

988

National Suicide Prevention & Crisis Lifeline

988 Community Education and Awareness Toolkit

[https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/crisis/988-
toolkit.pdf](https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/crisis/988-toolkit.pdf)

Ensuring Access to Library Services

Who Can't Use Your Library?

December 5, 2025

**Valerie Lewis, Administrator of Outreach Services
Outreach & Americans with Disabilities Act Liaison
Suffolk Cooperative Library System**

valerie@suffolknet.org

Accessibility should not be viewed as a job specific title, task or skill – It is Everyone's Responsibility



Accessibility is Inclusion -- should be the Value and Mission of the Entire Organization. Everyone associated with the organization should understand what it means to provide inclusive services, including administration, staff, trustees, volunteers, etc.

Things to Think About

- Access – Burden or Benefit?
- What makes your library accessible?
- What is a disability?
- What Policies do you have regarding access?
- How Do People Get a Library Card?
- What is a Service Animal (Emotional/Companion/Therapy)?
- The Laws vs. The Concept

Accessibility Basics

- Access Compliance Is **REQUIRED** - NOT OPTIONAL
- **BUDGET FOR ACCESSIBILITY!!!!**
- Procurement Policies For Accessibility
 >Do you know how to purchase ADA Compliant Items?
- What do you know about accessibility?
- Privacy is Paramount – Staff and Visitors
- Pre-COVID vs. Post-COVID Services/Environment
- Should not provide “Segregated Library Services”
 - * Labeling of Programs is Labeling of People
 - *Spaces Can Bring Together or Separate People
- Get Started with Federal/State/Local Resources

QUICK TIPS TO ACCESSIBILITY (1)

- **BUDGET for accessibility**
- **Attend Disability Awareness Trainings**
- **Develop Inclusive Procurement Policies**
- **WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA!!!!**
- **Evaluate Your Library: **Common Sense** Furniture, Equipment, Technology, Materials: Safety vs. Aesthetics (Walkways/Bricks)
Placement of Things Throughout the Library**

QUICK TIPS TO ACCESSIBILITY (2)

- Accessible Employment Procedures/Materials - Job Applications (whether in print or online –what platforms) - Community Service Opportunities, Friends, Programmer Forms, Staff Information, etc.
- Use Universal Design Concepts in EVERYTHING YOU DO!
Accessibility MUST be in every phase of planning – from the very beginning: Think about the end-user/audience (**Hooks on Doors**)
- Create an accessible/usable environment (public service areas, workspaces, break room, kitchen, bathrooms, makerspace, etc.) **INFORMATION DESK!**
- Outdoor Spaces –Trails, Walkways, Play Areas (Inclusive Physical Visual, Hearing and Sensory Resources) **BRICKS/COBBLESTONE** vs. Other
 - * Think About What Materials You Are Using When Creating Outdoor Spaces?

QUICK TIPS TO ACCESSIBILITY (3)

- Evaluate Signage and Way-Finding Information – Font, Contrast, Placement
- Understand Assistive Technology Basics in order to assist employees and patrons with access needs (Phones/Tablets/Computers)
- Inclusive Programming/Planning/Events/Tours/Materials/Exhibits
- Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Strategies
- **Accessible/Inclusive VOTING Materials/Methods**

QUICK TIPS TO ACCESSIBILITY (4)

- Evaluate the accessibility/usability of your communication and promotional materials (flyers, newsletters, brochures)
Do You Need to Include **Everything** You Are Including?
- Evaluate the accessibility of your website/social media by using assistive technology
- Ask for patron feedback
- Reach out to organizations serving/working with people with disabilities (Independent Living Centers/Service Providers)
- Understand transportation options in your area
- Think about your library: What is Missing? **WHO CAN'T USE IT?**

Service Animals

- ADA – Dog or Miniature Horse (Depending on Your Location – Ex. NYC/San Francisco)
- Famous Two Questions You Can Ask ☺
- Terminology – Service/Emotional/Companion/Therapy
- ACA/FHA – More Animals Are Included
- Vests/Paperwork – Means Nothing (Can Purchase on the Internet)
- Must be under the handler's control – Not Necessarily on a Leash
- Have a Library Policy Regarding Animals (Service or Otherwise)
- How far do you take the conversation/debate?

How to Get Started

Visit sites that can provide the basics of the (ADA, 1990). Many of these sites offer FREE webinars on accessibility in general, and on specifics such as Service Animals, Employment and Accessible Design. Also, subscribe to their email lists AND e-newsletters in order to learn about upcoming webinars and trainings.

General Disability Resources

ADA Homepage www.ada.gov

ADA HOTLINE 1-800-514-0301

United States Access Board www.access-board.gov

Georgia Tech: Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation (CIDI)

<https://cidi.gatech.edu/>

United Spinal Association <https://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/> AND
Disability Etiquette Booklet (PDF) www.unitedspinal.org

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

<https://www.aapd.com> VOTING!!!!

ADA Technical Assistance Centers – Information and Guidance on the Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA National Network consists of 10 Regional ADA Centers and an ADA Regional Knowledge Translation Center. The Regional ADA Centers are located throughout the United States to provide local assistance and foster implementation of the ADA. Find the ADA Center that serves your state, at:

[://adata.org/find-your-region](http://adata.org/find-your-region)

Hotline: 1-800-949-4232

Five Centers I tend to use most

Northeast ADA (NEADA) www.northeastada.org

Southwest ADA www.southwestada.org

Great Lakes ADA www.adagreatlakes.org

Mid-Atlantic ADA Center <https://www.adainfo.org/>

Pacific ADA <https://www.adapacific.org>

Effective Communication Strategies

There are many technologies and methods of communication that are valuable when interacting with a person with a disability.



Communication options should be based on the needs of the individual. Do NOT assume that because one method or technology works for one person, that it will work for everyone.

- Paper, Pens, Pencils, Markers
- Phone, Email, Text
- Tactile, Audio, Visuals
- Devices: Amplifiers, Assistive Listening (Comtek)
- Much More!!!!!!

Vision and Hearing Resources

American Foundation for the Blind <https://www.afb.org/>

National Federation of the Blind <https://www.nfb.org/>

American Council of the Blind <https://www.acb.org/>



Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

Use this site to find a Sign Language Interpreter for programs/meetings www.rid.org

National Association of the Deaf <https://www.nad.org/>

Gallaudet University <https://www.gallaudet.edu/>

Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center

<https://www3.gallaudet.edu/clerc-center/info-to-go/national-resources-and-directories/organizations.html>

Learning Disability and Mental Health Disability Resources

Learning Disabilities Online www.ldonline.org

Understood www.understood.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities <https://www.ncld.org/>

National Association of Special Education Teachers <https://www.naset.org/>



SAMHSA -- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services * Administration

<https://samhsa.org>

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence <https://www.ncadd.org>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) www.nami.org

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law www.bazelon.org

Developmental Disability Resources

- **Project Enable:** Free training modules designed for schools, and are completely relevant to libraries. <https://projectenable.syr.edu>
- **Project PALS:** University of Florida College of Communication and Information – free training modules on autism, designed for libraries <https://pals.cci.fsu-edu>
- **Disability Scoop:** “The national developmental disabilities news site” www.disabilityscoop.org
- **RUSA:** Reference and User Services Association <https://www.ala.org/rusa/guidelines-resources/resources-by-topic>
- **Library Programming for Adults with Developmental Disabilities** (Written by Carrie Banks and Barbara Klipper)
- **Webinar: Programming for Adults with Developmental Disabilities -** <https://infopeople.org/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=909>

Reading Materials in Accessible Formats

National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) – library of congress, FREE nation-wide **ONLY FULLY ACCESSIBLE** library service for people with disabilities, including a visual, physical, reading or learning disability. Audio and Braille materials are delivered directly to patron's home via the USPS, and can also be downloaded via BARD, to registered patrons. If you cannot hold a book, turn a page or see well enough to read a traditional print book. Find your local/regional Talking Books library at the NLS site: <https://www.loc.gov/nls/> --- All Long Island libraries are served by the Andrew Heiskell Braille & Talking Book Library (NYPL) – Upstate libraries served by NYS Library TBBL.

Librarians, Educators, Counselors, Social Workers, Healthcare and Social Service Providers are authorized to certify a Talking Book application!!!!!!!

- **Bookshare** www.bookshare.org
- **Learning Ally** www.learningally.org
- **Newsline for the Blind** www.nfb.org
- **Alexa and similar devices** (caution new users)

Accessible Outdoor Recreation Resources

- Inclusive Recreation Resource Center (IRRC) <https://inclusiverec.org/> -- on this site, visit <https://inclusiverec.org/sites/default/files/temp/Improving%20Usability%20for%20Visitors%20of%20All%20Abilities-2016.pdf>
- Play Core: Specialize in creating accessible and inclusive outdoor play spaces.
<https://www.playcore.com/>
- Indiana University: The Eppley Center: <https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/eppley/index.html>
- Bill Botten used to work for the US Access Board and now works independently to provide information on outdoor environments and trails, etc. bottenb3@gmail.com
- Skulski Consulting does work with outdoor recreation and accessibility. Jennifer Skulski is the owner Jennifer@skulksiconsulting.com
- There are many consulting firms that do accessibility consulting. Members of the [Accessibility Professionals Association](#) and of [CASI](#) are great resources.

Certified Access Specialist Institute (CASI) <https://www.casinstitute.org/>

Museum/Cultural Environment Resources

Creating Accessible Exhibit Resources

- **LEAD Conference (Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability)**
Kennedy Center, Washington, DC <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/networks-conferences-and-research/conferences-and-events/lead-conference>
- **LEAD Research and Resources** <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/networks-conferences-and-research/research-and-resources/lead-research-and-resources/>
- **Find a Local Museum Access Consortium – LI or NYC

Employment Resources

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Homepage www.ada.gov

Equal Employment Opportunities Commission www.eeoc.gov

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) www.askjan.org

United States Department of Labor –ODEP- Office of Disability Employment Policy
<https://www.dol.gov/odep>

Each state has an office of vocational rehabilitation that can provide services to children and adults with disabilities, including transition from school to work. Each county has an agency focused on services to people with disabilities. These services vary from state to state/county to county. Also, contact your local independent living center and service providers. **In NYS, please contact: ACCES VR**
<http://www.acces.nysesd.gov/vr> **to learn more about these services.**

Accessible Web Design

webAIM www.webaim.org (WAVE Accessibility Checker)

Web Accessibility Guidelines Initiative www.w3.org

Axe Web Accessibility Checker <https://www.deque.com/axe/>

Accessibility Checker <https://www.accessibilitychecker.org/>

National Center for Accessible Media <https://www.ncam-tech.com/>

Institute for Human Centered Design <https://humancentereddesign.org/>

Level Access <https://www.levelaccess.com/>

The Viscardi Center <https://das.viscardicenter.org> (On Long Island)

Accessible Virtual Presentations

American Bar Association: Virtual Meetings Accessibility Best Practices

<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/disabilityrights/resources/covid-resources/virtual-meetings-checklist/>

Accessibility-Zoom

<https://www.zoom.com/en/accessibility/>

Accessibility Frequently Asked Questions-Zoom

<https://zoom.us/accessibility/faq>

Hot Keys and Keyboard Short Cuts-Zoom

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/205683899-Hot-Keys-and-Keyboard-Shortcuts-for-Zoom>

Accessibility Best Practices for Zoom-University of Colorado Boulder

<https://www.colorado.edu/accessible-technology/resources/zoom-accessibility-best-practices>

Accessibility Tools for Microsoft Teams

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/accessibility-tools-for-microsoft-teams-2d4009e7-1300-4766-87e8-7a217496c3d5>

Section 508 Meetings Best Practices – NOTE: Scroll to the Sections Under: Accessible Meeting Elements

<https://www.section508.gov/create/accessible-meetings/>

Accessible Social Media

Social Media Accessibility Guidelines-American Foundation for the Blind

<https://www.afb.org/about-afb/what-we-do/afb-consulting/afb-accessibility-resources/afbs-social-media-accessibility>

Create Accessible Social Media

<https://www.section508.gov/create/social-media/>

10 social media accessibility best practices for social platforms

<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-accessibility/>

Accessible and Inclusive presentations and messaging is not only about the technology. You must understand your audience and be knowledgeable about the many forms of communication that will help to make your information more usable, understandable, beneficial and enjoyable to everyone.

Accessible Procurement Resources

Creating a Library Accessibility Policy (ALA)

<https://www.ala.org/ala/washoff/contactwo/oitp/emailtutorials/accessibilitya/22.htm>

SUNY

<https://sunnyolis.libguides.com/c.php?g=992416&p=7481219>

Smart Cities

https://smartcities4all.org/SC4A_Toolkit - Procurement_XT.php

General Procurement Policy concepts

<https://disabilityin.org/resource/building-blocks-of-an-accessible-procurement-program/>

Inclusive/Accessible Emergency Preparedness

FEMA: www.fema.gov offers a wide variety of resources specific to the inclusion of people with disabilities and other access needs, in the emergency preparedness and recovery planning process. The following link will bring you to recorded webinars that focus on emergency preparedness/recovery and people with disabilities.

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/preparedness-webinars>

Understand the barriers to inclusive emergency preparedness to individuals with other access needs, such as seniors, people with low literacy skills, people with low income and people who speak English as a second language.

Work with your local Office of Emergency Management/Fire Rescue Services and Medical Centers and Fire Departments to develop programming and resources for staff and the public.

Libraries play an integral role in the community emergency preparedness process.

Creating PDF & CANVA (Not Recommended)

PDF (and CANVA) – Please note that for the most part, PDF's are not accessible. They can be created to be accessible, but steps need to be taken in the development process to ensure accessibility.

- ADOBE has some very good information/tools to assist people to make a PDF accessible. Much about making a PDF accessible has to do with the source document (WORD, etc.) and if it was accessible before being made into a PDF. The best option is to start with an accessible file and then import to acrobat for final work.. That said this is still a labor intensive process. Many resources recommend avoiding pdfs for the majority of cases.
- Adobe's information is at: <https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/creating-accessible-pdfs.html>
- Another resource is this [6-part series](#) from WebAIM, which will guide a user through the necessary steps if a PDF must be created, including how to configure acrobat.
- This [Decision Tree](#) from NCSU will walk through evaluation if a PDF is the best option for the intended use case.
- One of the videos recommended by the Great Lakes ADA Center, and used by them for training purposes, is available at: <https://youtu.be/ndNuOHeA4CI>

Please Note: Although these resources offer tools for creating accessible documents, they are typically not truly accessible, and are not usable with many types of assistive technology. They are also not usable by people with various types of disabilities.

Alt Tags & Overlays

Alt-Tags: Creating alt tags for images, etc. is critical for any document, website or social media post-regardless of the format. Creating Alt text is different in every program. A good resource about this issue (written simply) is out of a university in South Carolina. Probably written for their staff, but still useful to everyone.

https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/digital-accessibility/guides_tutorials/best_practices/alternative_text/step-by-step-instructions-alt-text/index.php

Overlays:

There is lots of controversy about overlays. Companies that make them/sell them state that they make the website accessible. Various sources, including United States ADA Technical Assistance Centers, however, have done webinars and provided resources to say that overlay software does not make a website fully accessible, and in some cases make sites more inaccessible for some people. The issue and topic of accessibility of overlays is longstanding. They were heavily marketed as the answer to inaccessible websites for entities that did not want to do the work to actually code their sites so that they were accessible. There have been many lawsuits around this issue as well by individuals and disability advocates.

AFB (American Federation for the Blind) has a good article that identifies some of the assumed positives along with the “why” not such a great idea. <https://www.afb.org/blog/entry/accessibility-overlay-promises-and-pitfalls>

There is a good discussion of some of the legal issues by a well respected law firm as well.
<https://www.loeb.com/en/insights/publications/2021/08/web-accessibility-overlays>

The a11y project is a collective of accessibility geeks from across the world. They have a good article on this issue as well.
<https://www.a11yproject.com/posts/should-i-use-an-accessibility-overlay/>

The Great Lakes ADA Center hosted a webinar as part of their Accessible Technology Series on the issue of “Overlays” with Karl Groves and Chris Law who have spoken extensively on the use of overlays, etc. You may wish to review the recording of this session, as it is very helpful in understanding the issues/concerns with this approach to website accessibility. You can view the recording at: <https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ada-tech/archives/111028> Overlays have become a common way for websites to bypass creating a fully accessible website, without addressing the underlying inaccessible design of their site.

Karl Groves has some articles on this issue as well. The references for the session are also from him. <https://karlgroves.com/the-overlay-personalization-farce/>

The fact sheet he authored with many others, including Chris Law is another useful resource. <https://overlayfactsheet.com/en/>

Notes 1:

The first slide highlights the relatively new “988” Crisis Line. Please share this number throughout your library. You can print it out on paper and place it in picture frames. A person can see it in a welcoming way.

Please note the concept of “Segregated Library Services”. You should not design programs for specific groups. You want to offer public library programs that are accessible to anyone who wishes to attend, not to design programs for groups based on their disability. There are many organizations/service providers to address the specific needs of people with various types of disabilities.

On the page with the Technical Assistance Centers, I have highlighted the five centers to which I subscribe. You may wish to subscribe to all of them or different ones than the sites I use. I find these five to offer the most relevant programming to my work.

The resources shared in the slides are a “selected” group of resources. There are many organizations and agencies (nation-wide and locally) that can provide you with information regarding how to provide accessible programs and services to the broadest audience possible.

Reach out to me with any questions

Send Email to Valerie Lewis at valerie@suffolknet.org

Office Phone: 631-286-1600, x1354

Notes 2:

All of the information shared in these slides have been compiled to offer a starting point in helping to learn about providing your organizations' resources and services in accessible and usable formats. Think as broadly as possible when creating your materials, programming and employment opportunities. Once again, these are a selected group of resources and you can find many more resources by visiting the links provided throughout this presentation.

On the slide titled Service Animals, the two questions that you are allowed to ask are: Is that a Service Animal and What Task Has it Been Trained to Perform? You are not permitted under any circumstances to ask the person what type of disability they have that requires the use of a service animal.

National Library Service: Every library should have a Talking Book machine onsite for demonstration purposes. You may also wish to work with the Library for the Blind which services your area, to have a rotating collection of Talking Books at your library. You should also have Talking Book brochures and applications. All library staff should know about the Talking Book program and how a patron can access these services. Talking Books are available to patrons with disabilities of all ages.

There are many types of assistive technology that libraries should have onsite. These items should not necessarily be for loaning to patrons, but rather for access to library materials when in the library. Assistive Technology ranges from low to very high-cost items, that provide varying levels of access. Often low-tech and low-cost items can help to make library materials accessible to patrons with disabilities and other access needs.

The final slide, titled Notes 3, contains information on New York State Agencies that provide information and services to people with disabilities of all ages.

Notes 3:

NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is responsible for coordinating services for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, Prader-Willi syndrome and other neurological impairments.

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/>

New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYS OCFS)

The Office of Children and Family Services serves New York's public by promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of our children, families and communities. We will achieve results by setting and enforcing policies, building partnerships, and funding and providing quality services.

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/>

NYSED Family and Community Engagement

Our mission is to establish, support, and expand access to educational and life opportunities for ALL people in New York State. Parent Resources <http://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/family-and-community-engagement>

Invisible Disabilities Association

<https://invisibledisabilities.org/>