a Disability Etiquette and Sensitivity training that was presented to our federal partners, DC Government employees and volunteers.
- In collaboration with the DC DOH Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Administration (HEPRA), the development of a handbook – “A Path to Preparedness”—to assist people with disabilities who live in the community in developing their personal safety plans. The initial handbook will address the issue of “Heat Alerts and Emergencies.” In addition, ODR and HEPRA will launch a pilot program to foster “safer communities” by training and remunerating neighborhood residents to become “Prevention Alert Leaders,” who are responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities who have completed the “Preparedness” handbook can implement their personal safety plans in accordance with their preferences.
- Participation on the “Accessible Taxicab Workgroup” convened by the DC Taxi Commission. This workgroup is charged with reviewing the internal and external factors that impact the expansion of accessible taxi service in the District.
- ODR launched a Voter Accessibility Guide Program with a grant from the Board of Elections and Ethics (BOEE). Through this partnership, ODR trained 20 individuals, both with and without disabilities, to serve as Voter Accessibility Guides during the 2012 Presidential Election. The Voter Accessibility Guides were paid a stipend and assigned to polling places throughout the District on Election Day to ensure that the

path of travel from the entrance of the polling place to the voting machines was clear, and that people with disabilities who requested assistance in casting their votes were able to vote successfully.

- Development of a web-video that will provide training on “Disability Sensitivity.” This webinar will be geared toward DC government agencies, community partners, private sector businesses, and District residents. The training will be based on ODR’s existing disability sensitivity curriculum and will focus on topics such as person-first language, disability etiquette, service animals, and effective communication.
- Translation of the “Path to Community Living” handbook in a format for people who are “non-verbal”. This picture based version of the “Path to Community Living” Handbook will allow people with disabilities to make choices about where and how they wish to live in the community by tapping or circling the pictures that best fit their preferences.

On behalf of the Office of Disability Rights and the stakeholders we work alongside, we are proud of the leadership provided by Mayor Gray to ensure that the District of Columbia is a national model of accessibility. Lastly, I would like to recognize the staff of the Office of Disability Rights for the hard-work and commitment they invest to the mission, vision and values of the Agency. This concludes my formal testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.