

AccessibleNYC

2021 Edition



Mayor Bill de Blasio

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Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives

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Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities



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Letter From Mayor de Blasio



Dear Friends,

For the past eight years, my administration has worked hard to make New York City the fairest big city in America and the most accessible city in the world.

I am proud of the work we have done with Commissioner Victor Calise of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to make New York City a better place for those with disabilities than it was eight years ago. Importantly, there are now structures in place to ensure that this work will continue. For example, there are now disability service facilitators at every City agency to ensure that attention is paid to disability issues as programs and policies are being developed.

To keep our constituents informed and hold ourselves accountable, since 2016, we have published an annual report, AccessibleNYC, which reports on current and planned accessibility initiatives. This summer, I issued an Executive Order that requires that this report continue to be published annually, so future administrations can continue our work.

The 2021 AccessibleNYC report, the last one produced on my watch, describes the progress we and our partners have made over the past year to make New York City more accessible for people with disabilities in the areas of transportation, employment and financial empowerment, health, digital accessibility, arts and culture, entertainment, dining, tourism, and more.

We have come a long way but there is still much work to be done as the City continues its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope my successor will build on the work of the last eight years and continue to create an even fairer, more inclusive and more accessible city by keeping the rights of people with disabilities in the forefront.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill de Blasio". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill de Blasio

Mayor

Letter From Deputy Mayor Thompson



Friends,

My mother became disabled when I was nine years old. From a young age, I saw firsthand the many ways our cities have struggled to support those with disabilities: in the areas of housing, employment, public transit, and so many more. Yet I saw other things, too: the extraordinary strength and resolve of my mother and so many others. I saw that almost every person I knew – whether through a parent, child, friend, or themselves – was part of the disability community. And above all, I saw what could be possible if cities and communities truly

supported all their citizens.

I'm so proud of what the de Blasio Administration, led by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), has achieved over the past eight years. We have increased the accessible housing stock in the City, creating more than 5,000 newly-constructed accessible affordable housing units. We have made it easier to navigate our city, more than quadrupling the number of wheelchair-accessible yellow taxis and growing the number of wheelchair-accessible for-hire vehicles (FHVs) from 55 to 2,710. And we have put in place a plan to deliver Broadband to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who didn't have it – providing online employment opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities that will set them up for success in a new economy.

The list could go on and on. In the final AccessibleNYC Report of this administration, you will read about the extraordinary accomplishments of this team. Yet in this moment, as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis focused on equity and justice, we know we must go even further. We must recommit ourselves to building the fairest, most accessible city in the nation – because when do so, we bring out the best in every New Yorker.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phillip Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Deputy Mayor J. Phillip Thompson

Letter From Commissioner Calise



To all New Yorkers, Visitors and Our Friends Around the World,

When I was appointed Commissioner of MOPD in 2012, I committed to making New York City the most accessible city in the world. While we have certainly not achieved full accessibility, I know that we have put the city on the path to full inclusion, and moreover, have had an impact beyond New York City by driving competition among cities.

Among the highlights in the **transportation** space:

- More subway stations are being made accessible, and Zoning for Accessibility, which was passed by the City Council earlier this year, will help ensure that developers work with the City and MTA to set aside space where needed for station elevators, which will accelerate accessibility.
- We have shown that accessibility is good business: from September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021, there were more than a quarter million requests for wheelchair accessible vehicles made via ridesharing apps, representing more than five million dollars in fares.
- In 2020, Mayor de Blasio nominated me for a position on the MTA Board. I am the only person with a self-disclosed disability currently on the board, and I am there making sure that the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed.

And in the **employment** area:

- MOPD's person-centered employment program, **NYC: ATWORK**, has placed over 500 people with disabilities in real jobs with real pay since its launch in 2017. The program has been held up as a model program, and we have helped to show that fully including people with disabilities in the workplace is not only the right thing to do, but makes good business sense.
- Our financial empowerment initiative, EmpoweredNYC, has helped our **NYC: ATWORK** participants manage their money and has led to a multi-city initiative called Empowered Cities.
- Our Connectability program has helped to close the digital divide for our job seekers with disabilities.

Additionally, to help ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are considered, that City agencies will continue to be accountable, and that improvements will continue to be made:

- Disability Service Facilitators serve as points of contact for disability issues throughout City government.

- MOPD reports on the accessibility of City websites every two years.
- As MOPD Commissioner, I chair the accessibility committee of the New York City Building Code and Existing Building Code, successfully pushing to expand accessibility above ADA standards wherever possible.
- This summer the Mayor signed an Executive Order codifying the responsibilities of this office, including making AccessibleNYC an annual report.

Finally, because of the strong relationships this office has built with the advocacy community and agencies throughout City government, we were able to quickly mobilize amid the COVID-19 state of emergency in spring 2019. We have kept the disability community informed of new developments through regular meetings, which we initially conducted weekly and are now holding on a monthly basis. And we have ensured that the needs of people with disabilities are being addressed as the City responds to the pandemic and engages in recovery efforts.

I am very proud to have served you all for the past nine years and of what we have accomplished for the more than 900,000 people with disabilities who live in New York City, plus the millions of others who visit each year. I thank the Mayor for his support, the advocates for always holding our feet to the fire and most importantly, the hard-working and dedicated staff of MOPD, without whom all this would not have been possible.

Ciao,

Victor Calise
Commissioner

Introduction And Executive Summary

Established in 1973, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) is the liaison between New York City government and the disability community. In partnership with all City offices and agencies, MOPD consistently ensures that the rights and concerns of the disability community are included in all City initiatives and that City programs and policies address the needs of people with disabilities. Through its work and advocacy, MOPD has steadily improved services and programs for individuals with disabilities who live in New York City, as well as those who work in and visit the city. Working to make New York the most accessible city in the world, the office regularly engages in advocacy and policymaking at the local, state, national, and international levels to make certain that accessibility and full inclusion are key priorities for all public and private stakeholders alike.

New York City is a more inclusive and accessible city for people with disabilities than it was just a few years ago. There are now disability service facilitators in City agencies to ensure that access for people with disabilities is a part of everyday decision making. There are local laws to ensure that assistive listening devices are installed in certain capital projects paid for in whole or in part by City funds and that City websites meet the latest digital accessibility standards. There are more accessible taxis on the street, and there are rules to ensure that accessible for-hire vehicles are dispatched in a timely manner to those who need them. There are many more accessible subway stations, accessible pedestrian signals and pedestrian ramps than there were when the first edition of this report was published in 2016. MOPD’s employment program, **NYC: ATWORK**, has connected more than 500 job seekers with disabilities to jobs and internships and has been held up as a model program. And, while there is still so much more work to be done, we believe that the culture is changing, and that there is a greater recognition that making the city more accessible for people with disabilities benefits everyone – with disabilities and without.

This report summarizes current key programs and initiatives of the City and its partners that increase access for people with disabilities. The report is divided into eight sections:

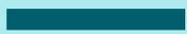
- Transportation
- Employment and Financial Empowerment
- Housing
- Health
- Digital Accessibility
- Arts, Culture, Entertainment, Dining and Tourism
- Access
- Education, Enforcement and Outreach

Some highlights from calendar year 2021 that you can read about in this report, along with information on many other accomplishments and initiatives, include:

- the passage of Zoning for Accessibility, which will incentivize more developers to invest in subway accessibility directly or give the MTA easements to enable elevator installation at more stations;
- approval by the City Council of updates to the NYC Building Code that will increase access for people with disabilities, including new requirements for accessible electric vehicle charging stations, accessibility in recreational, sports, and gaming facilities, an expansion of the existing requirement to provide assistive listening in assembly spaces, and provisions that will make dining more accessible for people with disabilities; and
- the provision of more than 50,000 COVID-19 doses to more than 30,000 New York City residents in their homes.

We also invite you to browse the appendices to this report, which include: a recent mayoral executive order that, among other things, codifies July as Disability Awareness Month in New York City and ensures that this annual report will continue to be published; selected statistics concerning New Yorkers with disabilities; an inclusive terminology guide; and a guide to creating accessible social media. Additional statistics and digital accessibility guides are available on MOPD's website.

Transportation



New York City is the world's busiest and most dynamic city. Residents and visitors alike rely on the streets to be safe and depend on public transportation to get them to where they need to go. Through the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC), and collaboration from other City and State agencies working with MOPD, including the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), the City has made it a priority to ensure that all New Yorkers, including the millions of people who use public transportation each day, are able to navigate the city.

In 2020, with critical support from disability advocates, Mayor de Blasio nominated MOPD Commissioner Calise to serve on the MTA Board and Commissioner Calise joined the board in June of that year. As the only current MTA Board Member with a self-disclosed disability, Commissioner Calise has advocated for more accessible subway, bus, commuter rail, and paratransit systems.

This section provides information on the accessibility of various modes of transportation in New York City and on some of the key accessibility initiatives in the transportation arena by the City and its partners.

The MTA Network

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), through its various agencies, operates the New York City subways and buses, Access-A-Ride, the Metro-North and Long Island railroads, and nine bridge and tunnel crossings. The MTA is governed by a 21-member Board. Board members are nominated by the Governor, with four recommended by New York City's Mayor.

Subways

An accessible subway system benefits all New Yorkers. It increases transportation options, which among other things increases employment opportunities and community interaction, all helping our city grow. As the New York City's population has grown and aged in the last ten years, and as more New Yorkers seek to age in place, the need for an accessible subway system is also growing. A fully accessible subway system welcomes not just riders with disabilities, but older adults, those traveling with bicycles, luggage and strollers, and visitors who may just need some extra assistance getting around.

Since the passage of the ADA, and particularly throughout the last five years, the MTA has made significant strides toward a more accessible subway system. In 2021, the MTA appointed its first Chief Accessibility Officer, responsible for overseeing accessibility work at all of the MTA's agencies. The appointment advances the MTA's commitment to increasing access and ensuring the system meets the needs of all riders, including those with disabilities.



Photo credit: Marc A. Hermann / MTA

When the 2016 AccessibleNYC report was published, 110 subway stations were accessible by a ramp or an elevator, five of which were only accessible in one direction. As of



Avenue H Ramp Opening on the Q Line. Photo Credit: Marc A. Hermann / MTA

September 2021, 138 of the city’s 493 subway and Staten Island Railway stations, serving about half of daily ridership, have vertical access via ramp or elevator. While many more stations have other accessibility features like tactile warning strips, braille signage and accessible audio and visual announcements, there is still work to do to achieve a fully accessible subway system.

Of the 138 ADA accessible stations, 60 are in Manhattan, 36 in Brooklyn, 22 in Queens, 15 in the Bronx, and 5 in Staten Island. Ninety-nine of the 100 Key Stations in the program mandated by state and federal law are complete. There are 39 additional stations that are ADA accessible throughout the system, including many that opened during the COVID-19 pandemic. A list of accessible stations as of November 2021, is attached to this report as Appendix E. For an up-to-date list of accessible stations visit [mta.info/accessibility](https://www.mta.info/accessibility).

The MTA is working on the design and construction of additional ADA station projects, including many of the stations in the 2020-2024 Capital Plan. (See *Appendix F*) In July 2021, the MTA completed the first ADA station project in this Capital Plan, with the opening of a new ramp to the northbound

platform at the Avenue H (Q) station in Brooklyn, making the station fully accessible. In 2021 and early 2022, construction is scheduled to begin at 8 additional stations including stations in all five boroughs. Design efforts are underway for the 14 St/6 Ave (1/2/3, F/M and L) station complex and several other priority stations. When the stations in this Capital Plan are complete, the system will be over 40% accessible by station count, and stations that serve more than half of ridership will be accessible.

The current Capital Plan also includes funding for full replacement and modernization projects for dozens of elevators that are nearing the end of their useful life. These elevator replacement projects help keep elevators reliable and provide a smoother ride.

The MTA continues to work with community advocates, the New York City Council, and key City agencies including DOT, Department of City Planning (DCP), Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and MOPD, to use zoning to encourage developers to add new elevators to the system and to identify areas where easements can be created for future installation of elevators. In close partnership with MOPD, the MTA successfully advanced



Photo credit: Marc A. Hermann / MTA



Zoning for Accessibility, an initiative to expand the use of two specific zoning tools – the Transit Easement Certification and Station Improvement Bonus – to a wider swath of the city. The zoning text amendments were approved by the City Council on October 7, 2021. Zoning for Accessibility will incentivize more developers to invest in subway accessibility directly or give the MTA easements to enable elevator installation at more stations. Any private investment will supplement the MTA’s own continued Capital investments in station accessibility, and help achieve systemwide accessibility on a shorter timeline. With the

impacts of COVID, such creative approaches are needed now more than ever.

The MTA has been steadfast in its commitment to accessibility, even with the budgetary and operational challenges brought by the COVID pandemic. While many Capital projects were delayed or put entirely on hold in 2020 and 2021, the MTA completed 14 subway ADA station projects during this time and started work at an additional 13 stations. Recently completed ADA station projects include Gun Hill Rd (5) in the Bronx, 57 St/7 Av in Manhattan, and the 42 St Shuttle project. There is also a new accessible entrance to the Manhattan-bound E/M platform at Court Square station in Queens, as part of a private development in this fast-growing area.



Transit advocate Jose Hernandez speaking in support of Zoning for Accessibility. Photo credit: Marc A. Hermann / MTA

The MTA remains committed to continuing this work and keeping accessibility at the top of the agenda with the additional funding provided by the federal American Rescue Plan and other sources of support critical to the recovery from COVID.

Subway accessibility is about much more than elevators and ramps. In 2019, the MTA ran the “Accessible Station Lab” project at the Jay St – MetroTech station in Brooklyn. At this station, the MTA tested 15 new



accessibility features including several wayfinding apps, new tactile and braille maps and signage, and floor guideways designed to make subway travel more accessible for all riders, including those with vision, hearing, mobility and intellectual/developmental disabilities. Based on positive feedback received during the pilot, the MTA has expanded the use of some of the most popular features tested at Jay St. For example, the MTA installed Accessible Boarding Area floor decals and wayfinding tape at Grand Central subway station to help customers navigate the accessible pathway during construction, and installed a new tactile map at the 23 St (1) station in Manhattan designed to provide critical information to customers who are blind or have low vision. The MTA also continued testing the NaviLens wayfinding app in partnership with the Transit Tech Lab.

Another feature tested at the Jay St Station Lab, which the MTA is looking to implement in the coming years, is a wide fare gate to provide easier access to the system to customers with mobility devices, as well as those with strollers, luggage, bikes etc.

Finally, throughout the last two years, the MTA has begun rolling out the OMNY new fare payment system across all subway stations. As of summer, 2021, customers can use OMNY to pay the fare at every subway station in the system, and to transfer between subways and buses. Additional phases of the OMNY rollout, including the Reduced-Fare program, are in progress as of this writing. OMNY readers have already been installed on all subway station AutoGates in preparation for their activation in the near future.

MTA NYCT is also creating and distributing online and print resources that can help people with disabilities navigate the subway system. The Guide to Accessible Transit, available online at new.mta.info/accessibility, provides more information on the accessibility of subway stations, as well as buses and Access-A-Ride paratransit service. MTA NYCT is working daily to provide additional information regarding elevator outages and alternate route information in real-time on their website and mobile app, via email and text alerts, and at in-station kiosks. Customers can verify an elevator's status

or sign up for E-Alerts on the MTA website. In 2020, the MTA also installed “Alternative Accessible Travel Information” signs at ADA elevators, to help customers navigate around any unexpected outages.

Finally, the MTA’s response to COVID-19 is ongoing, and customer safety remains the top priority for the agency. All customers and employees should continue to wear masks while riding the subway, and an enhanced cleaning regimen remains in place. An accessible subway system welcomes all riders, and the MTA remains committed to ensuring all riders feel safe, welcome, and comfortable riding the subway.

Buses

The MTA’s fleet of 5,800 buses provides service in every borough and is fully wheelchair accessible by front-door ramp (local and Select Bus routes) or lift (for coach-style buses on express routes). The MTA is also deploying Digital Information Screens across the fleet for enhanced audio and visual information.

Bus service played a critical role in the MTA’s response to COVID-19, ensuring accessible transit was available across New York City even through the hardest weeks of the crisis. Overnight bus service was increased and new routes added to ensure essential workers could continue to get to and from work, and provide access to critical services for New Yorkers, even during the overnight subway closure. Even during the months when the MTA moved to rear door boarding on buses to encourage social distancing, the front door always remained open to any customer needing the ramp or kneeler to board safely. The MTA also implemented the most aggressive cleaning program in the

agency’s history, disinfecting the entire bus fleet every 24 hours.

In 2021, the MTA began to take delivery of 800 buses with a new, more flexible seating configuration designed with accessibility in mind. The buses feature three additional flexible seats – beyond the wheelchair securement area – that customers can flip up to stow and sit within arm’s reach of a folded walker, mobility device, or small stroller

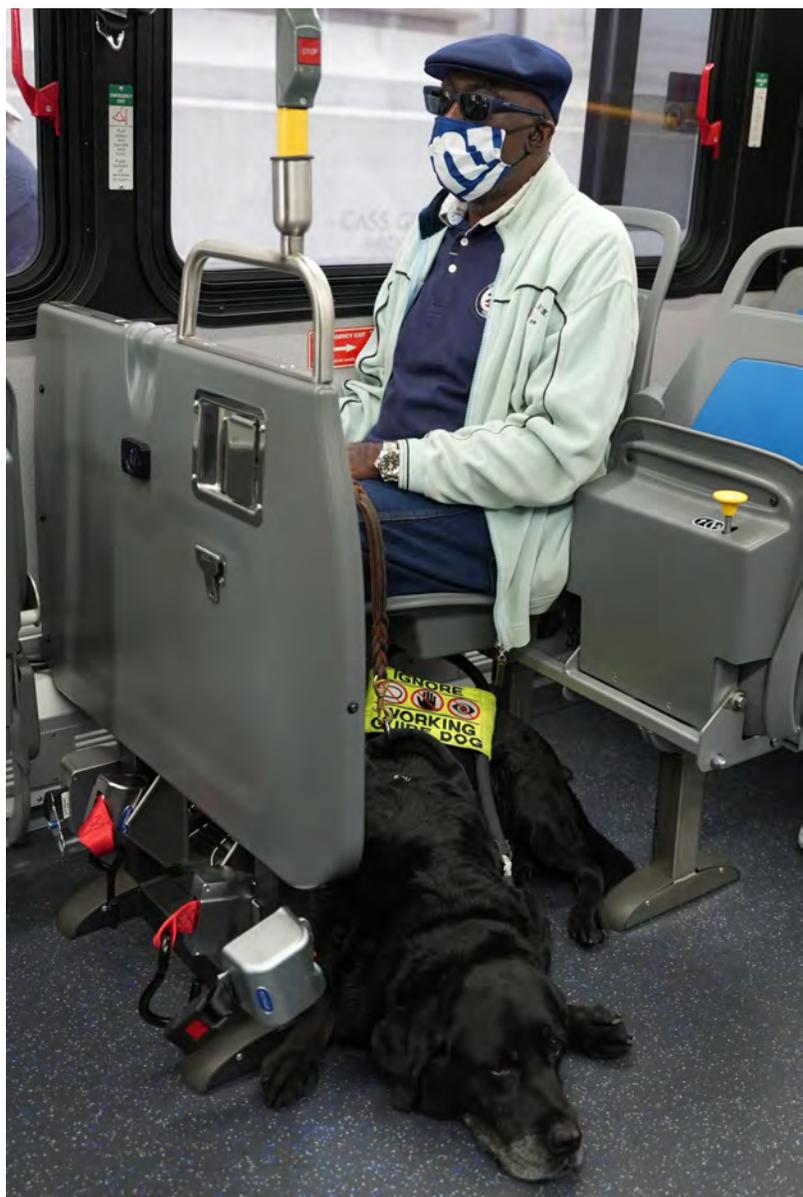


Photo credit: Patrick Carey / MTA

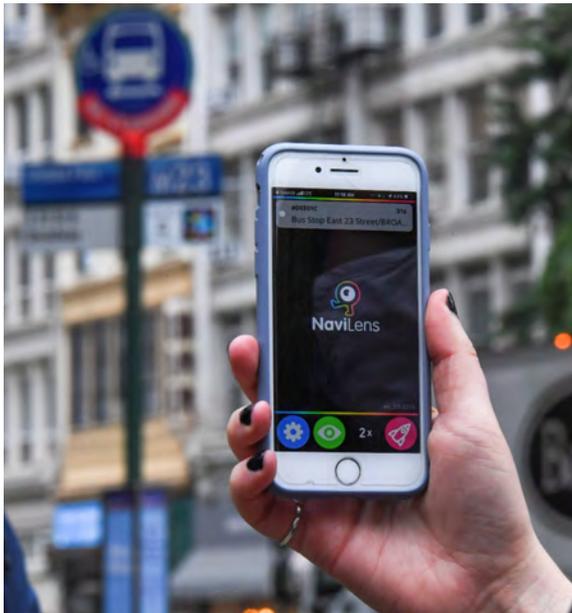


Photo Credit: Marc A. Hermann / MTA

while moving these devices out of the aisle and maximizing overall available seating. The new buses also feature wider doors and ramps designed to make it easier to enter and exit the bus.

In 2021, the MTA also announced a series of planned improvements to the bus network, in partnership with NYC DOT. Commitments include improving accessibility at 25 bus stops in the coming year.

In 2020, as part of Transit Innovation Partnership’s Transit Tech Lab Accessibility Challenge, MTA launched a pilot program that allows bus riders who are blind or have low vision to use their smartphones to find bus stops and learn of arrival times. With assistance from the NYC DOT, signs along the M23 SBS bus route display decals that allow for use of a new app. The NaviLens app, which can be downloaded on Android or iOS devices, uses a cutting-edge algorithm to translate visual signage into audio and allows customers to determine the accurate location and distance to the nearest bus stop, find out when the next bus will arrive, know how crowded the bus is (if the necessary sensor

technology is onboard), and be directed onto the bus when it pulls up to the stop. Colorful, next generation QR-style unique seven-inch-tall codes are installed on bus stop poles and some Guide-A-Rides that the app can detect from up to 40 feet away and at an angle of up to 160 degrees. The M23 SBS bus route is the eighth busiest bus route in Manhattan with stops near the Selis Manor Residence for the Blind, VISIONS Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library.

Access-A-Ride

Access-A-Ride (AAR) is the largest paratransit service in the country, with over 31,000 trips on peak days and over 8 million annual scheduled trips prior to COVID-19. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, AAR maintained 24/7 service and continued to provide tens of thousands of trips each day. As of summer, 2021, average daily trip volume is between 20,000 and 24,000 trips and continuing to rise back toward pre-COVID volumes.

The service operates 24/7 throughout

the five boroughs of NYC, and within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of NYCT fixed route services into Westchester and Nassau Counties. AAR has grown substantially throughout the last seven years, from 141,000 customers in 2014 to more than 164,000 registrants as of this writing. 15% of customers use wheelchairs, and 71% are over the age of 65. Throughout years of program growth and a global pandemic, the AAR program has continued to provide ADA compliant service to all customers, invest in new vehicles and technologies to improve the customer experience, and test ways to provide more flexible options for our customers. The weighted average cost per ride for 2020 was \$55.

One area of growth in recent years has been the use of broker service, which allows customers to travel by taxi or for-hire vehicle for a comfortable, quick ride. In 2019, AAR launched its enhanced broker service, through which thousands of customers travel by taxi or for-hire vehicle (FHV) each day when they book a trip with AAR. The improved and expanded broker program allows AAR to use taxis for door-to-door service, increase capacity to serve customers who use wheelchairs, require more robust trainings for taxi and FHV drivers that do AAR trips, give customers the ability to track broker trips on the MyAAR app, and improve tracking and reporting of the on-time performance of taxi and FHV trips. The new broker program also includes broker service on Staten Island. In 2019 and 2020, more than half of AAR trips were completed through the broker program, offering customers a fast and comfortable ride. In 2021, the MTA awarded contracts to four brokers, increasing capacity on this service, and AAR continued to make improvements to



Photo Credit: Marc A Hermann / MTA

the broker driver training program.

Even with the expansion of broker service, AAR continues to invest in the dedicated carrier (“blue and white van”) fleet, in order to provide a clean, safe, and smooth ride for the thousands of customers who use this service each day. In 2018 and 2019, hundreds of vans were replaced with newer models. In 2022, AAR is looking to pilot the Ford E-Transit, the first electric vehicle to be put into customer service for paratransit. As more electric vehicles become available in the marketplace, AAR will continue to evaluate them for use.

AAR continues to work closely with the NYC DOT and has 121 dedicated Access-A-Ride pick-up and drop-off stops throughout the city. In May 2019, the NYC DOT adopted a new rule that allows AAR vans to use dedicated bus lanes to further improve the customer experience while using AAR. AAR has also made policy changes to simplify its late and no-show/cancellation policies and improved eligibility with reduced re-assessments.

The 2019 MTA NYCT Paratransit AAR Customer Satisfaction Survey once again highlighted the improvements in service.

With an overall satisfaction rate of 84%, many customers indicated that such factors as ease of use, on-time performance, convenience, good service, and ability to be independent contributed to their overall satisfaction. In 2019, an overwhelming majority (95%) of AAR customers continued to consider the service to be a “good value for the money,” a significant improvement over the 2017 survey results of 91%. A copy of the survey is available on the MTA website at new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit. In 2020, Paratransit had an 83% customer satisfaction rate, even during the height of the COVID crisis.

AAR continues to be a program provided in partnership between the MTA and the City of New York. As a result of the 2020 New York State budget, the City of New York increased its annual financial contribution to paratransit operations from 33.3% to 50% over a period of four years. The City, and especially Commissioner Calise in his role as an MTA Board Member, is committed to working with the MTA to create a more efficient paratransit service for all New Yorkers with disabilities.

AAR continued to prioritize customer and operator safety in response to the COVID-19 crisis throughout 2020 and 2021, taking an all-hands-on-deck approach. The MTA continued to offer 24/7 paratransit service across its entire service area without interruption throughout the pandemic, while taking a series of steps to enhance vehicle cleanliness and customer safety. Masks remain required for all customers, guests, PCAs and operators on all paratransit trips, and dedicated non-shared transportation is offered to COVID-positive or symptomatic customers. Protective barriers were installed on all dedicated carrier vans in 2021, and

daily vehicle cleaning protocols remain in place.

In the summer of 2021, AAR began to gradually reinstitute shared rides and invited customers back to its assessment centers. Shared rides are an integral component of AAR service, helping balance trip demand and vehicle supply to ensure every customer can travel when they request a trip.

In 2017, AAR began working with taxi and FHV companies to provide “on-demand” service to 1200 customers as part of a same-day service pilot program. Pilot participants have had overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program, and AAR continues to seek ways to expand on-demand service. Changes to the E-hail on-demand pilot program were put on hold in 2020 due to COVID, and the 1,200 current on-demand pilot users were allowed to continue to use the pilot program to request a trip at any time. AAR expects to announce the next phase of the pilot program in the near future.

Finally, the MTA continues to expand the One Metro New York (OMNY) new fare payment system, which is scheduled to begin a gradual rollout to AAR customers in the near future. AAR customers will be able to choose OMNY as their payment method during the reservation process, eliminating the need to exchange money during vehicle boarding for any customer who chooses to use OMNY. OMNY will create a simpler fare payment option for AAR customers, and OMNY accounts will help customers track their trips and past payments. Cash will remain an option for any customer who wishes to pay for an AAR trip by cash in the vehicle.

Fair Fares Expanded to Access-A-Ride Customers

In 2020, the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) expanded its Fair Fares NYC transit discount program to AAR, enabling low-income individuals under age 65 to ride AAR for half the regular fare. AAR customers can apply directly online for the discount at nyc.gov/fairfares. As of October 2021, more than 2,600 individuals have applied their Fair Fares discount to their paratransit trips.

Commuter Rail

The MTA is committed to improving accessibility on its commuter railways, Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad. Both LIRR and Metro-North have accessibility task forces that include community members, MOPD staff members and other agency colleagues, which meet quarterly to give people with disabilities direct input into operations.

Long Island Rail Road (LIRR)

The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) is well on its way to full station accessibility, with 108 out of 124 stations being ADA accessible. Most recently, LIRR completed accessibility projects at the Nostrand Avenue station in Brooklyn and Murray Hill station in Queens, and in June 2021, new elevators went into service at Floral Park station in Nassau County.

One unique feature that will be included in some future station projects is a new

type of Help Point kiosk that LIRR is now testing through a pilot program. These Help Points allow customers with disabilities to press a button to notify train crews that they need boarding assistance, in addition to requesting general system information or reporting an emergency. This will allow customers to safely board the train without having to call ahead. LIRR is also incorporating braille as part of an ongoing signage replacement program.



Elevator at Floral Park station on the Long Island Rail Road. Photo Credit: Marc A. Hermann / MTA

Customer assistance is a key element of LIRR's approach to accessibility. LIRR employees are trained on ADA issues and accessibility as part of their Train Crew biannual training. In July of 2018, the agency started the LIRR Care Program for customers with mobility related disabilities who may need assistance to board and exit trains. Customers can call a dedicated

phone number ahead of their trip or visit customer service/ticket offices at major stations to request assistance. The program is available 24/7 and as of August 2021 had provided 6,800 customers with assistance.

Metro-North Railroad

Sixty of 85 Metro-North Railroad stations in the seven-county New York State service area are currently accessible for people with mobility disabilities. All New York State stations have tactile signage and the majority of stations have tactile warning strips at the platform edge. Ongoing capital projects that are currently in procurement include the addition of four new elevators on the Harlem Line at Scarsdale (1), Hartsdale (2) and Purdys (1), and a new high level platform was recently completed at Port Jervis to make that station fully accessible.

Metro-North is committed to making train arrival and service information fully accessible at every station. Every station has a public address system providing train arrival and service information in audio format, and nearly every station has digital screens providing similar information in text format. To improve announcement quality and better sync audio and visual information, Metro-North is installing newer generation PA systems that will be fully integrated with digital screens. New PA systems have already been installed at Grand Central Terminal and many outlying stations. Every station in New York State also has upgraded digital signage that provides information in large format, with similar signs coming soon to Connecticut stations. At Grand Central Terminal, Metro-North has installed hearing loops at two ticket windows. Metro-North is also advancing towards design completion on the GCT ADA Signage project which commenced in 2019 and

focuses on accessible signage within Grand Central Terminal. The project includes a full review and evaluation of existing wayfinding, directional and station identification signage, as well as tactile-braille signage.

All Metro-North conductors receive ADA-focused classroom and field training, so they can assist customers who use mobility devices in boarding and be prepared to assist customers with disabilities in case of an emergency. Through the Call Ahead Program, Metro-North offers 24/7 assistance to customers with disabilities. Customers can call 511 up to an hour before their trip to arrange assistance to safely board the train at any station. At Grand Central and other major stations, Station Ambassadors can help customers with mobility devices navigate the platform and provide sighted guidance for customers who are blind or have low vision. In 2019, Metro-North employees assisted nearly 5,000 customers through the Call Ahead program and provided sighted guides to 1200 customers.

Central Business District Tolling

The MTA, Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA) will be responsible for establishing the Central Business District Tolling Program (CBDTP) in the coming years. If the Program receives federal approval, the CBDTP will charge a toll for vehicles entering or remaining in the Central Business District (CBD), defined as inclusive of and south of 60th Street in Manhattan, but excluding vehicles traveling on the FDR Drive or Route 9A and not exiting onto roads within the CBD. The Program is designed to reduce congestion within the CBD and generate revenue for the MTA's capital program, which includes accessibility improvements across the MTA's transit system. State law mandates

CBD toll exemptions for qualifying vehicles transporting people with disabilities.

To implement the CBDTP on federal-aid roadways within the CBD, authorization is required from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), MTA, TBTA, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), in cooperation with the FHWA, are preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) with robust public outreach. The EA will assess the potential effects of the Program across a 28-county study area in three states, which covers a population of over 22 million, including 12.3 million in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. The first 13 virtual meetings on the Program, including three focused on EJ communities, were held in September and October 2021, where MTA, TBTA, NYSDOT, and NYCDOT staff provided information on the Program and the process, and solicited comments from the public. Under the current schedule, a decision from FHWA is anticipated in late 2022. If the Program receives federal approval, the vendor responsible for the roadway toll system will then have up to 310 days to implement the system and begin toll collection.

Taxis And For-Hire Vehicles

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC), created in 1971, is the agency responsible for licensing and regulating New York City's yellow medallion taxis, green cabs, for-hire vehicles (community-based liveries, luxury limousines, and black cars, including those dispatched by apps like Lyft, Uber, and Via), commuter vans, and some paratransit

vehicles. The Commission's Board consists of nine members, including the Commissioner who is the agency head and is appointed by the Mayor. In recent years, over 200,000 TLC licensees have completed an average of approximately one million trips each day.

MOPD partners with TLC in its efforts to make taxis and for-hire vehicles more accessible for people with disabilities. In addition, MOPD has recently partnered with the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) in getting the word out about the DFTA My Ride pilot program.

Yellow and Green Taxis

The TLC has steadily increased the number of accessible vehicles in the yellow and green taxi fleet for people who have mobility, vision, hearing, and intellectual / developmental disabilities.



All Yellow and Green taxis in New York City are required to include Braille and raised lettering to identify the specific taxi and relevant information for making a complaint. In addition, all taxis are equipped with an Accessibility Mode on the passenger information screen to assist passengers who are blind or have low vision as well as individuals with intellectual / developmental disabilities. There are 2,967 taxis equipped with induction loop systems

that transmit sound directly to cochlear implants or hearing aids with a T-coil to ease communication between drivers and passengers who have hearing loss.

The TLC created the Taxi Improvement Fund (TIF) to support medallion owners and drivers who are putting accessible vehicles on the road ensuring that all customers have equitable access to taxi transportation services. Between July 2020 and June 2021, owners and drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles received nearly 15 million dollars in incentive payments. As of December 2021, there are 2,423 wheelchair accessible vehicles in the Yellow Medallion Taxi fleet and 52 wheelchair accessible vehicles in the Green Taxi fleet.



Through the TLC's Accessible Dispatch program, residents and visitors can request a wheelchair accessible Yellow or Green taxi from anywhere in New York City for the price of a standard metered fare. Customers have several options to book a ride, including calling the dispatch center directly at 646-599-9999, dialing 311 (NY Relay: 711), booking online at [accessibledispatch.com](https://www.accessibledispatch.com), or using the "Accessible Dispatch NYC" mobile application. In 2019, there were 148,108 trips completed through the Accessible Dispatch program. In 2020, only 49,903 such trips were completed.

For-Hire Vehicles

Since 2019, TLC rules have required wheelchair accessible service in the for-hire vehicle (FHV) sector, which includes

companies ranging from small community-based car services to the app-based dispatching providers Uber, Lyft, and Via. Every passenger can request a wheelchair accessible vehicle from their local car service, app-based company, or any other FHV company with the cost and service comparable to a trip in a non-accessible vehicle. FHV companies must either dispatch a minimum percentage of its annual trips to wheelchair accessible vehicles or must work with an approved Accessible Vehicle Dispatcher to provide wheelchair accessible trips within certain wait times.

There are currently three Accessible Vehicle Dispatchers (Uber, Lyft and Via). As of December 2021, there are 2,710 wheelchair accessible vehicles in the FHV fleet and the number of FHV WAVs is expected to continue to increase going forward. From September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021, there were 256,331 wheelchair accessible vehicle requests made via the Uber, Lyft and Via apps, representing \$5,195,829.37 in fares.

An [evaluation](#) of wheelchair accessibility in the FHV sector for the period July 2019 through September 2020, including a detailed breakdown of wait times, is available on the TLC's FHV accessibility page: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/about/fhv-accessibility.page>. A chart showing wait times for requests for wheelchair accessible for-hire vehicles dispatched through Lyft, Uber, and Via from June 2020 through September 2020 is below:

WAV Dispatcher	Total Requests	Total Completed	10 minutes or less	15 minutes or less	30 minutes or less
June 2020					
Lyft	2,513	2,490	47%	72%	96%
Uber	6,777	6,646	76%	91%	98%
Via	1,702	1,697	47%	71%	93%
July 2020					
Lyft	4,893	4,824	44%	72%	96%
Uber	8,910	8,737	72%	90%	98%
Via	2,337	2,331	63%	81%	95%
August 2020					
Lyft	5,677	5,631	66%	87%	98%
Uber	10,215	10,039	80%	93%	98%
Via	2,039	1,999	53%	77%	94%
September 2020					
Lyft	5,164	5,118	68%	90%	98%
Uber	14,109	13,814	79%	93%	98%
Via	1,372	1,314	40%	65%	91%
Minimum Requirement			NA	80%	90%

TLC Driver Education and Passenger Engagement

On January 1, 2021, the TLC launched new curriculum and hands-on training for its Passenger Assistance and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Training course. The new course provides drivers with the tools they need to excel at their jobs and serve all New Yorkers. In this spirit, the course includes in-vehicle training, which adds more support for drivers who were previously taught on a metal plate in a classroom. By learning how to secure passengers in an actual TLC Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle, drivers are able to practice the process multiple times before they are expected to complete the process professionally. The course is divided into six different modules, covering in-depth information about the disability community, disability etiquette, and the unique role drivers play in providing equitable transit for New York City. TLC also created new resources for drivers, including a [video](#) and a [how-to guide](#) that illustrates all of the steps

drivers must follow during the wheelchair securement process. All TLC driver license applicants must take this course prior to licensure.



In the fall of 2021, the TLC launched its TLC Driver Continuing Education Course. The new course will cover many topics but will significantly focus on Passenger Assistance and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle training. All TLC licensed drivers will be required to demonstrate their knowledge of proper passenger securement or re-learn the essential skills that are required to drive for-hire. The lecture portion of the Passenger

Assistance and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Training will also play a significant role in the course.

TLC Office of Inclusion

The TLC Office of Inclusion was created pursuant to Local Law 219 of 2018 to ensure the riding public receives equal and courteous service from taxis and for-hire vehicles. Its mission is to reduce and ultimately eliminate service refusals and to ensure that no one is discriminated against by a TLC-licensed driver.

The Office of Inclusion recognizes that New York City's greatest strength is its diversity -of residents and visitors alike. Anyone who believes they have been subject to discrimination from a TLC licensee is encouraged to file a 311 complaint.

The Office of Inclusion's main goals are:

- Advocate for TLC Licensees to ensure they are able to serve the New York City Public, free from harassment and discrimination
- Reduce and ultimately eliminate service refusals
- Develop and implement anti-bias training for TLC-licensed drivers and bases
- Encourage members of the public to file 311 complaints when denied service or subject to discrimination

In 2020, the TLC Office of Inclusion (OOI) trained all TLC staff on disability etiquette and awareness to foster a better understanding of inclusive communication and considerations for persons with disabilities. This focus furthers TLC's mission to create sensitivity and facilitate positive interactions and inclusivity in the workplace.

OOI also has also collaborated with a variety of disability advocacy groups, such as the American Council for the Blind and the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State. TLC has actively engaged these groups to share information and to gain a better understanding of different types of disabilities and the needs of different communities.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/about/office-of-inclusion.page>

DFTA MyRide Pilot

Launched in 2021, DFTA My Ride is a three-year on-demand car service pilot for eligible older adults aged 60+ and individuals with disabilities developed by the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) in partnership with the New York City Department of Transportation. The goals of the pilot are to provide much-needed access to selected eligible participants in transportation desert areas and to study the impact of on-demand car service on participants' social determinants of health.

The pilot includes:

- A random participant selection process to ensure fairness
- A yearly cohort of 1,038 participants
- Eight monthly allotments of funds for rides for each participant
- 24/7 access to door-to-door car service, including disability-equipped cars, for rides within the five boroughs, Nassau, and Westchester counties
- The option to schedule or request on-demand rides using the DFTA My Ride app, website, or a dispatch number.

Ferries

NYC Ferry

In 2015, Mayor de Blasio announced “a new citywide ferry service” that would connect six routes, four boroughs, 21 landings, 19 vessels, and over 60 miles of waterway across New York City. It has been one of the most historic investments by New York City in waterborne transit in decades. The launch of NYC Ferry was done in record time – five new routes and a full fleet were delivered in just 27 months, and ridership far exceeded expectations. Since launch in 2017, NYC Ferry has served over 20 million riders and committed to further expansions in Staten Island, Coney Island, and the Bronx East. The NYC Economic Development Corporation has taken the lead on building new ferry landings, renovating existing landings, and managing the contract with the operator.

NYC Ferry was greatly impacted by COVID-19 at the start of the pandemic, but has since seen the strongest return in ridership out of any New York City form of public transportation and is at 70%-80% of 2019 ridership. As New Yorkers continue to navigate working from home and working in person, NYC Ferry service will continue to meet demand if it changes.

In the Spring and Summer of 2021, NYC Ferry invested in upgrades to ensure ADA and Local Law 68 2005 compliance to two of the oldest landings in the system, DUMBO/Fulton Ferry and South Williamsburg. Both landings now have two electric bow loaders to better serve riders using wheelchairs, canes, and other mobility devices.



During the pandemic, NYC Ferry re-committed to the system expansion previously announced by Mayor de Blasio in early 2019. The St. George route, connecting Staten Island to the West Side of Manhattan, launched on Monday, August 23rd. The Coney Island route and the Throgs Neck/Ferry Point Park extension of the Soundview route are set to launch before the end of the 2021.

NYC Ferry remains the same cost as a subway ride – currently \$2.75 – and offers reduced fare monthly ticketing passes at a 50% discount. Applications can be obtained at [ferry.nyc/ticketing-info](https://www.ferry.nyc/ticketing-info) or by calling 1-844-469-3377.

Staten Island Ferry

The Staten Island Ferry, which is operated by NYC DOT, provides a free, accessible travel option between the St. George Ferry Terminal in Staten Island and the Whitehall Ferry Terminal in Lower Manhattan.



Both terminals have escalators and elevators and are ADA accessible. Passengers who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices may board on the lower level. The lower level waiting area is not climate controlled but has seating and is protected on three sides from wind and precipitation. Due to the restricted nature of the lower level area, any individual who is granted access for lower-level boarding is subject to search by security personnel and/or the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

The DOT Ferry Division works closely with the local community to ensure that accessibility is at the forefront of its service. As one example, the Division meets with the Staten Island Center for Independent Living to offer sensitivity training to ferry employees.

Ferry schedules and other information are offered in Braille.

For more information on the Staten Island Ferry visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/ferrybus/staten-island-ferry.shtml>

Other Modes Of Transport

E-Scooter Pilot

E-scooters are electric-powered vehicles with handlebars, a seat or floorboard, and have a maximum speed of 15 miles per hour. Shared e-scooter systems have become popular in many American cities over the past few years, allowing millions to rent publicly accessible e-scooters for short trips. These systems operate similarly to dockless bike share. Riders find and un-lock shared e-scooters within a designated service area using a smartphone app. Many shared e-scooter systems use designated parking corrals to organize vehicles, reduce sidewalk clutter, and ensure a clear right-of-way.

NYC DOT launched its first e-scooter pilot in the East Bronx in August of 2021. The pilot, which is mandated by City Council legislation, will last a maximum of two years. One of NYC DOT's main priorities for the pilot is to prevent parked e-scooters from blocking sidewalks, corner pedestrian ramps, building



Accessible e-scooters from Bird, Lime and Veo available as part of the DOT e-scooter pilot.

entrances, and bus stops, so that all sidewalk users, including people with disabilities, have a clear path of travel. The participating companies — Bird, Lime, and Veo — are also offering accessible e-scooter options. For more information on the e-scooter pilot visit: <https://nycdotscootershare.info/home>



Bike Share

Citi Bike is the city’s bike share system that is run through a public-private partnership between New York City and Lyft. In Fall 2021, Citi Bike launched an adaptive cycling pilot program with Achilles International. Currently, the program offers 25 vehicles, including handcycles and tandems, for free usage on Saturday mornings at Central Park’s Loeb Boathouse. Lyft and DOT will evaluate the success of the program and potentially expand to additional sites in other boroughs in the near future.

Pedestrian Ramps

Pedestrian ramps provide access on and off our streets and sidewalks and are an essential tool for pedestrians, especially persons with disabilities and aging New

Yorkers, as well as people pushing strollers, carts, and other wheeled objects.

Since Fiscal Year 2017, the City (through its Department of Transportation and its Department of Design and Construction) has installed more than 1800 new pedestrian ramps where they did not previously exist and has upgraded approximately 27,000 existing pedestrian ramps. All new and upgraded pedestrian ramps include a detectable warning surface to help guide individuals who are blind or have low vision.

For more information on pedestrian ramps visit <http://nycpedramps.info>.



Accessible Pedestrian Signals

DOT’s Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) are devices affixed to pedestrian signal poles to assist pedestrians who are blind or have low vision in crossing the street. APSs are wired to a pedestrian signal and send audible and vibrotactile indications when pedestrians push a button installed at the crosswalk.



DOT has installed accessible pedestrian signals in all five boroughs by collaborating with the disability community on identifying priority intersections. As of November 30, 2021, there were APS units installed at 929 signalized intersections citywide.

As of this writing, the City is reviewing a December 27, 2021 decision by Judge Engelmayer of the Southern District of New York regarding the installation of APS at signalized intersections.

A full list of APS locations is available here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/infrastructure/accessiblepedsignals.shtml>

Parking

Parking Permits for People with Disabilities

The New York City Department of Transportation's Parking Permits for People with Disabilities (PPPD) Unit issues two types of parking permits for people with disabilities: the NYC PPPD (placard) and the NY State permit (hangtag).

The NYC permits allow eligible permit holders to park on NYC streets, contrary to many posted parking regulations.

The NY State permit allows the driver to park in publicly accessible spaces marked by the International Symbol of Access as long as the permit holder is traveling in the car. In New York City, these spaces are all off-street, such as in parking lots for shopping centers/malls, office/apartment buildings, and college campuses, and include all DOT municipal parking garages.

Permit applications are currently being accepted by mail only. For more information on the PPPD program visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/pppdinfo.shtml>

Municipal Parking Garages

All DOT municipal parking facilities provide accessible parking spaces, including van accessible parking spaces with access aisles. DOT manages 29 municipal parking fields and 7 municipal parking garages, providing a total of 265 accessible parking spaces. DOT also recently installed an Electric Vehicle (EV) Fast Charger with van accessible aisle at Delancey-Essex Municipal Garage and at Court Square Municipal Garage, providing 2 accessible EV fast charging spaces. For more information on DOT's parking garages and lots visit:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/parkinglist.shtml>

Employment and Financial Empowerment

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The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic shutdown led to soaring unemployment rates in New York, which peaked at 16.2 percent in April 2020.

As of April 2021, New York's unemployment rates had declined to 8.2 percent. However, for New Yorkers with disabilities, unemployment rates rose more quickly and have remained high, disrupting progress that had been made in employment indicators before the pandemic.¹

As the City focuses on recovery, it is committed to improving access to good jobs, increasing the number of people with disabilities who are employed, and otherwise improving the financial stability of people with disabilities and their families. On the employment front, we do this by providing resources to job seekers and connecting them to opportunities in and outside City government; by ensuring that the City hires people with disabilities; and by providing training, technical assistance and information to employers to help them better engage with the disability community. And through the EmpoweredNYC program, we provide financial counseling to help New Yorkers with disabilities navigate the banking, credit and debt systems, and connect with local, state and federal resources.

NYC: ATWORK

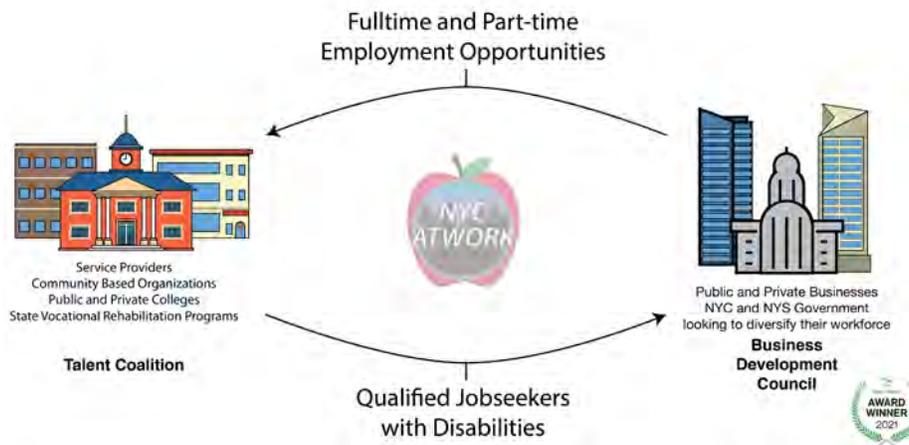
Launched in 2017, ***NYC: ATWORK*** is an employment program administered by MOPD that recruits, pre-screens, and connects New Yorkers with disabilities to jobs and internships with established business partners in both the public and private sectors. Participation in ***NYC: ATWORK*** is

voluntary, and more importantly, self-driven. The program offers guidance and support to improve hiring chances and expand professional networks and opportunities, internships, and access to trainings. To date, ***NYC: ATWORK*** has connected over 500 job seekers with disabilities to jobs and internships. Retention rates have increased each year, with 85% of participants who were connected to jobs in 2019 retaining them after one year, despite the pandemic.

NYC: ATWORK services for job seekers include tips to tailor and strengthen resumes and cover letters; mock interview preparation, guidance on conducting an effective job search; access to participate in employer-led job readiness workshops; opportunities to network with prospective employers; access to the program's Job Board; information on using the 55a program for City government jobs (see *section on the 55-a program below*); and support for up to one year after securing placement.

For the business community, including MOPD's Champions of Change Business Development Council, ***NYC: ATWORK*** offers not only a centralized talent pool of candidates with disabilities to recruit from, but targeted sector-based trainings, including disability etiquette and awareness trainings and technical assistance, including guidance on providing reasonable accommodations. Between January 2021 and October 31, 2021, MOPD staff conducted 40 disability etiquette and awareness trainings for 2,180 members of the business community, including staff of the Red Cross, Mount Sinai Hospital, NYC VISTA, NYC Mayoral Offices, NYC Road Runners, and the High Line.

¹ New York's Economy and Finances in the COVID-19 Era (June 3, 2021 Edition), NYS Comptroller, available at <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/new-yorks-economy-and-finances-covid-19-era-june-3-2021>.



*In the months of July and October (the 31st anniversary of the ADA and National Disability Employment Awareness Month, respectively), **NYC: ATWORK** hosted 20 webinars reaching 1,156 participants. These included sessions focused on job preparedness and opportunities for remote work, orientations for **NYC: ATWORK** for job seekers, and a convening of non-profit partners.*

for services following the recent end of additional pandemic-related unemployment benefits under the CARES Act.

Although the percentage of unemployed New Yorkers with disabilities has increased during the pandemic, we are hopeful that the increased availability of remote work options and increased attention on equity and inclusion on the part of many employers will provide new opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities.

With return to the office and focus on the city’s recovery workforce, **NYC: ATWORK** has continued to be flexible and to pivot as needed in response to the demands of its job seekers and those of the business community. With the health and safety of staff and program participants its top priority, the **NYC: ATWORK** program has implemented the following measures until further notice:

- Staff remain available to work with active job seekers through e-mail, phone, and virtual meetings.
- Webinars, meetings, targeted recruitments, and employer information sessions are virtual with ASL and CART provided upon request.

As of October 2021, there is a waitlist for new referrals, due to an increased demand

55-a Program and NYC: ATWORK

New York State Civil Service Law Section 55-a authorizes the City’s Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to identify a maximum of 700 positions with duties that can be performed by “physically or mentally disabled persons” who are qualified to perform such duties. People who wish to enter City government and have expressed an interest in being considered for the 55-a Program may apply for competitive positions otherwise filled through exams and, if qualified to perform the duties of the position, may be interviewed.

If offered the position, they must apply to be certified by ACCES-VR or the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) as having a mental or physical disability and may be

appointed to the position without taking a Civil Service exam.

NYC: ATWORK and DCAS work together to assist City agencies in using the 55-a Program to fill their recruitment needs and diversify the City’s workforce by hiring qualified persons with disabilities who may have encountered barriers to City employment.

Currently 374 employees throughout City government are participating in the 55-a Program. This number fluctuates annually for three reasons: resignations, retirements and those who have been made permanent.

Top 5 agencies Using 55-a in 2021

Agency	55-a Hires in 2021
DSS/HRA	50
NYPD	41
DOE	37
DOF	35
DEP	28

New Hires in 2021 as of September 30 (based on City Start Date): 3

Internships to Career Pathways

In partnership with New York State’s vocational rehabilitation agency, ACCES-VR, **NYC: ATWORK** connects students and adults with disabilities with internship opportunities in the public and private sector. While working one-on-one with job seekers, our staff saw a common trend of recent graduates and adults who transition careers: they needed more work experience to qualify for jobs that reflect their employment and career goals.

This program identifies college students and adults with disabilities who are seeking or will soon seek competitive integrated employment and builds linkages for those individuals to business by connecting them to:

- Mentoring opportunities
- Short-term internships to explore options at different venues
- Paid internships
- Training options

Forty internships have been created for college students and adults with disabilities that have been connected to ACCES-VR for support and services. Some of the internship sites include NYC Cyber Command, Northwell Health, Standard Chartered Bank, TSINY, Inc., Global Brands Group, NYC Department of City Planning, MTA/NYCT and the Municipal Arts Society.

Program recognitions:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mopd/employment/nyc-atwork-program-recognition.page>

The Partnership for Inclusive Internships

Thanks to a generous grant from The Taft Foundation, the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) and AHRC New York City (AHRC NYC) have formed a partnership to provide internship opportunities and create pathways for future employment for New Yorkers with disabilities.

The Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII) is a formal internship program at DSS, offering internship opportunities for people with disabilities. The program leverages AHRC NYC's resources, experience, and success in finding employment for people with disabilities, as well as DSS's vast network of programs and services, to offer a wide variety of internship opportunities across the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) and Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Since its inception in 2019, PII has placed more than 90 interns across the agency, 14 of whom have gone onto full-time employment at DSS. Of the 14, twelve are temporarily employed, making \$17-\$22 per hour and two are salaried employees.

Qualified candidates for each internship opportunity are identified and referred by partner organizations. MOPD's **NYC: ATWORK** program not only refers qualified candidates, but also works closely with the PII interns on career pathways in City government by accessing opportunities through the 55-a program. In addition, they leverage their partnership with ACCES-VR and the New York State Commission for the Blind, the state vocational agencies that support the individual based on the nature of their disability. These state agencies can provide the funding for the internships provided they meet the individual's career goal. Other partner organizations in this initiative include AHRC NYC, Yachad/Jewish Union Foundation, the CUNY: LEADS program, and the Institute for Career Development (ICD). Internship opportunities include clerical, data entry, IT, accounting, social service placements, and more.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the PII Program has offered remote internship opportunities as well as online events and webinars. The program continues to support interns in a virtual capacity.

NYC: ATWORK Success Story: Judy Hoang

Judy Hoang was referred to **NYC: ATWORK** in late 2019 as a recent graduate with an M.A. in Geography and a Graduate Certificate in GIS and Spatial Analysis from SUNY Albany. While accomplished academically, she did not have any professional work experience. Judy worked with her relationship manager to develop a resume that clearly demonstrated her skills and accomplishments; identify appropriate internships and entry-level positions; and build confidence in interviews.

Judy applied for multiple internship and entry-level positions to gain experience in her field. Through **NYC: ATWORK's** internship to career pipeline, Judy was hired for a PII internship at the NYC Department of Social Services (DSS) as a Family Independence Administration Intern. Despite the added challenges of working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, her hard work with **NYC: ATWORK** and at DSS paid off. Even before her internship ended, she was offered a temporary position at DSS, which led to a permanent full-time job as a Community Coordinator at DSS in September 2021.

NYC: ATWORK Success Story: Jonathan Kwiat



Jonathan Kwiat at work at the NYC Cyber Command (NYC3)

Jonathan Kwiat was introduced to **NYC: ATWORK** in Spring 2018 when he was referred as a candidate for the Ability Cisco Academy, an initiative launched in partnership with the Institute for Career Development.

He came to the program with multiple degrees and certifications, but without any recent full-time work experience.

After successfully completing the Ability Academy, Jonathan worked with his relationship manager to identify several potential internship opportunities, including one with NYC Cyber Command (NYC3). Jonathan accepted an internship with NYC3 supporting the City's cyber-defense efforts, for the summer in 2019. When the internship ended, he continued to work with **NYC: ATWORK** to explore additional job opportunities, attend workshops, and strengthen his resume and cover letter.

While pursuing a master's in computer science at Brooklyn College, Jonathan received an offer to return to NYC3 as a College Aide (a part-time paid internship position) and shifted to working remotely in March 2020. Despite the challenges of the transition and of remote work, Jonathan continued with NYC3 while applying to full-time jobs. With the support of his relationship manager, Jonathan leveraged his experience and professional network for a permanent position with NYC3 as a Cyber Associate Application Security Engineer in 2021.

NYC: ATWORK Success Story: Simon Bondar

Simon Bondar was connected to **NYC: ATWORK** when he was commuting over an hour each way for his job in retail. After working with his relationship manager to strengthen his resume, Simon was invited to participate in **NYC: ATWORK's** first career exploration event with Uniqlo in 2018. Shortly following the career exploration, Simon was hired as a Sales Associate at the Fifth Avenue flagship store. He excelled in the role

and his work was recognized with a raise. Simon was laid off during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic but was brought back seasonally for the holidays in 2020, and during Summer 2021, was brought back as a full-time employee with benefits. This could not have come at a better time because he and his wife welcomed their first child in Fall 2021!

NYC: ATWORK Success Story: Tiffany Geigel



Tiffany Geigel at work at Northwell Health.

As a person with a disability born and raised in NYCHA housing, **Tiffany Geigel** had always dreamed of moving out of the system and being able to afford a safe and peaceful home.

But in fact, as a woman with disabilities on SSD, she was not able to land a good

paying job, despite 14 years of administrative experience, and her dream seemed unreachable. “Everyone liked my resume but the minute I walked into the interview everything changed.”

With the assistance of **NYC: ATWORK** and her relationship manager, Tiffany was appropriately guided and able to persevere:

This was a process requiring hard work and patience, and I was empowered to not settle, but pursue the job that fit my skills and experience.

I was hired as a contracted bi-lingual customer service representative for COVID-19 Track and Trace, working remotely, and continued to explore other opportunities knowing that the current position would be temporary. After several months, I was hired as a Flex Staff clerk at Northwell and now have become a fulltime Flu Clerk Administrator at Northwell Health. And now my dream is a reality. I have moved from NYCHA housing into a beautiful home of my own with the assistance of MOPD’s Housing Coordinator. I am forever grateful to MOPD, Commissioner Calise and my relationship manager and the work they do to help companies and businesses become more diverse and inclusive when hiring qualified, talented people with disabilities.

MOPD changed my life.

ConnectAbility

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed a light on remote work as a viable, productive, and flexible employment option. For thousands of New Yorkers, the ability to work from home became an essential solution to keeping businesses and City services alive. Telework is now seen as an option, a solution and yes, a reasonable accommodation.

But many job seekers lack access to a computer, Wi-Fi, and internet. They rely on a smart phone, their local library, or a provider agency/community-based organization for access to the technology needed to apply for jobs, create resumes and cover letters, research potential employers, or gain 21st century skills. This is not only a disability issue. It is a poverty issue that continues to affect our community. Moreover, during the

height of the pandemic, many of the resources that individuals relied on were no longer available, further compounding the problem and making the need for a solution more urgent.

With support from the Mayors' Fund to Advance New York City, MOPD received a grant to establish a pilot project to address the digital divide, ConnectAbility. Additionally, MOPD's Business Development Council member, Juniper Unlimited, a division of Global Brands Group, has donated computers for the project. We are enrolling our third cohort of **NYC: ATWORK** participants in the pilot, who will have access to new computers and accessories, Microsoft Office licenses, internet access, free trainings, certification programs and soft skills workshops. To date, we have distributed nearly 50 laptops through this program.

Connectability Success Story



I was accepted into the ConnectAbility program earlier this year and have benefitted from the program in a variety of ways, such as:

- *qualifying for new equipment that included a PC, headset, and an ergonomic keyboard and mouse*
- *access to skills training through a partnership of the New York State Department of Labor and Coursera web-based programs to upskill my experience and gain valuable skills needed for the digital economy*

Since starting the program, I have enrolled in the Google Project Management certificate course offered through Coursera and have obtained a contingent position with a global Fintech company where I am able to apply what I'm learning. As a contingent employee, I'm able to

temporarily experience the work environment and determine my needs to successfully transition to a permanent role.

As my position is currently fully remote, I have also been able to access the services of the Assistive Technology clinic through ConnectAbility's partnership with NYU Langone. I am currently working with an occupational therapist to assess my work-from-home environment and make needed adjustments to ensure that I have a healthy workspace at home, as well as when I'm ready to return to an office environment. Additionally, they have introduced me to a range of technologies to assist me in a work environment, as well as with activities of daily living. It is reassuring to know that I have access to these resources to help me obtain the accommodations that I need to regain my independence. — Connectability participant

EmpoweredNYC



Building Financial Stability for People and Families with Disabilities

In 2018, the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) (then the Department of Consumer Affairs) and MOPD, in partnership with the National Disability Institute (NDI), launched EmpoweredNYC. This multi-pronged initiative, originally funAVWded by Citi, aims to test, adopt, and promote new strategies to improve the financial stability of New Yorkers with disabilities and their families, tailored to the needs of the community.

EmpoweredNYC supports New Yorkers with disabilities and their families in accessing City, State and federal benefits available for those returning to work and provides one-on-one financial counseling. Everything about EmpoweredNYC, including messaging, branding, service provider selection, training content, outreach, marketing, performance metrics, and the accessibility of the service locations, was created with the target community in mind. EmpoweredNYC's public awareness campaign was the first campaign of DCWP's Office of Financial Empowerment and MOPD targeting New Yorkers with disabilities and their families.

During the 2019 pilot of EmpoweredNYC, 667 New Yorkers participated in more than 1,100 financial counseling sessions. This was made possible by co-locating financial counseling services with other community services, and selecting locations based on accessibility and a presence in communities with a high

density of people with disabilities. By placing the EmpoweredNYC financial counseling service within more than 20 community-based organizations, we were able to leverage opportunities for client referrals and forge strong relationships with these organizations as they integrated financial counseling into their work.

Through EmpoweredNYC, clients met with specially trained professional financial counselors, provided by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), for free, one-on-one, confidential counseling about banking, credit, debt, and savings. Counselors also assisted with navigating the asset limits and rules of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, tackling Social Security Administration (SSA) overpayments, and avoiding common benefits-related challenges when transitioning to work.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on all of New York City, communities where New Yorkers with disabilities live were hit particularly hard. Eleven of the 14 target EmpoweredNYC ZIP codes were among the hardest hit by COVID-19. In spring 2020, EmpoweredNYC, as with all DCWP financial counseling programs, transitioned to remote, phone-based counseling to safely support New Yorkers with disabilities during this unprecedented health and financial crisis. These remote EmpoweredNYC financial counseling services were extended through December 31, 2021. This transitional phase of EmpoweredNYC was made possible by the support of Citi, The Taft Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

Thanks to the bridge funding in 2021, EmpoweredNYC financial counselors have

been able to meet with 170 clients, including 110 new clients, and provide more than 330 remote counseling sessions between January and October 2021. During the same period, more than 25 virtual outreach events and meetings were held to promote and educate New Yorkers with disabilities about EmpoweredNYC.

Looking into the future, these specially trained financial counselors are poised to provide services that are needed now more than ever. EmpoweredNYC financial counselors can help New Yorkers with disabilities with benefits-related situations such as providing accurate information about earning income and maintaining benefits, understanding wages, researching eligible work incentives, understanding SSA overpayment, filing an appeal if needed, and opening a safe and affordable bank account, such as an NY ABLE account.

A financial counselor can also support navigating sudden changes to household budget or income, developing a strategy to reduce debt, balancing a household budget, drafting letters to creditors to lower or temporarily suspend payments due to hardship, and referring to local, state, and federal resources.

As we begin to see what the lasting effects of COVID-19 will be for New York City and its residents, the City of New York is committed to supporting New Yorkers with disabilities and their families to improve their financial health. Throughout 2020, remote EmpoweredNYC services were available, and several former EmpoweredNYC financial counselors now provide counseling through the larger NYC Financial Empowerment Center network.

Moving into 2022, EmpoweredNYC financial counseling will continue as a part of the NYC Financial Empowerment Centers. DCWP will be developing curriculum based on the lessons learned from the EmpoweredNYC pilot to train additional financial counselors so they can tailor their services to the needs of people with disabilities.

Housing



New Yorkers with disabilities face unique challenges when it comes to finding housing that is affordable, safe, and accessible. The City has worked hard to increase and improve the supply of affordable accessible housing units, as well as supportive housing units, in New York City, to remove barriers to accessing those units by those who need them and to help New Yorkers with disabilities remain in their homes. Below is information on some of the programs and initiatives that the City has undertaken for people with disabilities in the housing arena. Many of these initiatives are specifically for people with disabilities. Others, although not specifically for people with disabilities, are nonetheless of particular interest because of their potential value to the community.

Affordable Housing

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and Housing Development Corporation (HDC) create affordable housing opportunities for households of many income levels and sizes. To ensure fair distribution of affordable housing, these below-market apartments are available to buy or rent through a randomized lottery system. These housing units are considered affordable because they cost about one-third or less of the occupants' income. The marketing, lease-ups and/or sales of the units are handled by qualified "marketing agents" who are hired by developers and must be approved by the applicable agency (HPD or HDC).

"Set Aside" Units for People with Disabilities

In many affordable housing projects overseen by HPD and HDC, 7% of all units must be set

aside for applicants with disabilities (5% for those with mobility disabilities and 2% for vision and hearing disabilities). Since 2014, 5,170 newly constructed units have been made available to people with disabilities as a result of this set-aside requirement.

Applications for set-aside units are managed through a lottery system which can be accessed online through Housing Connect www.nyc.gov/housingconnect (described in more detail below). Paper applications can be mailed to applicants without access to the internet. Applicants who are not able to have the Medical Certification form completed by a medical professional within the allotted time for the housing lottery eligibility review can submit a form in which they self-attest to their disability pending submission of the form from a medical professional.



Accessible units are designed according to the [Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards \(UFAS\)](#). Once a household is approved for an affordable unit, they have an opportunity to let the building owner know of any additional and specific accommodations they need (e.g., removable under-counter cabinets). Vision/hearing units are wired to support alarm systems to serve people with hearing and vision disabilities. Similarly, additional features may be requested as needed (i.e. talking or braille appliances, etc.), once an applicant is approved for a unit.

Housing Connect

NYC Housing Connect is a portal to search and apply for units in developments assisted by HPD and HDC. The portal is available at HousingConnect.nyc.gov.



The original Housing Connect went online in 2013. Prior to this, the application was a paper-based process. Since creating the online portal, the housing lottery has received unprecedented interest and usage, and contributed to the increasing rate of affordable housing development, and set-aside units for people with disabilities.

In July 2020, HPD and HDC launched Housing Connect 2.0. The new platform is a significant improvement on the original platform in providing more opportunities, less waiting, and the following new features:

- In addition to rentals, it also includes homeownership, re-rental and resale opportunities
- Has mobile-friendly design

- Allows the user to save and submit documents online
- Allows real-time updates to user applications

The new platform leverages a responsive design that allows users to magnify the content. MOPD continues to work with HPD to further enhance Housing Connect 2.0's accessibility for all users. Its compatibility with mobile devices allows the use of its built-in accessibility features, and 60% of the original Housing Connect users have smartphones.

In commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the ADA in July 2020, HPD and MOPD co-hosted a virtual public training on the new Housing Connect portal and its accessibility features. This presentation was offered with CART and ASL services. A digital guide and video in accessible formats are being posted on the new Housing Connect portal. It will be available in various languages including ASL.

Twenty-one thousand households where the applicant identified themselves as a person with a disability made a total of 266,000 applications through Housing Connect between July 2020 and December 21, 2021.

Affordable Housing Guide for Applicants with Disabilities

In 2017, MOPD and HPD created the Affordable Housing Guide for Applicants with Disabilities, which is posted on the HPD website at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/resources-for-people-with-disabilities.page>. The guide is in the process of being revised to reflect updates to the new Housing Connect lottery platform and the application process. It also includes a section on the Mitchell-Lama

Program and Frequently Asked Questions. It will be available in various languages including ASL.

Housing Ambassadors Program



Through the Housing Ambassadors Program, HPD partners with community-based service providers in New York City who help people prepare and apply for Housing Connect affordable housing lotteries. HPD established the Housing Ambassador Program in 2014 as a pilot with four organizations. Since then, the program has grown to a network of over 50 community-based service providers. Several of these service providers specialize in serving people with disabilities.

To find a Housing Ambassador, go to <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/housing-ambassadors.page>.

People with disabilities are welcome to meet with any Ambassador, but have the option of selecting someone who only serves people with disabilities.

Disability-Related “Resources and Tips” for Marketing Agents

“Providing Services for People with Disabilities: Resources and Tips for Marketing Agents”, a document co-created by HPD and MOPD, can be accessed here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/providing-services-to-applicants-with-hearing-vision-and-mobility-disabilities.pdf>

Disability Etiquette and Awareness Training for Marketing Agents and Housing Ambassadors

Disability Etiquette and Awareness Training was provided to over 270 Marketing Agents in 2021 and 170 in 2020. Housing Ambassadors were also provided this training several times in 2021. Additionally, in 2022, HPD will offer this training to participants of its upcoming Housing Navigator Program, a network of organizations that provide housing search assistance to Emergency Housing Voucher holders. HPD and MOPD also co-created a guide for Marketing Agents titled “Providing Services for People with Disabilities: Resources and tips for Marketing Agents”, which can be accessed here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/providing-services-to-applicants-with-hearing-vision-and-mobility-disabilities.pdf>

TypeB+NYC Units

Federal Fair Housing Act Guidelines (FHAGs) require that newly constructed dwelling units include certain features that make them usable by persons with disabilities (such as doorways with a clear opening of at least 32 inches wide, allowing someone with a wheelchair to pass through them) or more easily adaptable for use by people with disabilities (such as reinforced areas in bathroom walls that allow for the later installation of grab bars without the need for major structural work on the walls). The New York City Building Code goes beyond the requirements of the FHAGs by requiring that all new apartments in New York City be what are referred to as “TypeB+NYC” units, which include a number of adaptable and/or accessible design features that go over and above what is included in the FHAGs.

Supportive Housing

One way to improve access to housing for people with disabilities is to provide more supportive housing. Supportive housing is a proven, cost-effective approach to addressing the needs of people who have a mental illness, substance-use disorders, or have other barriers to independence. By providing tenants with permanent, rent-stabilized housing with access to onsite case management, alcohol and substance-use programs, and other social services, supportive housing reduces the need for placement in higher-cost homeless shelters, hospitals, mental-health institutions, jails, and prisons. In November 2015, Mayor de Blasio announced his landmark commitment to provide 15,000 units of supportive housing over the next 15 years to the most vulnerable New Yorkers. These units will house adult families experiencing chronic homelessness, single adults, and families with children who have serious mental health disabilities and/or substance-use disorders. There are also units designated for young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have high utilization of City services.

To improve access to supportive housing for eligible individuals and families with mental health conditions, the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) expanded the types of professionals allowed to complete a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation as part of the HRA 2010e application. For guidance on completing a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation, please refer to the Center for Urban Community Services' guide:

<https://www.cucs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Suggested-Outline-for-Psychiatric-Summary-2016.pdf>

Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS)

Coordinated Entry is a requirement for all Continuum of Cares (CoC) nationwide to streamline the way people move from homelessness into permanent housing, ensuring the most vulnerable are prioritized for scarce resources. It requires each CoC to look at their system as a whole, rather than program by program.

In NYC, the CoC developed the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System, or CAPS. Launched in October 2020, CAPS is a web-based system accessible to both mainstream and homeless service providers across all five boroughs. CAPS includes a coordinated assessment survey to pre-identify people with disabilities for permanent supportive housing, local and state rental subsidies and federal subsidies and housing, including HUD's Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) available through the American Rescue Plan.

The CAPS Steering Committee, a committee of the CoC, is comprised of key stakeholders across NYC's homeless and housing services. They meet monthly to review, evaluate, and refine CAPS development and expansion.

City Programs that Help People with Disabilities Remain in their Homes

NYC Department of Finance (DOF) Programs

Disabled Homeowners' Exemption

The Disabled Homeowners' Exemption (DHE) is a property tax break for homeowners with disabilities who own one-, two-, or three-family homes, condominiums, or cooperative apartments. Available to homeowners with a combined annual income of \$58,399 or less, DHE provides a property tax exemption of five to fifty percent of the property's assessed value. Thanks to state legislation supported by Mayor de Blasio, homeowners with incomes up to \$50,000 are now eligible for the full 50% reduction. The previous income ceiling for the full benefit was \$29,000.

DOF works closely with elected officials, community based organizations, and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit to enroll New Yorkers who are eligible for DHE. Approximately 3,300 households currently receive the benefit.

NYC Rent Freeze Program

In 1970, the City established the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program, offering qualifying senior citizens an exemption from future rent increases. In 2005, the exemption was expanded to include qualifying tenants with disabilities under the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program. Together, SCRIE and DRIE are known as the NYC Rent Freeze Program. This program helps eligible senior citizens (aged 62 and over) and tenants

with qualifying disabilities (aged 18 and over) stay in affordable housing by freezing their rent. Under this program, a property tax abatement credit to the property owner covers the difference between the current rent amount and the amount that the tenant is responsible for paying (frozen rent.)

The DRIE program currently provides assistance to more than 12,000 households.

More information on DHE, DRIE and other DOF programs, including eligibility requirements, can be found at nyc.gov/finance.



Project Open House

Project Open House, which is administered by MOPD in partnership with HPD, uses Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to remove architectural barriers from the homes of New York City residents who have disabilities. The extent of the work depends on the physical condition of the applicant and their particular needs.

Projects include grab bar installations, main entry components (ramp, lift, and door), and kitchen and bathroom modifications. Project Open House affords program recipients greater independence through greater accessibility of their living environment.

Since 2014, Project Open House has completed 37 projects. It is not currently accepting new applications, but is engaged in 4 active projects and has 3 projects in the pipeline.

Aging in Place

Aging in Place is an HPD initiative to help seniors age safely in place through building-wide and apartment renovations. The Aging in Place initiative applies to buildings that receive financial assistance through an HPD Preservation Finance program. As part of developing the scope of renovations, residents receive a survey in which they can select in-unit modifications. These modification options were identified to assist seniors and people with disabilities maintain independent, safe, and comfortable lives. Although the in-unit modifications were specifically developed to address fall prevention and other mobility issues for seniors, all tenants are offered the opportunity to select the in-unit renovations. HPD also offers the opportunity for a homeowner to elect modifications for 1-4 family homes through its HomeFix program.

Other

Other resources available to all tenants (including those with disabilities), include the following:

- **Homebase** is a homelessness prevention network with 26 locations across New York City. The program works with clients

experiencing an immediate housing crisis such as an eviction or who are facing housing instability and want to plan ahead. Among others, services include assistance with public benefits, emergency rental assistance, financial counseling, and legal representation. More information on Homebase can be found here: www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/homebase.page and to find a convenient location, use the Homebase Location found here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/homebase-locations.page>. As of December 22, 2021, all Homebase locations remain closed due to COVID-19. However, services are still available by phone.

- **The Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT)**, which was created in 2019 to coordinate the City's range of tenant protection efforts. MOPT operates a Tenant Helpline to help all tenants navigate challenges with landlords. The Helpline can be reached by calling 311 and asking for the Tenant Helpline; callers receive one-on-one assistance, referrals, and follow-up support.
- **The New York City Department of Social Services' (DSS's) Office of Civil Justice (OCJ)** provides free legal representation, advice and other legal assistance to New York City tenants facing eviction, harassment, disrepair and other housing-related issues. Through partnerships with contracted nonprofit legal services organizations, OCJ is implementing the City's right-to-counsel (RTC) law, providing access to free legal help for tenants facing eviction cases in New York City Housing Court and NYCHA administrative proceedings. In addition to providing free eviction defense legal

services, OCJ's programs provide access to free legal assistance for tenants in a range of housing-related cases. These programs provide access to legal representation and advice to New York City tenants in individual and group collective litigation to help maintain and preserve their housing and protect against harassment, disrepair or other misconduct by unscrupulous landlords. OCJ's legal services are free and available in every ZIP code. OCJ's legal services are available regardless of immigration status. For help, call [311](tel:311) and ask for the City's **Tenant Helpline**.

- **The New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR)** enforces the City's Human Rights Law, including its prohibitions on discrimination in housing against people with disabilities. For a detailed description of CCHR's initiatives on behalf of people with disabilities, including in the housing arena, see the "Access" section of this report.



HPD Accessibility Guide

Released in March of 2021, the [HPD Accessibility Guide](#) describes HPD's most current understanding of accessibility requirements in multi-family dwellings, and is intended as a guide for navigating through all the layers of accessibility regulations that apply to such housing. The HPD Accessibility Guide is the only accessibility standard published by HPD, and is used as a reference for both new construction and preservation.

Disability Inclusive Data Collection for the NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey

The [New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey \(NYCHVS\)](#), sponsored by HPD, is conducted every three years to comply with New York State and New York City's rent regulation laws. The Census Bureau has conducted the survey for the City since 1965. The survey that is currently underway, which was extended due to the pandemic, is the 18th such survey.

Detailed data from the survey cover many characteristics of New York City's housing market, including characteristics of the city's population, households, housing stock, and neighborhoods. The rental vacancy rate is the primary focus of the survey, because that value is crucial to the current rent regulation laws. Other important survey data on housing include rent regulatory and homeownership status, structural conditions, unit maintenance and neighborhood conditions; crowding, rents, utility costs, type of heating fuel, rent/income ratios; owner purchase price and estimated value, mortgage status and interest rate; number of stories and units in building, cooperative/condominium status, wheelchair accessibility, and much more about housing and households in New York City.

In 2021, for the first time, six function-based questions were included in the NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey, to collect representative data on people with disabilities in NYC. By using function-based questions, the NYCHVS will more accurately identify and record people with disabilities in NYC, which will enable researchers and policymakers to develop evidence-based policies and programs to support this population.

Disability etiquette and interviewing guidelines training was provided to more than 300 census workers responsible for collecting data for the survey. Best practices were provided in terms of person-first language, reasonable accommodations, effective communication, standard survey administration, interviewer instructions, and meeting, speaking and interviewing people with different types of disabilities.

DSS Housing Resource Guide

DSS has produced a housing resource guide entitled Housing Resources for People Who are Aging or Have Disabilities to support efforts to identify appropriate housing opportunities for individuals in need. The Guide offers information for staff on eligibility requirements, the application process, and contact information for several specialized subsidies and direct placements. This tool also includes a listing of organizations that provide home modifications, as well as some important housing-related legal resources. DSS is currently updating the Guide to include additional housing programs and resources and, once completed, will share the Guide widely with staff and vendors.

Rental Assistance

Special One-Time Assistance (SOTA) Program

The SOTA program pays one year of rent for eligible Department of Homeless Services (DHS) clients to move within New York City, to other New York State counties, or to another state, Puerto Rico, or Washington, D.C. SOTA can be accessed by households

with recurring income from employment, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability (SSD) benefits and a rent that does not exceed 40% of the household's current or projected income. DHS or provider staff conduct walkthroughs utilizing a comprehensive apartment review checklist for all units within New York City and in nearby counties. Once in the program, participants can call a SOTA Hotline if they are having issues that could affect their ability to remain permanently housed or need guidance on services available in their community.



CityFHEPS

CityFHEPS is a program that provides rental assistance to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It is available to, among others, eligible individuals and families who reside in a DHS shelter and include an adult who receives federal disability benefits. Subject to the availability of funding, the assistance is available for as long as the household continues to receive federal disability benefits. This program also includes a comprehensive apartment review.

The CityFHEPS rent levels, which had previously been lower than Section 8 levels,

were recently increased to federal Section 8 Fair Market Rent levels.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

As of mid-November 2021, funding is currently available through the NY State Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) for certain New York City households who fell behind in their rent since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. Eligible households can get up to 12 months of their back rent paid, three months of future rent, and other assistance. Assistance is also available to landlords.

For details about the program, including eligibility, visit [Emergency Rental Assistance Program | OTDA \(ny.gov\)](#).

Health



COVID-19 Vaccine for All

With vaccine equity as its core principle, the City's COVID-19 Vaccine for All effort focuses on ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to, and confidence in, the vaccines – which are safe, free, and easy.

The City, through the Vaccine Command Center (VCC), in partnership with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), NYC Test & Trace Corps, NYC Emergency Management, the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), and MOPD worked to ensure that non-pop-up City-run sites, as well as websites, events, and documents related to COVID-19 vaccination are accessible for New Yorkers with disabilities. Additionally, these entities have collaborated to offer in-home vaccinations and to provide transportation to and from vaccination sites for those who need it.

City-Run Vaccination Sites and City-Hosted Vaccination Websites

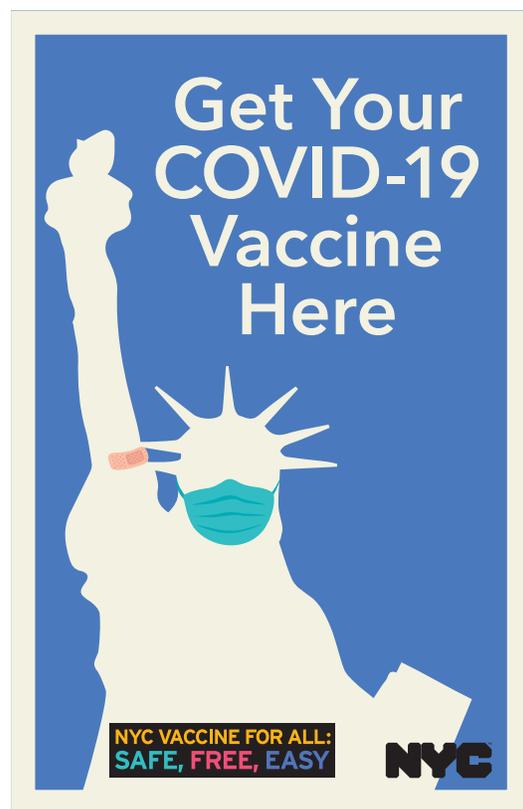
There are hundreds of publicly available vaccination sites citywide, including pop-up and brick-and-mortar sites run by the City. The City also hosts [Vaccine Finder](#), which has all publicly accessible vaccine locations, and the City's vaccine appointment scheduling app – located at vax4nyc.nyc.gov. Below is a summary of the various aspects of site accessibility that are currently in place.

Appointment Process Accessibility

In terms of appointment process accessibility:

- All appointment-making websites meet WCAG 2.1 AA Accessibility Standards

- Vaccine Finder, the City's website for scheduling vaccine appointments or finding locations that offer the vaccine, includes a filter button that allows for only accessible sites to be shown
- Vaccination appointments can be made online and over the phone
- The Vax4NYC appointment scheduling website and call line allow people with disabilities to request accommodations at vaccination sites



Accessibility and Accommodations

City-run non-pop-up sites:

- Have an ADA-compliant entrance, restroom, and main facility
- Have a Disability, Access, and Functional Needs (DAFN) coordinator, onsite daily, responsible for overseeing accessibility

and accommodation requests. All DAFNS have received Disability Etiquette & Awareness training.

- Have a designated pick-up and drop-off area for Access-A-Ride and for-hire vehicles
- Offer a wheelchair upon arrival to clients who need it
- Offer an immediate place to sit and a quiet seating area
- Have a policy in place to safely accommodate clients who are unable to wear a face mask

Additionally:

- In-person American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are offered during business hours at select sites
- Sites have access to video remote ASL interpretation
- Upon request with 48 hours' notice, an in-person ASL interpreter can be deployed to any site
- Upon request with 48 hours' notice, an in-person tactile interpreter (for clients who are deafblind) can be deployed to any site
- Sites have access to live captioning applications and staff will offer to communicate in writing
- Staff can provide assistance with reading and filling out forms in a private space
- Clients may bring a companion or health aide to any site
- Clients may bring a service animal to any site
- There is a complaint and grievance

process through which clients with disabilities who request accommodations can report any issues regarding their vaccination experience at city-run sites

In-Home Vaccinations

In March 2021, the City began providing in-home COVID-19 vaccinations to eligible New York City residents who were fully homebound (*i.e.*, physically unable to travel to a vaccination clinic, even with assistance). Homebound New Yorkers were identified through various mechanisms, including referrals from the Department for the Aging (DFTA), MOPD, Medicaid insurers, community-based organizations, and self-identification by submission of the City's online form and vaccine hotline. The City confirmed that the individual was fully homebound, scheduled the home visit appointment, and made appointments for any homecare worker or other eligible person in the household. During this period, New Yorkers who applied to the program but didn't meet the threshold of fully homebound were redirected to the VAX-4NYC hotline, offered appointments at vaccination sites, and connected to transportation options.

As the City increased provider capacity, program eligibility was expanded in May 2021 to include all New Yorkers 75 years old and older, as well as all New Yorkers with disabilities. The program expanded further to universal eligibility in June 2021. Since then, the program has served any New Yorker requesting vaccination in-home.

The City's in-home vaccination program deploys clinical teams to conduct scheduled home vaccination visits, which include the required post-vaccine observation period for safety monitoring. All vaccinations are logged in the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR).

In addition to the City's in-home vaccination program, healthcare providers already serving homebound patients have the opportunity to offer in-home vaccination for their existing patients. These providers are screened by the City and if appropriate, are provided with a vaccine allocation to vaccinate both homebound patients and their eligible health aides or caregivers. Vaccinations provided through these existing providers are also reported to the Citywide Immunization Registry and included in homebound vaccination totals.

As of December 10, 2021, 54,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to 30,000 New York City residents in their homes through the City's in-home vaccination program.

Transportation

The City offers free transportation to its residents ages 65+ and individuals with disabilities (ages 16-64) to and from vaccination sites. Eligible passengers can request to be picked up anywhere in the five boroughs and taken to any vaccination site located within New York City. For more information, call the NYC Vaccine Hotline: 877-VAX4NYC (877-829-4692).

As of October 21, 2021, more than 12,000 rides have been provided to vaccination sites.

MOPD Outreach Efforts

MOPD has kept the disability community informed of developments concerning access to the COVID-19 vaccine through its website, social media accounts, regular Community Meetings and Deaf Town Halls (see Access section of this report).

Facilitated Enrollment in Free and Low-Cost Health Insurance

The Facilitated Enrollment for the Aged, Blind and Disabled Program is a New York State Department of Health-led initiative that connects seniors and people with disabilities to free and low-cost health insurance. Trained facilitated enrollers provide free, in-person assistance to individuals who are age 65 or older, those who have vision disabilities, and those who have other disabilities in order to get them enrolled in Medicaid and financial assistance programs for Medicare. Assistance is available at selected senior centers and health centers across New York City in multiple languages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitated enrollers have been able to assist individuals by phone. To get assistance call 311 or visit nyc.gov/abdprogram.

Medicaid During COVID-19

The New York Human Resources Administration (HRA) has continued to pursue and implement easements granted by the State for the Medicaid (MA) clients HRA serves in New York City, ensuring that clients can more easily maintain their health coverage during the ongoing public health and economic emergency. These easements have allowed HRA to automatically renew cases with an authorization that ends between August and December 2021 for a period of 12 months. These renewals are being initiated regardless of whether a client has submitted their renewal documentation. Until the end of 2021, new applicants can also self-attest to their eligibility information, with the exception of their immigration status and identity. Surplus MA cases are being

extended 6 months at a time. No Medicaid case is being closed for failure to renew or for failure to provide documentation verifying eligibility at this time.

The renewal extension applies to all renewal cases including the Office of Mail Renewal, Managed Long Term Care (MLTC), Nursing Home Eligibility, Medicare Savings Program, MBI-WPD (entitled to six months extended grace period if loss of employment), Stenson/Recipients who lose their SSI eligibility, and Rosenberg/Recipients who lose their eligibility for Cash Assistance.

Former SSI recipients and any discontinued Temporary Assistance/Medicaid cases that required a separate Medicaid eligibility determination had Medicaid coverage extended. No renewals or redeterminations were required during this time period.

Additionally, during the COVID-19 emergency, some New York City residents are able to submit a Medicaid application via fax to 917-639-0732. This is available to residents age 65 and over; those living with blindness or other disabilities; and to young adults under age 26 who were formerly in foster care. All other applicants not in the categories listed above may submit an application via the NY State of Health at nystateofhealth.ny.gov or by calling 855-355-5777.

NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H)



NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) is the largest public health care system in the United States, providing essential inpatient,

outpatient, and home-based services to more than one million New Yorkers every year in more than 70 locations across the city's five boroughs.

NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to quality health care services without exception. To ensure it meets the highest standard of quality care for its patients, H+H optimizes health care delivery through ongoing quality improvement projects that strengthen access to equitable care for people with disabilities. These efforts, which are informed by partnerships and collaborations with MOPD and organizations like the Center for Hearing and Communication, the Independence Care System (ICS), and the Hearing Loss Association of America, include investing in physical infrastructure and auxiliary aids and services to serve its patients with disabilities.

Highlights include:

- **Capital improvement projects** to update the physical environment to improve access to persons with mobility issues, including \$2.5 million in City Council capital investment to renovate physical locations to improve accessibility at the following sites: (1) Sydenham; (2) Morrisania; (3) Cumberland; and (4) Woodhull (Radiology and Women's Health Pavilion).
- The expanded availability of **auxiliary aids and services**. For the deaf and hard of hearing population, these include CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation) services, assistive listening devices, notification systems, and captioning devices and services. For individuals who are blind and have low vision, H+H has created large print, Braille

and audio versions of key patient consent forms. During COVID-19, H+H added hundreds of additional tablets to support video remote interpretation services for the use of American Sign Language (ASL), and retrofitted tablets with the capacity to allow isolated patients and family members meaningfully connect during the COVID-19 pandemic. When in person public meetings switched to virtual sessions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the System ensured accessibility by making available captioning and American Sign Language Interpreters for all virtual public meetings.

- **Training and resources**, including best practices guidelines to support services for individuals who are blind or have low vision, job aids and other resources on the types of auxiliary aids available to support communication accessibility, webinars and trainings to increase staff knowledge about the policies and best practices for communication accessibility, and an online resource portal for employees to access information to support accessibility.

Digital Accessibility



Just as ramps, braille signs, and accessible pedestrian signals provide people with disabilities better access to the physical world, accessible web design removes barriers that prevent full use of digital information.

Some common modifications include:

- Adding alt text descriptions to images
- Using sufficient color contrast
- Resizing text
- Adding captions and audio descriptions to videos
- Properly tagging headings, links, lists and tables
- Designing to support simple navigation and logical site structure
- Writing in plain language
- Creating alternatives for maps and data visualizations
- Ensuring that PDFs and other downloadable content is accessible

Improved digital accessibility makes the user experience better for everyone, not just people with disabilities. For example, video captioning benefits not only people who are deaf and hard of hearing, but also hearing users in loud environments or who prefer to keep their sound off. Similarly, adequate contrast helps anyone see a screen better in bright sunlight, and easy navigation benefits everyone.

Recognizing the role that digital accessibility plays in learning about and applying for City services, the City Council with the Mayor's support passed [Local Law 26](#) in 2016. The law required that the City

adopt a protocol for website accessibility based either on federal regulations, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA or any successor standards. If the City wants to depart from such standards, it must consult with experts in website design and reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities as well as hold a public hearing. Such differences must be documented in the protocol and posted online. The law holds the City accountable by requiring it to produce a report on accessibility of City websites every two years.

Following enactment of the law, the City adopted WCAG 2.0 as its standard and hired its first Digital Accessibility Coordinator. Housed at MOPD, the Digital Accessibility Coordinator has worked closely with other City agencies, especially the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), to review the accessibility of City websites and apps and to train City employees in digital accessibility. The City also developed a scoring methodology for rating City websites' compliance with the WCAG standards.

Since 2016, the City has enhanced the accessibility of hundreds of websites and thousands of electronic documents and forms and the Digital Accessibility Coordinator and





Beginning in 2018, MOPD has cohosted a Digital Inclusion Conference (DiCon) focusing on inclusive communication and design, digital accessibility and assistive technology. There was no 2020 conference due to the pandemic, but in May 2021, MOPD, together with Disability Unite, held the conference virtually. Artists and members of the non-profit and small business community were invited to attend and learn how to get started with digital accessibility.

DoITT staff have trained employees at dozens of City agencies on digital accessibility. Three [Digital Accessibility Reports](#) have been released, in 2017, 2019 and 2021, outlining the progress that the City has made. In 2021, the City adopted WCAG 2.1 as its web accessibility standard and, to increase transparency, committed to publishing audits of website accessibility on a rolling basis, not just as part of its biennial reports.

Additionally, MOPD has published numerous guides on digital accessibility. These guides, which are maintained on MOPD's [Digital Accessibility Guides page](#), serve as a valuable resource for both City agencies and the community at large.

An **Accessible Social Media Guide** is included as Appendix D to this report. Additional guides available as of this writing at nyc.gov/digitalaccess include:

- [Getting Started with Web Accessibility](#)
- [Accessible Slidedecks Guide](#)
- [Accessible Documents Guide](#)
- [Creating Accessible PDFs using Adobe In-Design](#)
- [Word to PDF Part 1 Accessible Doc Creation](#)
- [Word to PDF Part 2 Using Acrobat Pro](#)
- [Accessible Virtual Meetings Guide](#)
- [Audio Description and Captioning Guide](#)

The page is being expanded into a standalone website that will include video tutorials and additional guides.

Arts, Culture, Entertainment, Dining and Tourism



Arts Culture and Entertainment

Department of Cultural Affairs

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City’s vibrant cultural life based on the conviction that arts and culture is for everyone. The agency uses its planning, funding, advocacy, technical assistance, and practices to help make participation in NYC’s cultural life — as artists, cultural workers, or audience members — increasingly accessible, inclusive, and equitable.

Ensuring there is public funding for non-profit cultural organizations of all sizes and throughout the five boroughs is one of DCLA’s core goals. During the pandemic, several new collaborative efforts were launched, such as the City Artist Corps and NYC Open Culture.

During the pandemic, DCLA conducted two major surveys of the impact of COVID-19 on the city’s nonprofit cultural sector. Results from these surveys have helped inform relief and advocacy efforts for the city’s diverse cultural field as the struggle to end the pandemic continues globally and locally.

There have been three cornerstones to DCLA’s work on issues of access and inclusion during the pandemic and throughout the past eight years:

- the launch of the *cultural plan*;
- *new funding and initiatives*; and
- *support for best practices*.

DCLA is the largest municipal funder of arts and culture in the country. The agency provides support to over 1,000 non-profit cultural organizations. In addition, DCLA provides general operating support for the Cultural Institutions Group, 34 cultural institutions located on City property, as well as energy expenses for a larger group of sites under DCLA’s jurisdiction.²

DCLA administers funds for hundreds of capital projects at arts and culture organizations, addressing a range of structural and equipment needs, including improvements to increase venue accessibility.

Other initiatives administered by Cultural Affairs include Materials for the Arts, which annually redistributes materials to more than 2,000 non-profit organizations, public schools, and agencies throughout the five boroughs; and Percent for Art, which brings permanent art installations to public spaces around the city.

² New York City is known around the world for its diverse offering of arts and culture. Museums, concert halls, zoos, botanic gardens, theaters, festivals, and public art projects reach into every corner of the city. Visitors and residents alike can experience a variety of artistic offerings in virtually all genres and from numerous cultural perspectives. Venues range from large, internationally known icons such as the Whitney Museum, Carnegie Hall, Alvin Ailey, MoMA, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Metropolitan Opera, New York Philharmonic, American Museum of Natural History, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, to more locally-focused organizations including the Louis Armstrong House Museum, Flushing Town Hall, Weeksville Heritage Center, Sugar Hill Children’s Museum, Alice Austen House, and Bronx River Arts Center.



CreateNYC: A Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers

How can we work toward a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable cultural sector that serves all New Yorkers? There is no single simple answer, but in a signature DCLA initiative, Mayor Bill de Blasio launched CreateNYC, a comprehensive cultural plan that attempts to address the question from a variety of perspectives.

New York City's First-Ever Comprehensive Cultural Plan

CreateNYC was developed through extensive public engagement using surveys, town halls, focus groups, and other strategies, which together led to a wide-ranging set of recommendations around several key focus areas. These areas include equitable cultural participation citywide; affordability of artist workspaces; access to arts, culture, and science education; and the role of public spaces in the city's arts landscape. Released in July 2017, CreateNYC established a 10-year framework for achieving a more vibrant, equitable cultural community that reflects the extraordinary diversity of New York City.

- The plan expresses DCLA's commitment to supporting disability arts, artistry, and artists with disabilities at all levels of the city's cultural life.
- Further, CreateNYC considers barriers to access and inclusion for persons with disabilities as threats to the health of the city's cultural ecosystem. CreateNYC signaled DCLA's determination to foster greater access to the extraordinary cultural offerings and opportunities of New York City.

New Funding and Initiatives for Disability Inclusion and Diversity

- The **CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund**, developed as a result of CreateNYC, provides programmatic support for organizations deepening their commitment to people with disabilities as artists, cultural workers, and audience members.
- DCLA also launched the **CreateNYC Language Access Fund** in support of programming that increases access to arts and culture for those whose primary language is not English. This funding supported a variety of programs that addressed and highlighted American Sign Language (ASL): in FY20, awards totaling \$90K went to five such programs; in FY21, awards totaling \$100K went to four programs.
- In FY20, DCLA awarded \$4.1M in arts partnership grants to 357 schools to work with 96 unique arts and cultural organizations to offer arts education services to students focused on multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and family engagement.
- Through the **CUNY Cultural Corps**, also developed following CreateNYC,



A performance by dancers Louisa Mann and Peter Trojic at the CreateNYC Action Plan launch event in September 2019. The work was choreographed for them by Mark Travis Rivera at a Dance/NYC residency supported by the CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund. Photo Credit: Matthew Lapiska / DDC

more than 350 students from the CUNY colleges held paid internships with a wide range of cultural institutions between FY18 and FY20. While receiving professional development and experience

in the sector, the Cultural Corps provides support to the sector and dozens of host institutions across the city each year.



A music performance is provided by Sidiki Conde, a teaching artist at the Center for Traditional Music and Dance, at the announcement event for Disability Forward Fund grantees in August 2018.

In August 2018, DCLA launched the **Disability Forward Fund**, which [in FY19-20 awarded \\$1.28M in two-year competitive grants to 22 programs committed to serving artists, cultural workers, and audiences with disabilities](#). Funded projects ranged from the creation of new work featuring disabled artists, to re-examining collections through the lens of disability aesthetics, to training people with disabilities for employment in creative careers.

For FY21, while the pandemic posed major challenges, the agency was able to allocate \$400K to 33 organizations whose missions and core programs engage people with disabilities as artists, cultural workers, and audience members.

- The **CreateNYC Leadership Accelerator**, another partnership with CUNY, is designed to address the lack of diversity in high-level positions in the cultural sector. The program, which is free of charge to the participants, provides equity-centered professional development and training in leadership skills to diverse groups of mid-career cultural professionals. Following a successful pilot cohort in June 2018, the program has now served more than 75 emerging leaders.



A workshop for children about photography and the use of color at the New York City Housing Authority’s Mitchel Houses in the Bronx, where Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals joined in a discussion related to public art to be created in the neighborhood with the children’s input as part of the City Artist Corps. Photo credit: NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

- In FY20, DCLA funded capital projects that proposed specific accessibility features at eight cultural organizations, distributing \$15.5M towards these projects which include improvements to the physical accessibility of these facilities.

Support for Best Practices for Access & Inclusion at DCLA and Across the Cultural Sector

- **Staffing and training at DCLA** – Following the release of CreateNYC, DCLA committed to strengthening engagement and programming focused on disability inclusion within the cultural sector and to addressing issues of access in the city’s arts community at the agency staff level. DCLA’s Disability Service Facilitator worked with the new role of the External Affairs/Disability Inclusion Associate, bringing to the agency a new depth of expertise on disability and disability arts and supported both inclusive agency practices and engagement with the disability community. In fall 2018, all DCLA staff were provided a training session offered by the Disability Inclusion Associate on *inclusive presentations*



The installation of a new elevator at Gibney Dance is celebrated at “Beyond Accessibility: Elevator Opening” in September 2019 – where MOPD Commissioner Victor Calise and Manhattan Borough President Gail Brewer took a ride. Photo Credit: Agnes Varis Performing Arts Center by Scott Shaw.

for all audiences. With the Associate's guidance, DCLA now incorporates verbal description of images in all official digital communications (website, social media, e-newsletter).

- **Technical assistance to the field on accessibility & inclusion** – A webinar on *Accessibility and Inclusion in the Virtual Space* was developed in partnership with MOPD and delivered remotely to the field in the fall of 2020 (recording available at: <https://youtu.be/vy-lxBRbrLQ>). In prior years this same partnership produced two conferences for the cultural sector on increasing employment of people with disabilities – see box – and in FY20, DCLA launched a webinar series with MOPD's guidance that was designed with accessibility features built-in, such as access checks, verbal descriptions, captioning and ASL.
- **Focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)** – Through a number of initiatives, DCLA seeks to encourage affirmative and inclusive practices among its grantees. The agency now requires all members of the Cultural Institutions Group to adopt and implement DEI plans. As of FY19, applicants to DCLA's Cultural Development Fund (CDF) are asked questions about their efforts to hire diverse staff and reach diverse audiences. An agency DEI Committee, open to all DCLA staff, meets regularly to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion within the workplace and in the agency's work with its constituents.
- **Outreach to the field regarding materials available for artists and schools and funding opportunities** – DCLA's Materials for the Arts program (MFTA) created a

3D virtual tour of its offerings, allowing users to take a self-guided tour of the MFTA warehouse, classrooms, gallery, and artist studio. Additionally, during the pandemic MFTA's Third Thursday and gallery programs offered artist talks online as well as numerous virtual gallery experiences. MFTA will continue to make programming accessible online, including professional development for educators. With respect to funding opportunities, to further increase access for all qualified organizations, CDF applicants now receive enhanced support in the application process. DCLA is also hosting virtual application seminars on Zoom to reach an ever-wider constituency of applicants for the city's many cultural funding streams.

Employment in the Arts:

As part of a multi-year and ongoing effort to support opportunities and help expand the pipeline for positions in the arts, DCLA worked with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to host ***Disability and Inclusion in the Cultural Workforce***, an event held in February 2019 for over 150 people representing over 90 cultural organizations. Attendees heard personal perspectives from people with disabilities working in the arts. They also learned about local, state, and regional resources offering support in developing more inclusive recruiting, hiring, and retention practices. This was an expansion of a similar event held in March 2018 for a smaller group of some 25 cultural institutions.

Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment

The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME) works to support New York City's thriving creative economy and make it accessible to all. The agency comprises four divisions: the Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting which coordinates film and television production throughout the five boroughs; NYC Media, the largest municipal television and radio broadcasting entity in the country with a reach of 18 million viewers within a 50-mile radius; workforce and educational initiatives in film, television, theater, music, publishing, advertising and digital content to support the development of NYC's creative industries, which account for around 500,000 jobs and an economic impact of \$150 billion a year; and the Office of Nightlife which supports the sustainable development of New York City's night-time economy.

In 2021, MOME provided marketing support for *ReelAbilities: NY Disabilities Film Festival* from April 29, 2021 – May 5, 2021 including all printing costs, advertising in 20 bus shelters and digital ads and by featuring the festival in New York City taxis for several weeks. ReelAbilities also led a webinar for MOME staff about representation of people with disabilities in film.

MOME provides ASL interpretation at many of its MOME-produced events, including all five performances of [Off Broadway in the Boros](#) September 29-October 3, 2021 and the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus event at Summer Streets in August 2021.

MOME has funded ASL services to make other third-party events accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons, including the [Wavy Awards](#), an awards show on October 23, 2021,

celebrating women, LGBTQ+, non-binary, artists of color, artists of disabilities and allies.

In 2018 and 2019, MOME partnered with GalaPro, a first-of-its-kind mobile app, to revolutionize the theatre-going experience, particularly for the deaf, hard of hearing, low vision, and blind communities. To foster greater access to theatrical performances for all New Yorkers, MOME provided funds to cover the cost of installing GalaPro software in four theaters. Since that time, the Shubert Theater has expanded its use of the GalaPro app to all its theaters and many other theaters have followed suit.



ASL interpreter at Staten Island Off Broadway in the Boros event.

Dining

Restaurant Access Program (RAP)



Photo credit: Accessible Travel NYC

The Restaurant Access Program (RAP), created in 2013, provides restaurants with the opportunity to advertise themselves as wheelchair friendly. To receive a “Wheelchair Friendly” decal to promote their restaurant’s accessibility, the restaurant owner must answer “yes” to the following three questions:

- Is your main entrance flush with the sidewalk, or is there a ramp, lift or other usable entrance?
- Is the entrance opening 32 inches or larger?
- Are wheelchair spaces distributed throughout the seating area and is there a level route to those spaces?

More than 4,000 restaurants have received the “Wheelchair Friendly” decal since the start of the program.

Restaurants may apply for a decal as part of the DOHMH restaurant permitting process, or separately online at www.nyc.gov/business.

Open Restaurants

NYC’s Open Restaurant program, currently operating on an emergency basis, allows restaurants to use the sidewalk adjacent and curbside roadway space in front of their businesses for outdoor dining. Due to the success of the emergency program, New York City is working to create a permanent Open Restaurants program that will be managed by the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT).

Restaurants must provide an 8-foot clear path on the sidewalk for pedestrians, accessible tables, and an accessible route to on street seating via ramp or decking. For more guidance, visit [MOPD’s Small Business Resources page](#), which includes an MOPD-produced [guide](#) to help restaurants understand accessibility requirements. If an individual sees any violations, they can report them by calling 311 or texting 311-692.

Plastic Straws

Plastic straws available upon request.

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Las pajillas plásticas están disponibles a solicitud.

• Absorbente	• Carrizo	• Sorbete
• Bombilla	• Pajita	• Sorbeto
• Calimete	• Pitillo	
• Cañita	• Popote	

.....

可應要求提供塑料吸管。

nyc.gov/straws **NYC**



Local Law 64 of 2021, which took effect on November 1, restricts food service

establishments — such as restaurants, cafes, delis, bars, grocery stores and food trucks — from providing single-use plastic straws, stirrers and splash sticks to customers. However, thanks to input from the disability community, which includes people who need plastic straws in order to consume beverages, meals and medicine, the law requires food service establishments to make plastic straws available if a customer requests one for any reason and must post signage to that effect. MOPD helped raise awareness of this important issue and assisted the Department of Sanitation to plan and prepare for the law's enforcement. For more information, visit nyc.gov/straws.

Tourism

NYC & Company, New York City's official destination marketing organization, maintains [Accessible NYC](#), a digital hub to help visitors and New Yorkers explore and enjoy the five boroughs. Resources include original editorial content created by members of the community as well as an interactive

filter to help visitors find hotels, attractions and restaurants that provide the accessibility amenities they need. Accessibility advocate and founder of the online resource Accessible Travel NYC Lakshmee Lachhman-Persad joined the NYC & Company Board of Directors this year to help ensure this audience is well represented in NYC & Company's channels and campaigns; she also advises NYC & Company on best practices for its suite of digital offerings, including its educational webinars. NYC & Company hosts annual webinars to educate its members from across various industries on accessibility, and will embark on a staff training program with the Slatin Group in January of 2022. NYC & Company actively encourages accessible meetings and other gatherings to choose New York City as the location to hold their events and supports disabled owned business. It also regularly introduces its consultants to colleagues at member businesses and other destination marketing organizations to keep accessibility top of mind and share best practices for the benefit of all.



Lakshmee Lachhman-Persad and her family enjoy a visit to Edge, the highest outdoor sky deck in the Western Hemisphere. Photo credit: Accessible Travel NYC



The guidance and help we received from both Sara Simkin, Vice President, Destination Services with NYC & Company and Victor Calise, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities was essential to the success of the **40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, held in New York City from August 7-14, 2021.** They connected our team with the support services we needed throughout New York, as well as LaGuardia airport that were essential for providing accommodations and logistics to support the accessibility required for our Veterans. Altogether, they contributed to a positive travel and destination experience for our Veterans, staff and community attending the event.

We also were able to showcase the city’s accessibility by hosting events around New York at locations like The High Line, Top of the Rock, Rucker Park, and at our host hotel — the Sheraton Times Square. Thanks to the support we received, our veteran attendees, many of whom have high-level disabilities were able to navigate the city with ease.

-Dave Tostenrude and Jennifer Purser,
from the National Veterans Wheelchair Games leadership team



Photo credit: Courtesy of National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

Access



This section highlights some of the City's many efforts to increase accessibility in areas not covered elsewhere in this report.

Disability Service Facilitators

[Local Law 27](#) of 2016 requires City agencies to designate a Disability Service Facilitator (DSF). Disability Service Facilitators serve as an easy access point for the public to obtain information, services and assistance concerning access within the agency for people with disabilities.

MOPD convenes regular meetings of the DSFs to share information, learn about new technologies and participate in trainings. A full list of DSFs can be found on the MOPD website at www.nyc.gov/dsf.

Induction Loop Systems

[Local Law 51](#) of 2017 requires the installation of induction loop systems for certain capital projects paid for in whole or in part by City funds and that the City publish a list, to be updated annually, of locations owned or operated by the City with assistive listening devices, including the type of device. The list is available on MOPD's website at nyc.gov/LL51List



Hearing Loop
Switch hearing aid to T-coil

Universal symbol that identifies a looped venue

Induction loop systems continue to be installed throughout the city. Locations where loops have been installed since passage of the law include the NYC Council Chamber, various locations within Carnegie Hall and OATH hearing rooms in the Bronx.

Public Meeting Notices

Local Law 28 of 2016 requires that all print and digital advertisements, posters, invitations, and other publicity materials for events open to the public that are hosted by City agencies contain, at a minimum, information regarding who to contact for information regarding accessibility for people with disabilities at the event and a deadline for when requests for accommodations must be received by the organizer of the event. It also requires that, to the extent practicable for the type of media, the publicity materials include information on the venue's accessibility.

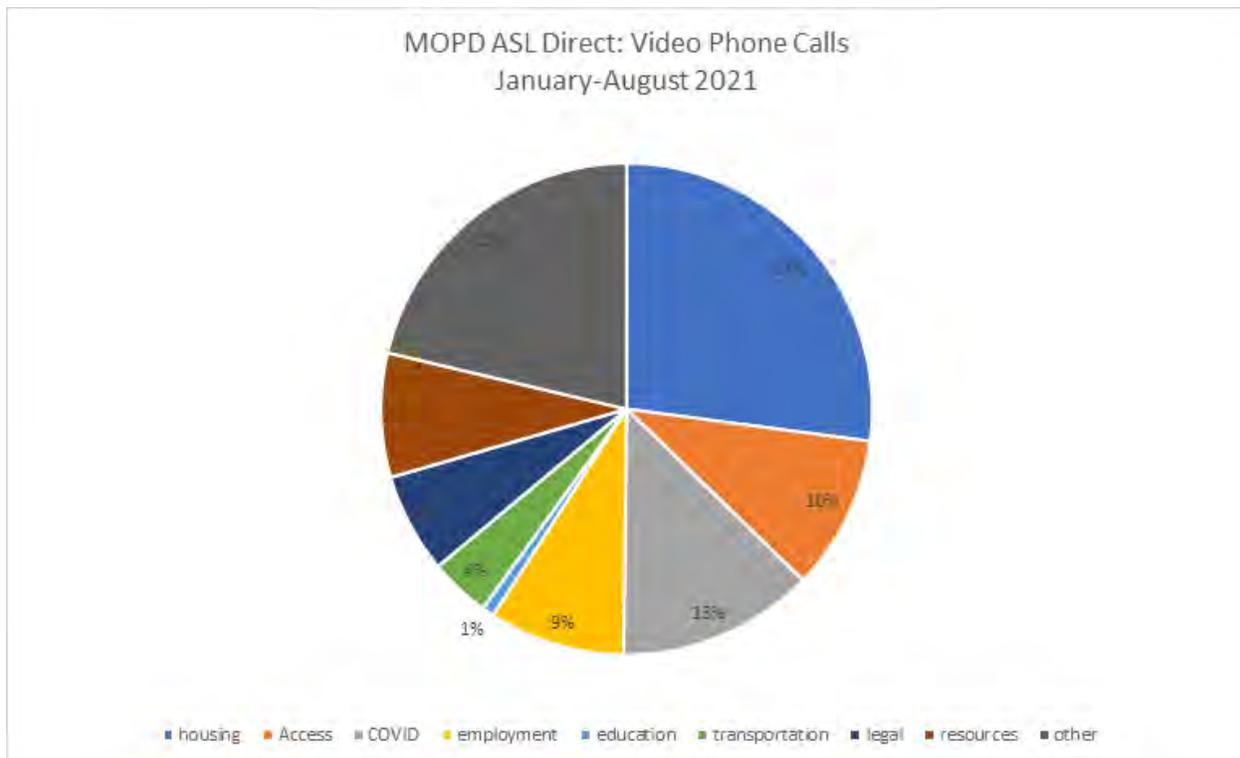
A [Meeting Notice Guide](#), developed by MOPD pursuant to the local law, is available on MOPD's website.

ASL Direct

In 2018, MOPD, in partnership with the NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), launched ASL Direct, a video conferencing line where constituents who prefer to communicate in American Sign Language can be connected directly to an information specialist fluent in ASL.

The program originally had two ASL Direct information specialists at MOPD. In 2019, the program was expanded when an additional ASL Direct information specialist began taking video phone calls at HRA's Infoline call center. We hope that the program will be expanded to other agencies in the near future.

The ASL Direct program at MOPD has handled more than 3,500 calls, emails and in-person visits since 2018. From January 1



through August 31, 2021, the program at MOPD handled more than 500 phone calls and the program at HRA handled more than 675 calls and emails.

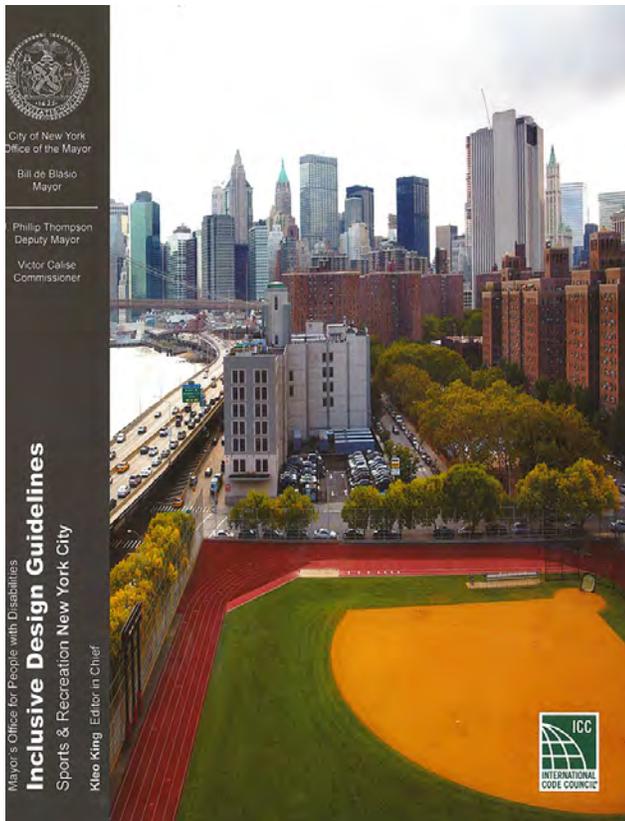
To be connected to MOPD's ASL Direct video conferencing line, call 646-396-5830. To be connected to HRA's ASL Direct video conferencing line, call 347-474-4231.

Inclusive Design Guidelines

In 2017, MOPD released *Inclusive Design Guidelines: New York City (Second Edition)* (IDG), a resource book published by the International Code Council, the leading international publisher of model building codes. The IDG is voluntary technical guidance that helps architects and designers produce multisensory enhanced environments that accommodate a wide range of physical and mental abilities for people of all ages. Automation, scooter accommodation and Active Design are

emphasized. At launch, the book was distributed to a group of relevant and interested accessibility stakeholders at the local, national, and international level, and to universal design representatives and entities including local political leaders and organizations; national American Institute of Architects (AIA) chapters; sister MOPD offices in major US cities; and internationally to the European Union, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Israel, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Japan, and Australia.

Additionally, in 2019, MOPD staff completed *Inclusive Design Guidelines: Sports and Recreation, New York City*, also published by the International Code Council. This publication helps designers working on sports and recreation facilities include features for adaptive sports in order to foster the inclusion of sports for individuals with disabilities.



Updates to the NYC Construction Code

The New York City Construction Codes protect public health, safety, general welfare, and the environment by establishing minimum standards for the design, construction, and occupancy of buildings and other structures. They consist of General Administrative Provisions, the Building Code, the Plumbing Code, the Mechanical Code, the Fuel Gas Code, and the Energy Conservation Code.

To ensure the City's regulations are current, periodically the City's Construction Codes must be updated based on the latest version of the International Code Council Codes (I-Codes).

The Construction Code Revision Cycle is primarily intended to: introduce measures to update to the latest I-Codes with New York City modifications; adopt innovative new technologies by incorporating the latest national standards; improve construction safety; clarify the existing text; and to correct errors, typos and inconsistencies. All revisions to the Construction Codes must be incorporated into a local law that is approved by the New York City Council.

To aid the process, the Department of Buildings organizes a series of Committees to review the technical and administrative provisions of the Codes. Technical Committee members are subject-matter experts in their respective committee. The Commissioner of MOPD chairs the Accessibility Technical Committee.



Sisters sit at the accessible bar at Contento Restaurant in East Harlem. Effective November 2022, a new requirement for accessible drinking counters will take effect. Photo credit: Accessible Travel NYC

The most recent update to the New York City Building Code was approved by City Council on October 7, 2021. That legislation includes a number of advances in accessibility, including:

- A new section has been added to address alterations to primary function areas in existing buildings.
- A new requirement for buildings with elevator service to provide accessible routes to rooftop spaces with new occupancies.
- A new requirement for automatic doors in large assembly facilities.
- A new requirement for accessible electric vehicle charging stations.
- An expansion of the existing requirement to provide assistive listening in assembly spaces.
- Doubling the requirement for accessible seating and standing spaces at dining surfaces.
- A new requirement for accessible seating space at dining and drinking counters.
- A new section to address accessibility in saunas and steam rooms.
- A new section to ensure accessibility of destination-oriented elevators for users who are blind or have low vision.
- New requirements for accessibility in recreational, sports, and gaming facilities.

construction projects. As the City's chief construction manager, the agency provides professional project management and world-class design services to more than 20 City agencies and non-profit organizations that receive City funding. DDC has a dedicated office to ensure that the public buildings in its portfolio, including libraries, cultural institutions, fire and EMS stations and police precincts, adhere to the 2010 ADA Standards and Chapter 11 of the NYC Building Code. DDC's ADA Compliance Unit, established in 2019, is involved in projects at all stages, from design development through to construction, to ensure accessibility and compliance with ADA requirements. The office also works with DDC's Infrastructure division to apply ADA compliance to projects such as pedestrian curb ramps and plazas. The unit performs thorough reviews, formal inspections, formal and informal consultations, and other checks against accessibility standards. All projects are reviewed from initial conception and throughout schematic design, design development, and the construction document phases. In early 2021, the ADA Compliance Unit was expanded to include a more extensive role in monitoring its construction portfolio by performing periodic accessibility inspections at critical construction phases, which is resulting in greater accessibility compliance. DDC's dedication to accessibility extends beyond legal requirements — the agency is committed to ensuring all New Yorkers are able to use and enjoy its projects.

Department of Design and Construction ADA Compliance Unit

The New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC) was established in 1996 to provide project management services for the City of New York's capital

Small Businesses

In FY19, MOPD collaborated with the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS), NYC BID Association and Public Policy Lab, a nonprofit innovation

lab for government, to develop materials to support small business owners with accessibility compliance. These materials are available in multiple languages at businessaccessibility.nyc and include, among other things, an Accessible Entrance Signage Guide, a Web Accessibility Checklist, an Accessible Social Media Guide and a Service Animal Fact Sheet.

In FY20, MOPD conducted trainings for Business Improvement District staff and SBS' compliance advisor and small business advocate teams. The educational and outreach materials have continued to be promoted to BID staff for distribution to their small businesses.

Additionally, as noted previously in this report, MOPD created a guide to help restaurants understand accessibility requirements for the new Open Restaurants outdoor dining program (see *Dining section*). MOPD also created a guide to help businesses understand accessibility requirements of the Open Storefronts program, a DOT program that assists existing ground-floor storefront businesses who want to use outdoor areas on a temporary basis.

Schools

There are almost 1.1 million students in the NYC school system, the largest school district in the United States. Of those students, 20.8 percent are students with disabilities.

The New York City Department of Education has made strides in recent years to improve the experience of students with disabilities. Groups the DOE has collaborated with in these efforts include: The ARISE (Action for Reform in Special Education) Coalition;

Advocates for Children; and PIE - Parents for Inclusive Education; and the Accessibility Student's Advisory Panel (ASAP!), a citywide student group facilitated by the ARISE Coalition and PIE, which has met several times over the past several years with key DOE staff and City Council members to share their experiences, concerns, and recommendations for making schools more accessible and inclusive.

Some recent key reforms and initiatives particularly affecting students with disabilities are described below.

Physical Accessibility of School Buildings

Partnering with MOPD, community groups and advocates to address accessibility concerns across NYC schools, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) has increased the accessibility of school buildings by 15% since the 2014 fiscal year.

Among other things, in the last 8 years, the School Construction Authority has added 50 newly constructed fully accessible buildings. Moreover, \$1B in capital funding has allowed for 73 projects within existing buildings to increase accessibility across high-needs Community School Districts (CSD) to be implemented so far, with more in the planning phases.

DOE publishes a **Building Accessibility Profile (BAP)** for school buildings, based on an accessibility rubric that helps determine the accessibility rating of a building: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/school-environment/building-accessibility>. Since 2016, the Office of Accessibility and Planning (OAP) within the DOE's Division of Space Management (DSM) has conducted

over 700 accessibility surveys of DOE school buildings. Each school with a BAP completed is included in New York City School Finder. <https://schoolsearch.schools.nyc/>. New schools are placed in accessible buildings when possible.

Additionally, the OAP conducts trainings to help build accessibility awareness among DOE staff and school communities. These training courses address disability etiquette, best practices, and guidelines to equitable access to DOE programs and buildings. Since 2016, the DOE's accessibility team has conducted 40 training courses to over 3,400 attendees. This past year (2020-2021), the office leveraged the power of remote technology to expand the reach of OAP's training.

DOE has also created **Accessible Entrance Guidelines**, which address the protocol for ensuring access to DOE buildings for individuals with disabilities and has provided guidance for schools to create an **Accessibility Contingency Plan**, i.e., an emergency plan in the event that an elevator or lift goes out to ensure that a student with a disability can continue to receive program access.

Admissions Priorities

The DOE revised its admissions policies in 2019 to provide priority in admissions for students with physical accessibility needs to school buildings that are partially or fully accessible. The current priorities are set forth here:

Admissions Priorities

Schools located in fully and partially accessible buildings prioritize applicants with accessibility needs. The DOE encourages any family with accessibility needs to explore their child's program options in MySchools, and to list choices on their child's application that will meet their family's needs. For more specific information about a program's admissions priorities, please contact the program directly.

3-K, Pre-K, and Kindergarten Admissions

- Applicants with accessibility needs will get offers before other students in their admissions priority group in order to accommodate accessibility needs.
- If your child's pre-K or 3-K offer does not meet your family's needs, please contact us at ESenrollment@schools.nyc.gov and the DOE will be happy to support you with next steps.
- Middle and High School Admissions
- All accessible middle and high schools will prioritize students with accessibility needs regardless of the zone or district where they live.
- If your child receives an offer to a school or program in a building that is not accessible, the DOE will work with you to find an accessible placement for your child.
- Those with additional questions may email the DOE at MSEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov or HSEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov.

DOE Transition and College Access Centers (TCACs)

TCACs help students with IEPs and their families prepare for the transition from school to adult life. Since 2019, the DOE has operated a TCAC in each borough to help with transition assessments to determine interests and needs; college readiness resources and supports; work-based learning opportunities; and more.

Instruction During COVID-19

Because school building closure created particular hardships for students with disabilities and their families, throughout the pandemic, the DOE prioritized continuity of services for students with IEPs and supports for their families. For example, in March 2020, when the DOE began issuing iPads with data plans to students who would otherwise be unable to connect with schools through remote learning, students with IEPs were prioritized in the distribution process. In total, 117,000 iPads were provided to students with IEPs. Aided by these devices, DOE providers were able to deliver remote sessions of speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling to students with IEPs who otherwise would not have had access to services when school buildings were closed during the pandemic.

During this period, the DOE also developed Remote Learning Plans and subsequently Program and Related Services Adaptation Documents to guide students and educators on how instruction and services would be delivered and individually tailored using this unprecedented educational model. The DOE also kept in touch with families through remote IEP meetings, and the DOE's central

Special Education Office continued to monitor and respond to parent inquiries via its specialeducation@schools.nyc.gov inbox and 311. IEP meetings continue to be held remotely during the 2021-2022 school year.

Academic Recovery

In Fall 2021, the DOE implemented the ambitious Academic Recovery Plan, a broad set of supports to ensure a successful return to full-time in-person instruction for all students. Among the core elements of Academic Recovery services are a common screening for social emotional learning and literacy and training for staff at every DOE school on evidence-based ELA and math interventions.

The pandemic has taken a particular toll on students with disabilities. As part of the ongoing system-wide Academic Recovery, the DOE is also offering Special Education Recovery Services (SERS). All DOE students with IEPs are eligible for SERS. SERS consist of additional instruction and related services intended to supplement the programs and services students with IEPs receive during the school day, and are tailored for each student based on their particular needs and input from their families. Every school offers an extended day, Saturday or some combination of the two to deliver recovery services. Earlier this year, the federal government allocated 236 million dollars specifically towards DOE's Special Education Recovery Services.

Beyond Access

The Beyond Access Series is presented by the New York City Department of Education's Division of Specialized Instruction and Student Support. The series supports

families of students with disabilities by providing sessions on topics related to special education. The sessions are held virtually in an accessible format and are archived on youtube for those who are not able to attend the event itself. Past topics have included literacy, social emotional learning, suicide prevention, the IEP process and many more. More information is available at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/special-education/family-resources/beyond-access-series>.

Public Benefits

ACCESS HRA



The Human Resources Administration (HRA) continues to leverage technology to increase access and make it easier for people with disabilities to apply and maintain their public benefits. Through ACCESS HRA, a free, online-accessible portal, many people with disabilities have been able to apply for benefits and manage their cases without having to call HRA or come to a Center in person. ACCESS HRA is also available as a mobile app on any smart device. Through the site, clients can apply and re-certify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Cash Assistance (CA) and Fair Fares benefits and retrieve case information such as the status of their applications and their

EBT balances; view upcoming appointments and documents that need to be submitted; update their contact information; apply for special grants for assistance with an emergency or other unique circumstances; and request a closure of their CA case. They can also instantly download a statement of benefits letter to show proof of receiving HRA benefits, receive SMS notifications of upcoming appointments, and upload documents. With a client's consent, HRA's ACCESS HRA Provider Portal allows partnering organizations to view real-time case information. Currently, over 300 community-based organizations are using the site to help clients with their cases. The ACCESS HRA mobile app allows clients to electronically upload documentation for their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Cash Assistance (CA) case and enrollment in the Fair Fares NYC Program by taking pictures of or selecting from their device's photo gallery the required document and submitting them for agency review.

For notices available on ACCESS HRA, clients can use the site's accessible features to read or listen to their notices. HRA is continuing its robocall program to let people who are blind or have low vision know that their Medicaid renewal or surplus payment is due, inform them that HRA can assist them by reading their recertification over the phone, arrange an appointment at a Medicaid center, or arrange home visits.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Over the past year, HRA has continued to pursue and implement waivers from its State and Federal partners that provide easements for clients and staff. At the time of writing, one of these waivers allows HRA to process

SNAP applications and recertifications without an interview if a client's identity and all eligibility criteria is verified and no information requires clarification. In the instances where an interview is needed, HRA will reach out to clients by telephone. Additionally, clients continue to receive the maximum benefit allotment for the household size, if the household was not already receiving the maximum benefit amount.

Generally, HRA's SNAP On-Demand is a way for clients to complete a SNAP eligibility interview during their recertification or application period. This allows clients to call HRA during business hours for their interview at a time most convenient for them, which gives clients more flexibility while applying for SNAP. However, as mentioned above, if HRA can verify identity and all other eligibility criteria, no interview is currently needed pursuant to COVID-19-related waivers. Whenever HRA must clarify a client's information, HRA will call them — the client need not call using On Demand. Additionally, cases where adults in the household are aged 60 and over or have a disability and have no earned income are encouraged to use the SNAP simplified form (which consists of only two pages) when applying or recertifying for benefits. HRA continues to allow clients with disabilities or other hardships that made applying online difficult to apply for SNAP over the phone with HRA staff and mail, fax, or upload documentation. Lastly, for seniors and people with disabilities who have no earned income and no changes to their household size, they can also recertify by answering questions on a simple, automatic system over the phone, which is faster and easier than any other method of recertification.

SNAP recipients can avoid the grocery store and shop from home by ordering groceries online using their EBT card. Participating retailers include Amazon, ShopRite, and Walmart. This program, which was piloted in 2019 but is now a permanent program, helps address the needs of people who are elderly or have disabilities, especially those who are homebound or lack access to convenient transportation. The program is particularly beneficial for those working long and inconvenient hours, those who act as caregivers, or those who live far from a grocery store with fresh produce.

[More Information on Shopping Online with SNAP Benefits](#)

During the pandemic, SNAP applicants and recipients also benefit from regulations that allow community organizations to serve as an authorized representative on behalf of a client. Clients may authorize a representative to submit applications and communicate with HRA on their behalf. In addition, HRA has partnered with Benefits Data Trust (BDT) to allow certain clients to complete their full SNAP applications over the phone with a Benefits Outreach Specialist. BDT has the capability to record a "vocal signature," which streamlines applications for those clients with disabilities for whom the other options pose a challenge.

WeCARE

When applying or recertifying for Cash Assistance at HRA, clients can be referred to HRA's Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE) program. WeCARE provides a continuum of services to help Cash Assistance clients to attain their maximum levels of self-sufficiency when they have medical and/

or mental health conditions that affect their employability. Individuals referred to WeCARE receive a comprehensive clinical assessment to identify possible conditions and social barriers that may affect their ability to participate in work-related activities. Based on the results of this assessment, WeCARE contractors determine an individual's functional capacity, develop a customized service plan, and provide a range of services tailored to meet their needs. Those services include assistance applying for Social Security if their condition warrants such and help with job development and placement through Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) if they can work with accommodation. Those who may have unstable medical or mental health conditions are monitored through a Wellness Plan to stabilize all conditions.

During the COVID crisis, WeCARE services were modified. All Wellness and SSI services were conducted virtually as were the majority of VRS services. All clients received regular "triage" calls to assist with any needs they may have had during these difficult times. These included case issues, medical intervention, food insecurity, housing, or Social Security case concerns.

As HRA begins ramping up services for a post-COVID world, WeCARE will apply best practices learned during the pandemic to provide even more robust services across a developing cadre of service deliveries. WeCARE will leverage the virtual platform created to provide clients both in-person and virtual services moving forward that reduces the intensity of on-site services for the protection of both clients and staff. All wellness and post application SSI services do not need to be done on site, greatly reducing the footprint and traffic of WeCARE

services. Many activities can be done with an even greater buy-in from the client through our virtual platform, reserving preferred in-person services for needs such as clinical and medical assessments and some VRS placement activities.

Disability Screening Tool

HRA has developed a Disability Screening Interview Tool to assist HRA workers in identifying individuals with disabilities who may need reasonable accommodations to apply for and maintain their Cash Assistance benefits. An electronic version of this tool was first implemented in five Job Centers across New York City and its use was expanded to all Job Centers in early 2021.

Accessible Kiosks

As of October 2021, HRA has installed accessible kiosks at 14 locations across New York City. These self-service check-in stations are used by individuals visiting the Center to receive a routing ticket. The kiosk software searches for a client's existing appointments and/or determines the program service area they are there to see.

Reasonable Accommodations

HRA applicants and clients with disabilities can request reasonable accommodations (RAs) that they may need to access and maintain their benefits. The Request for Reasonable Accommodation form (HRA-102c), the Request for Medical/Clinical Information (HRA-102d), and the Request an Appeal of a Reasonable Accommodation (HRA-102) can be found on the [Disability Access page](#).

HRA's centralized Home Visit Needed (HVN)

Center provides home visits and processes applications and re-certifications for those that are unable to come into a Center due to an illness or disability. Staff provides outreach to eligible HRA applicants and clients, and tracks and monitors cases to ensure that vulnerable populations are able to access and maintain their benefits. Applicants and clients are able to schedule Home Visit appointments directly through HRA’s Office of Constituent Affairs by calling 212-331-4640. Additionally, HRA’s Homebound Assessment and Referral Unit (HARU) provides individualized services that are centered on the needs of applicants and participants as needed.

Plain Language

HRA is continuing its project to review all of its public-facing notices for Plain Language in order to improve readability for everyone, including people with cognitive and learning disabilities.

ASL

For information on ASL Direct at HRA, please see the ASL Direct section of this report.

In order to continue to promote the ASL Direct service, DSS designed palm cards for public distribution. Currently all open Job and SNAP Centers have these cards available for clients who are deaf or hard of hearing to take home with them.

To further facilitate communication between DHS and HRA staff and sign language users, DSS uses an ASL (American Sign Language) Options Card, which informs ASL-users of their options in obtaining sign language interpretation at HRA and DHS locations. The tool denotes the availability of Video Remote

ASL DIRECT

ASL Direct is a video phone line for callers who use American Sign Language.

NYC Human Resources Administration
Department of Social Services Department of Homeless Services
PALM-42 (E)

Video Phone: (347) 474-4231

You can call to get information about:

- Human Resources Administration (HRA) services like SNAP, Cash Assistance, and Medicaid, or
- shelter under the Department of Homeless Services (DHS).

You can also schedule ASL interpretation services for any HRA-run or DHS-run location.

Using a video phone, you can call us Monday - Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., except for City holidays. You can also email us at ASL@dss.nyc.gov.

For more information, please visit: nyc.gov/dssasdirect

ASL Palm Card

Interpreting (VRI), in-person interpretation, and scheduling an appointment for a later date and time.

For more information about ASL resources at HRA and DHS, visit [ASL Services for HRA and DHS Clients](#) or use your video phone to call 347-474-4231.

VRI	Live	Later Date and Time
Wait Time: 30 minutes	Wait Time: 2 hours	Wait Time: When? You pick.

ASL Options Card

Homeless Services

Based on the settlement of the *Butler* Lawsuit in 2017, DSS and DHS leadership have:

- Hired a Director of Disability Affairs for Homeless Services;
- Hired a Disability Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) Director;
- Engaged an experienced consulting firm to assess shelter accessibility;
- Established a multi-disciplinary workgroup and several sub-workgroups to improve policies and procedures around the provision of reasonable accommodations; and
- Embarked on a process to develop and begin training for all shelter employees on successfully serving people with disabilities.

DSS has already implemented an *Introduction to Disabilities* training that promotes positive interactions/outcomes, explores the history of the disability rights movement, discusses related legal requirements, outlines reasonable accommodations and disability etiquette/culture, and addresses attitudes that can be barriers to effectively working with people with disabilities. New DHS staff receive this training as part of their onboarding process and current DHS and shelter staff are in the process of receiving this training.

DHS is also continuing to train shelter staff on accommodating people who are deaf or hard of hearing and have produced a guide to support staff in these efforts. Video Remote Interpretation is available at all DHS-run shelters and intake facilities, and the Office of the Ombudsman. DSS and DHS have also embarked on a process and pilot program

to ensure more consistent and streamlined access to sign language interpretation services for clients who are deaf or hard of hearing.

For more information on disability access at DHS and how to request a reasonable accommodation, visit the [Disability Access Page](#).

Parks



Photo credit: Courtesy of National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

NYC Parks, which is the steward of more than 30,000 acres of land (14% of New York City) was already established as a world-leader in the planning, design and construction of universally accessible parks and playgrounds prior to 2014. Between 2014 and November 2021, Parks has improved and added to its roster of accessible facilities by reconstructing or building: (1) 278 ADA accessible playgrounds and sports courts; (2) 165 newly constructed ADA compliant paths and plazas; (3) 60 ADA compliant comfort stations; (4) 55 athletic fields with improved ADA access to the dugouts and fields; and (5) 28 piers and waterfronts, which became more accessible for all New Yorkers and its visitors year-round.

NYC Parks offers adaptive fitness, sports, and arts programs at its parks and recreation centers for all abilities. While many NYC Parks events are accessible, these events are geared specifically towards people with physical disabilities.

In 2016, the Parks Department instituted a reduced annual membership fee of \$25 for people with self-disclosed disabilities. In the 2017 Fiscal Year, 1,837 individuals with disabilities took advantage of this incentive, 2,231 in FY2018, 2,733 in FY2019 and 3,005 between March 1, 2019 and February 28, 2020 (the one-year period immediately preceding the pandemic).

Parks recreation centers, which had been closed due to the pandemic since March 2020, reopened on September 13, 2021. To find a center or other recreation facilities, visit nycgovparks.org/accessibility.

Police

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) now publishes its own accessibility plan, “AccessibleNYPD.” The plan details steps the department has taken, and intends to take, toward its ongoing commitment to maximizing accessibility and eliminating barriers associated with its programs, services, and activities delivered at NYPD stationhouses, facilities, and shared spaces throughout New York City. A Department working group, comprised of employees from many NYPD bureaus, meets regularly to discuss the remedial measures and proactive steps addressed in this plan.

New York City’s five boroughs are broken into eight geographic NYPD patrol boroughs: Patrol Borough Manhattan South, Patrol Borough Manhattan North, Patrol Borough

Bronx, Patrol Borough Brooklyn South, Patrol Borough Brooklyn North, Patrol Borough Queens South, Patrol Borough Queens North, and Patrol Borough Staten Island. Across the eight patrol boroughs, the NYPD has 76 precinct stationhouses that are owned and maintained by the NYPD and other City agencies.

Acknowledging the importance of accessibility as it relates to members of the public, the NYPD instituted a self-evaluation process that involved several architectural surveys. As a result of these surveys, the NYPD has identified 16 “hub sites” (with at least one location in each patrol borough) that will be made fully ADA accessible by the end of 2026. The remaining stationhouses will receive ADA compliant upgrades where feasible (e.g., structural limitations).

NYPD employees located in stationhouses that are unable to provide a program or service to individuals with disabilities are required to comply with Operations Order 35 of 2018 (Ops Order 35). Ops Order 35 directs NYPD employees who are unable to provide accessibility services to relocate programs and services to an alternate accessible location outside the precinct, an accessible location within the precinct, or to bring the program or service to the individual with a disability wherever they may be located.

A list of the 16 hub sites is below:

Patrol Borough	Location
Manhattan South	7 th Precinct
	13 th Precinct
Manhattan North	25 th Precinct
	30 th Precinct
	Central Park Precinct
Bronx	48 th Precinct
	50 th Precinct
Brooklyn South	61 st Precinct
	67 th Precinct
Brooklyn North	83 rd Precinct
	90 th Precinct
Queens South	105 th Precinct
	107 th Precinct
Queens North	112 th Precinct
	114 th Precinct
Staten Island	121 st Precinct

The NYPD continues to expand and enhance its training and policies around interacting with people with disabilities. For example, the Department's use of force policy was amended to include officers' need to consider whether an individual's lack of compliance is an inability to comply because of a medical condition, mental health disability, developmental disability, or physical limitation, among others. The curriculum for all NYPD recruits in the Police Academy has several sections which cover interactions with individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. Additionally, there are several training videos (mandatory for all employees) that share different ways and methods that police can communicate with the deaf and hard of hearing community.

The full "AccessibleNYPD" plan is available at https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/public_information/accessible-nypd-2021-08-23.pdf.

Emergency Planning and Preparedness

Below are a few of the many ways the City has expanded its emergency preparedness and response capabilities in recent years to better serve people with disabilities before, during, and after emergencies. These efforts are led by NYC Emergency Management (formerly the Office of Emergency Management), with MOPD playing a critical advisory and supportive role.

Emergency Communications

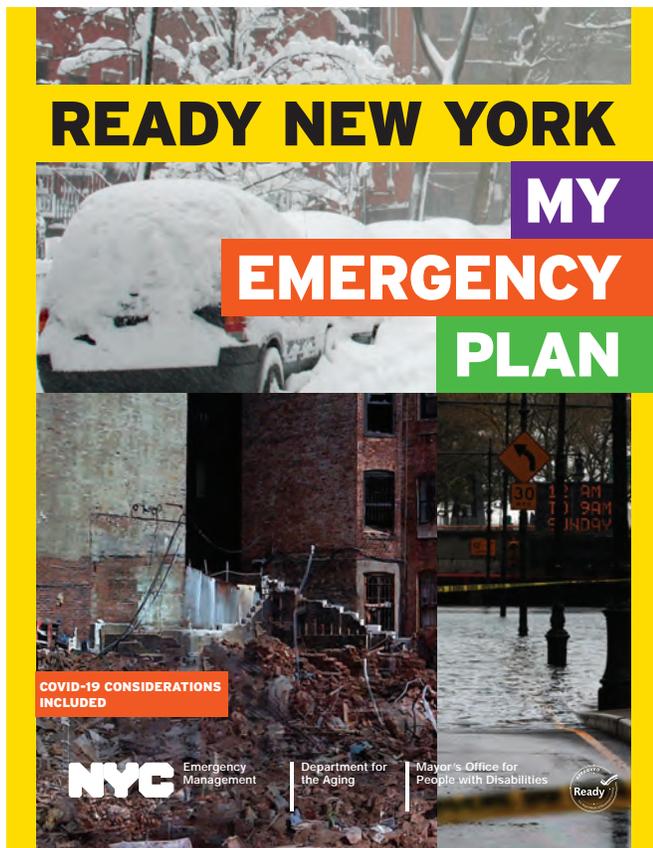
- The City has established procedures and guidelines for requesting materials distributed by City agencies and partners at Disaster Assistance Service Centers (DASCs) and accessible shelters in alternative formats (such as large print, audio, braille), so they are accessible to people who are blind or have low vision.
- The City created an Accessible Communication Policy for Hurricane Evacuation Centers and Accessible Shelters and Service Centers, which sets forth the City's policy on how Evacuation Center, shelter, and service center staff accommodate the communication needs of people who are blind, deaf, or hard of hearing. This policy has been operationalized as the City's Accessible Communication Protocol for Shelters and Service Centers.

- The City purchased a stockpile of auxiliary aids including personal amplifiers and computer tablets to be deployed to Evacuation Centers, shelters, and service centers. Guidance explaining how to use the auxiliary aids was developed to support Evacuation Center, shelter, and service center staff during operations.
- The City re-launched its Advance Warning System (AWS) website and grew the list of subscribers for Emergency Alerts from less than 2,000 to over 8,000. AWS is an all-hazards messaging tool designed to push targeted information to individuals at particular risk during emergencies such as hazardous weather, utility or transportation disruptions, public health emergencies, and other incidents that may require evacuation.

AWS is designed to alert individuals to hazards by sending current, detailed, information to governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations who then forward it to their individual clients in ways tailored to their clients' communication preferences.

Power Outages

- The City has acquired enough power devices, including universal scooter chargers, power strips, and extension cords to meet the power needs of New Yorkers with mobility and durable medical equipment visiting Evacuation Centers, accessible shelters, and Disaster Assistance Service Centers.
- The City coordinates with Con Edison and Public Service Enterprise Group – Long Island (PSEG-LI), the two power utilities serving New York City, to apply communication protocols regarding the providers' Life Sustaining Equipment (LSE), Medical Hardship and Critical Care programs. The City also distributes information about enrollment in these programs through NYCEM's website, Notify NYC, NYCEM's Advance Warning System, Ready New York materials and social media.
- The City developed a Standard Operating Procedure whereby Notify NYC messages are issued when Con Edison or PSEG-LI give advance notice of 60 minutes or more to NYCEM of a pre-emptive network shutdown. NYCEM also provides messaging to service providers through its Advance Warning System, with tips and recommendations people with disabilities can take to prepare for power outages.



Accessible Transportation

- The City conducted a needs analysis to examine the evacuation behaviors of people with disabilities. This needs analysis helped to estimate the demand for City-provided accessible evacuation services in the event of a coastal storm. Using the results of the needs analysis, and with input from advocates for people with disabilities, the City revised its Coastal Storm Evacuation Plan.
- The City developed and maintains an up-to-date inventory of its accessible City-owned vehicles available for use in an emergency.
- City agencies with personnel involved in providing accessible transportation during pre-storm evacuations have been trained on how to effectively communicate with individuals with sensory and cognitive disabilities, the proper operation of wheelchair lifts, and the proper handling of durable medical equipment.

Post-Emergency Canvassing Operation (PECO)

- With input from disability advocates, the City created a Post Emergency Canvassing Operation (PECO) plan detailing the specific operational steps to be taken by the City following an emergency requiring a canvassing operation. The canvassing operation will be staffed and led by employees from various City agencies.
- The City's PECO planners created a data-driven approach to prioritizing sectors for canvassing operations where people with disabilities and others vulnerable in

emergencies are most likely to be heavily concentrated.

Disability and Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) and Disability Community Advisory Panel

- The City coordinated with advocates for people with disabilities to identify members of the disability community to serve on a Disability Community Advisory Panel. During the Panel's quarterly meetings it has provided input on a wide variety of changes to the City's emergency plans and policies affecting people with disabilities.
- The City has hired and trained DAFN staff to serve in the City's Emergency Operation Center (EOC), including at NYCEM, DOHMH, DOE and the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities. Staff in these positions have been trained on the EOC processes and have participated in the review of the City's emergency plans. Going forward, agency DAFN staff will be involved in the development and implementation of any new emergency plans developed to address the needs of people with disabilities.

High Rise Evacuation for People with Disabilities

- A new Evacuation Planning Checklist was created and distributed to residents in city multiple dwellings. The Checklist addresses evacuation concerns specific to people with disabilities while also encouraging all residents to work with building management to maintain a safe building for all.

- The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) issued a “New York City Apartment Building Emergency Preparedness Guide,” which includes a section on “People Who Need Assistance” with recommendations on improving communication between residents and building staff. These topics were also incorporated into the Department of Housing Preservation and Development’s “ABCs of Housing” guide.
 - The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is a regular participant in City pre-event evacuation planning efforts coordinated by NYCEM through various committees and working groups. NYCHA drafted a plan to address the shutdown of elevators and heating systems in advance of a known, anticipated event. NYCHA also has in place a communications system for informing residents of intentional shutdowns due to coastal storms.
 - FDNY developed new DAFN training that has been integrated across the Agency’s training modules.
 - All FDNY response vehicles have been provided visual medical language translator cards to aid communication with people with disability related communication barriers. The New York City Police Department (NYPD) coordinated with FDNY to obtain visual medical aid cards to be placed on all of its department cellphones.
- accessible facilities have the capacity to shelter more than 127,500 people with disabilities.
- In the event of an activation for a coastal storm, the accessible shelters are used first. They are each staffed with a Disability Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) Coordinator. During storm emergencies, there is also always a DAFN Advisor in the Operations Center and ten (10) trained Americans with Disabilities Act Administrators from various agencies posted in the Shelter Command Center to help trouble shoot any problems encountered at accessible shelters.
 - The City completed accessibility surveys of 124 New York City Department of Education schools for sheltering, and the City continues to remediate them for use as additional accessible Coastal Storm shelters.
 - Accessible Shelters have all been provided “way finding” kits and accessibility aids to assist in servicing shelterees.

Training, Outreach and External Affairs

- NYCEM provides emergency messaging to disability service providers through its Advance Warning System (AWS) for distribution to their clients.
- Through its Ready New York program, the agency delivers hundreds of emergency preparedness presentations per year and regularly participates in community fairs to distribute Ready New York program materials and information to those individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

Accessible Sheltering

- The total number of accessible shelters has increased from eight to 74, including 59 used as Evacuation Centers. Those

- NYCEM developed a “DAFN Training for Community and Faith-Based Organizations.” The training stresses how to include people with disabilities in planning and response, educates people about proper etiquette when working with people with disabilities, and provides resources to assist organizations in their planning around people with disabilities.
- NYCEM holds an annual symposium on disability-related planning. This event brings together hundreds of community leaders, service providers, government representatives and members of the public to discuss emergency planning for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.
- The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program developed a Thrive NYC Mental Health First Aid training to educate, identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance abuse challenges and crises. The CERT Program holds regular Mental Health First Aid trainings to help CERT volunteers identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance abuse in their interactions with the public.
- NYCEM conducts annual fairs that specifically address the needs of service animals and pets during emergencies. Organizations in attendance have included the Animal Medical Center, Canine Companions for Independence, and the Guide Dog Foundation.
- NYCEM produced a video series titled “*Ready New York: What’s Your Plan?*” which features actors with disabilities: “Prepared for the Worst” and “Caught Off-Guard.” These video installments, created with feedback from the Disability Community Advisory Panel, highlight the importance of having an emergency plan and the planning steps and resources available to help the DAFN community prepare for emergencies. The videos can be accessed through the NYCEM website at [NYC.gov/emergencymanagement](https://www.nyc.gov/emergencymanagement) and YouTube channel available at: <https://www.youtube.com/nycemergencymanagement>.
- MOPD created the Disaster Resilience & Resource Network (DRRN) to connect federal, state and City agencies utilizing best practices, expertise, and communication to ensure that equal access to resources and services before, during and after emergencies. The Network meets quarterly.

Emergency Services

Text-to-911

Text-to-911 is the ability to send a text message to reach 911 emergency call takers from a mobile phone or device. It is useful for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, as well as those who may not be able to make a voice 911 call for safety reasons.

Through the collaboration of the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), NYPD, and FDNY, Text-to-911 successfully launched in New York City in June 2020. In the months leading up to launch, MOPD and DoITT met with stakeholders on a bi-weekly basis to discuss technology updates, progress, training materials and marketing strategies. As of September 2021, more than 25,000 text sessions have been initiated via Text-to-911.

Text-to-911 is a reliable and safe way to reach emergency services in New York City. Calling 911 should always be used unless calling is not an option. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, have a disability that makes speech difficult, or you are in a situation where you cannot safely call, then text 911. For more information, please visit: nyc.gov/text911.

NextGen 911

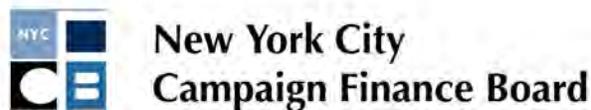
The City is currently in the design stage for NextGen 911, a fully digital, state-of-the-art emergency communications system that will allow New Yorkers to communicate with 911 through text messaging, photos, video, social media, and more, thereby enhancing the information available to first responders to assess and respond to emergencies. Representatives from DoITT, FDNY, NYPD, MOPD and the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence have regular calls with advocates to discuss the design.

The City currently anticipates a 2024 launch. However, the major wireless communication carriers have not yet developed the capability to transmit video messages to 911 systems, and some carriers cannot support the transmission of picture messages.

While the systems themselves can support multimedia messaging, the capacity must exist on the carrier side to ensure persons who need 911 can send more than simple text. As such, the City is urging the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to require all covered wireless communication carriers to transmit multimedia content to 911.

Voting, Civic Engagement and Citizenship

Campaign Finance Board



A central goal for the Campaign Finance Board is to make all aspects of city elections accessible to all voters. In 2021, the CFB sought to make the televised debates more accessible by arranging for live American Sign Language interpretation during all broadcasts for the first time. The CFB contracted with a vendor that provided two teams of interpreters for each debate. CFB staff coordinated closely with broadcast partners, who were providing interpretation of a live debate for the first time. Producing the interpretations required the vendor and the broadcasters to overcome obstacles unique to the 2021 primary elections: eight candidates qualified to participate in each debate and the broadcaster's studio capacity was severely restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CFB received valuable guidance throughout from Disability Rights New York and from staff at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

[To make the debates more accessible to voters who are blind or have low vision, the CFB also began publishing visual descriptions of the candidates, moderators, and studio.](#) The CFB distributed these descriptions on its Twitter channel and via email to advocates within the disability rights community. The CFB is committed to expanding the use of visual descriptions in the debates and to making ASL interpretation and visual descriptions a permanent fixture within the debate program.

Separately, the CFB took steps to make its public hearings when it solicits testimony from voters more accessible for all. The Voter Assistance Advisory Committee (VAAC) is a nine member advisory board that advises the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB) on its voter engagement efforts and recommends legislative and administrative changes to improve elections in NYC.

The VAAC meets bi-monthly, or six times a year. Two of these meetings are deemed “Post Election Hearings”, where the VAAC solicits feedback from members of the public about their experience voting in the most recent election. The onset of the pandemic has required the VAAC to hold meetings virtually, which has in turn required us to rethink its accessibility practices.

For every Post Election Hearing, the CFB has made it standard practice to hire two ASL interpreters, and closed captioners where applicable. Zoom’s recent addition of a closed captioning function has made it simple to include closed captioning for all VAAC meetings. For the additional VAAC meetings that do not solicit public testimony, the CFB accepts requests prior to the meeting for ASL interpretation.

The CFB has also made it standard practice to have VAAC members, staff, and members of the public provide visual descriptions for individuals who are blind or have low vision prior to speaking at a meeting. The CFB and VAAC are dedicated to making its meetings as open and accessible as possible, and looks forward to working with advocates to ensure all New Yorkers have an opportunity to participate in our democracy.

DemocracyNYC

DEMOCRACYNYC

YOUR VOICE, YOUR POWER

DemocracyNYC (DNYC) in partnership with MOPD remains committed to reducing barriers to the ballot box for all New York City voters, especially for populations that have been historically disenfranchised. This builds upon previous work conducted through funding from the New York Community Trust and in collaboration with Independent Living Centers in which DNYC registered 752 people with disabilities to vote, hosted 63 community events on the importance of voting for the disability community, [launched the first ever voter guide with American Sign Language interpretation](#) with the Campaign Finance Board, surveyed 72 poll sites for physical access and advocated for increased access to voting for people with disabilities on the state and local level. Read more about this work at democracy.nyc.gov.

In June 2021, NYC had its first citywide Ranked Choice Voting Primary Election in which New Yorkers ranked their top five candidates in order of preference for Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough Presidents, and a majority of the 51 City Council seats. DNYC collaborated with disability rights advocacy groups and agency partners to create accessible tools, resources and messaging around how to rank your vote, to ensure all New Yorkers were prepared to use this new system of voting. In January 2021, DNYC partnered with MOPD, the Campaign Finance Board, the Board of Elections and several advocacy groups on an in-depth training on how to rank your vote using the Ballot Marking Device as well as other key voter resources.

In collaboration with RankedVote, DNYC launched a multilingual, interactive online app that mimicked the NYC ballot and helped New Yorkers better understand how Ranked Choice Voting worked before heading to the polls. The ballot was translated into the top 15 languages spoken by the Low English Proficiency voter eligible population. DemocracyNYC worked with several community-based organizations to create and distribute customizable ballots in each of these languages and with MOPD to ensure the app was fully accessible, including for usage via screen reader.

Additionally, DNYC worked with partners like Disability Rights New York to provide closed captioning services at the majority of Ranked Choice Voting workshops we hosted and ensure ads, graphics, and messaging were both accessible and representative of the disability community. In partnership with BRIC Media, DNYC developed a video ad titled “[What Was at Stake with the June Primary](#),” which ran on TV and featured Rasheta Bunting, a Disability Rights Activist from Bronx Independent Living Services speaking about the importance of employment in the disability community.

In order to prepare for the November General Election and continue key work at the intersection of disability and voting rights, DemocracyNYC, in collaboration with the Campaign Finance Board, continued to host a New York City Elections Consortium with representation from good government groups, disability rights organizations, immigrant groups, and other community-based organizations to address issues related to voting safely during a pandemic and other barriers to the polls as they arise.

NYCitizenship

NYCitizenship, which was launched in 2016 as a joint initiative of the New York City Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS), provides immigrant New Yorkers with free citizenship application assistance. As part of NYCitizenship, you can:

- Meet with a free, trusted lawyer
- Apply for citizenship easily
- Find out if you can apply for free

Through NYCitizenship at DSS, the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) has reached out to more than 13,500 immigrant clients with disabilities and select seniors receiving benefits who were identified as potentially eligible to become U.S. citizens. As of October 2021, over 3,300 unique appointments have been made and over 1,000 citizenship applications have been completed with the assistance of free legal services provided by NYLAG, the program’s legal partner. As a result of this project, 600 people have become citizens with many others on track to do the same. Those who successfully naturalize go on to receive assistance through HRA with applying for Supplemental Security Income benefits (SSI).

IDNYC

The City’s municipal identification card program IDNYC allows NYC residents aged 10 and up with physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities — regardless of possession of photo identification or proof of residency — to apply for an ID card if accompanied by a caregiver who has a

photo ID and who can demonstrate proof of a relationship to the applicant. [Visit the Residency and Caretaker Relationship page of the IDNYC website](#) for more information.

To further expand accessibility, “IDNYC” now includes tactile braille on the front of all new IDNYC cards to help cardholders who are blind or have low vision distinguish and use the card. IDNYC is the largest and most successful municipal ID program in the country with over 1.4 million cardholders and is now the first locally-issued ID in the nation to include braille. The City will continue to work with the blind and low vision community to increase accessibility for the cards.

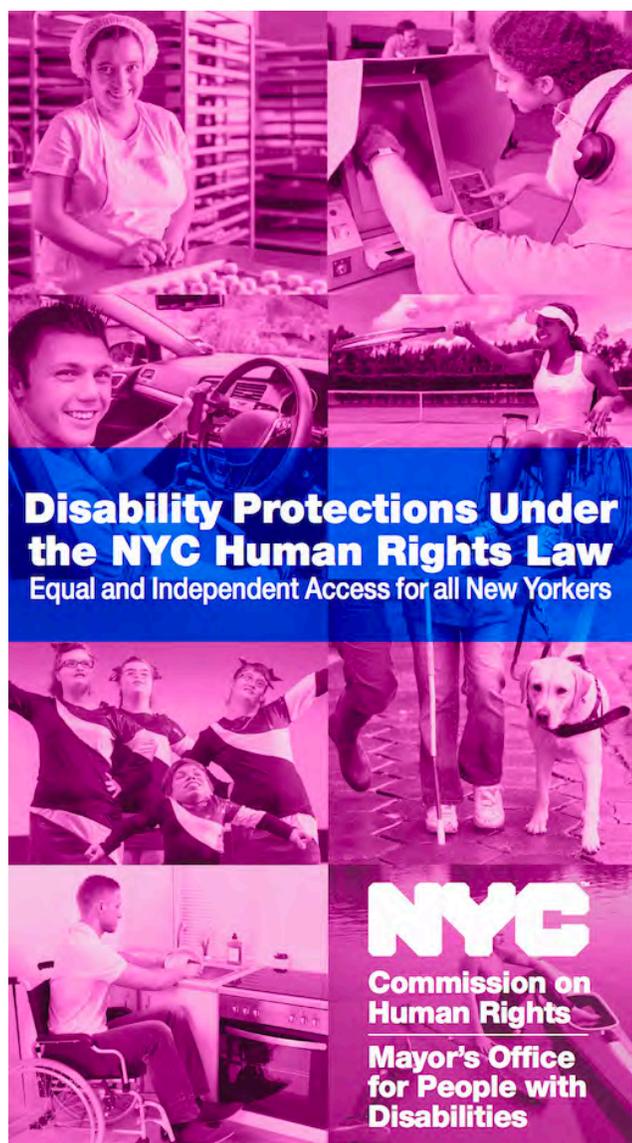


Education, Enforcement and Outreach



Most of the work described in this report has an education, outreach or training component. This section describes education, enforcement and outreach activities not touched on in other sections of this report.

City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR)



The New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) enforces the New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL), educates the

public about their rights and responsibilities under the NYCHRL and encourages positive community relations. The NYCHRL prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations and is one of the most comprehensive antidiscrimination laws in the country. CCHR meets this mission through its law enforcement, community outreach, media and policy efforts. CCHR's Law Enforcement Bureau (LEB) impartially investigates alleged violations of the law, negotiates and resolves matters, provides early intervention in cases of ongoing discrimination, retaliation, or the need for accommodations and, where appropriate, tries cases before an independent administrative law judge. Mediation services are offered through the independent Office of Mediation and Conflict Resolution. CCHR's Community Relations Bureau (CRB) educates the public on their rights by building deep community relationships through roundtable discussions, workshops, trainings and other gatherings. The CRB also engages with the small business community, including chambers of commerce, merchant associations and business improvement districts to facilitate compliance with the NYCHRL. CCHR's Office of the Chair is the agency's policy, legislative, and adjudicatory hub. It convenes public hearings, publishes reports on key issues of the day, implements new legal protections, publishes legal guidance, issues final Decisions and Orders, and oversees media campaigns. If someone is facing discrimination on the basis of their disability or is not being given a reasonable accommodation in the workplace, in housing, or in public accommodations, they can contact CCHR by going to nyc.gov/humanrights, calling 311, or calling the CCHR directly at (212) 416-0197.

CCHR has, since the early days of the pandemic, considered actual or perceived infection with COVID-19 to be protected as a disability under the NYC Human Rights Law. Beginning in March 2020, CCHR published guidance on the intersection between COVID-19 and the NYC Human Rights Law, which is continually updated as the situation in New York City, and our understanding of the virus, evolves. The guidance provides information on one's rights with respect to COVID-19 as a disability in the workplace, in housing, and in public accommodations. People cannot be discriminated against because of their actual or perceived infection with COVID-19 or an underlying disability that places them at greater risk of complication from infection with COVID-19. In addition, covered employers, housing providers, and providers of public accommodations have an ongoing duty to provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, including those related to COVID-19. In April 2020, CCHR launched a COVID-19 rapid response team comprised of Law Enforcement and Community Relations staff that quickly tracks and responds to harassment and discrimination incidents connected to the pandemic, in many cases even without having to file a complaint.

In June 2018, and revised in April 2019, CCHR issued guidance on discrimination against people with disabilities, including clarification on discriminatory policies and practices, an explanation of how to engage in a cooperative dialogue as required under the NYC Human Rights Law, best practices on how to assess and provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities, and examples of reasonable accommodations. The Guidance explains that the NYC Human Rights Law defines

“disability discrimination” more broadly than does state or federal disability law and explains how the Commission interprets and enforces the law.

The basic principles of the prohibition against disability discrimination are:

- Housing providers, employers, and business owners must offer modifications or accommodations in their policies and/or physical space to allow a person with a disability to have equal use and rights.
- It is generally the responsibility of housing providers, employers, and business owners to cover the cost of the modification or accommodation.
- Even if a housing provider, employer, or business owner already complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the NYC Human Rights Law still requires them to provide modifications or accommodations that address an individual's needs, unless it would cause an “undue hardship,” as defined under the law.
- Service animals are trained to perform specific tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. Service animals must be permitted to accompany their owners into any area where the public is permitted and are not required to wear a vest, be specially licensed, or otherwise visibly indicate their status as service animals.
- Housing providers, employers, and business owners must engage in a cooperative dialogue, a good faith and individualized conversation with the person with a disability to help determine what type of modification or accommodation can be provided for the person with the disability.

Access to accommodations in housing can be a life-or-death situation for people with disabilities in New York City, which is why the CCHR intervenes early when it learns of alleged acts of discrimination based on disability. CCHR's Project Equal Access, which provides pre-complaint intervention advocacy, works with housing providers and places of public accommodation to make facilities accessible to people with disabilities, including identifying ramps that should be installed, necessary bathroom renovations, and identifying other areas that need to be made accessible through the installation of electronic doors, grab bars and handrails, and training staff on how to accommodate people with disabilities. While some of this work became more challenging due to the pandemic, in Fiscal Year 2021, CCHR achieved 46 reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities without having to file a complaint.

CCHR's Community Relations Bureau educates the public on protections against discrimination based on disability status by conducting workshops and hosting various programs. The Community Relations Bureau has a dedicated training on the NYC Human Rights Law and protections for people with disabilities, and incorporates issues on disability rights into general workshops and presentations on human rights law protections. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Relations Bureau hosted dozens of Know Your Rights programs which discussed protections for those who have, or are perceived to have, COVID-19.

CCHR's Law Enforcement Bureau investigates claims of discrimination brought by members of the public and can obtain accommodations, monetary damages, and other relief for people who have experienced

discrimination. In Fiscal Year 2020, disability discrimination claims represented the most common claim filed at the CCHR, comprising 20.53% of all claims, totaling 242 claims filed (149 disability discrimination claims in employment; 61 in housing; 31 in public accommodations; and 1 in discriminatory harassment). Disability discrimination claims were also the most common claims where the Commission was able to successfully intervene without having to file a complaint, making up almost 60% of all successful intervention claims, totaling 153 claims (8 disability discrimination claims in employment; 115 in housing; and 30 in public accommodations).

CCHR has the authority to assess fines and obtain monetary damages for those aggrieved by violations of the NYC Human Rights Law. Additionally, CCHR may negotiate additional remedies including reasonable accommodations, rehiring, policy change, training, and modifications for accessibility.

Under Commissioner Malalis's leadership, CCHR has settled disability discrimination claims resulting in more than two million dollars in damages, as well as policy changes, postings, trainings, and monitoring.

Most cases filed at CCHR resolve prior to the issuance of a final Decision and Order. Since 2015, CCHR has issued seven final Decisions and Orders in disability discrimination cases, which are described in Appendix G to this report. The full Decisions and Orders are available on CCHR's website, nyc.gov/HumanRights.

Disability Etiquette and Awareness Trainings

MOPD regularly hosts in-person and virtual interactive disability etiquette and awareness trainings for City agencies and partners, particularly businesses that are participating in our **NYC: ATWORK** program. In 2021, MOPD worked with DCAS to develop an online training that will be required for all City employees, starting in 2022.

Community Meetings

Early in the pandemic, MOPD established a weekly Zoom call with the community to provide updates on the latest COVID-19 news and programs. Many City agencies have participated on a weekly basis including the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Emergency Management (EM), and the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS); while other agencies have participated periodically to report relevant information. In August 2020, the calls went to every other week and in October 2020 they became monthly meetings. As of December 2021, there are still COVID-related updates on every call, but as the City moves towards recovery, the topics are now more far-ranging.

At the beginning, weekly participation was over 100 callers, and our monthly calls continue to attract 50-80 people per week. We will continue holding these virtual meetings even after the pandemic ends.

Deaf Town Halls

MOPD hosts regular “Deaf Town Halls”, which are currently being held virtually due to the pandemic. These events are opportunities for MOPD to inform the Deaf community about City programs and services and to receive feedback from the Deaf community regarding what improvements they would like to see in New York City regarding accessibility. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, these events drew as many as 100 participants. Topics of Deaf Town Halls in 2021 have included: COVID-19 vaccines, including accessibility of vaccine locations; voting; financial empowerment and **NYC: ATWORK**; clear masks; COVID-related housing and rental assistance; food banks; Text to 911 updates and NextGen 911 goals; and events for Deaf Awareness Month.

Participation in Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE)

In April 2020, the City launched the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE) in response to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. The Taskforce brings together City Agency leaders, primarily of color, who work in interdisciplinary teams to monitor the COVID-19 response in affected neighborhoods and identify key disparities through analysis and dialogue with affected communities. In 2021, MOPD continued to participate on the taskforce’s Vaccine Equity Subcommittee.

More than two-thirds of people with disabilities in New York City are people of color. (*See Appendix B*). We look forward to continuing to participate in initiatives that explicitly recognize and address the intersection of racial and disability justice.

Empowered Cities

Launched in 2019 with support from Citi, Empowered Cities is a collaboration co-chaired by the Offices of Disability of Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco and spearheaded by the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. It is an outgrowth of NYC's successful financial empowerment pilot, EmpoweredNYC described earlier in this report. (see *EmpoweredNYC section*)

Empowered Cities is building a national network of municipal disability leaders to:

- Identify strategies to increase access to financial empowerment, employment, and affordable and accessible housing for people with disabilities
- Address long-standing equity issues magnified by the COVID-19 crisis, including accessibility, healthcare, food insecurity, and the digital divide

Empowered Cities has already mobilized the leaders of Empowered Cities to:

- Meet the immediate needs of the disability community related to the COVID-19 crisis, including by providing accessible public health information, food and personal protective equipment.
- Launch the Empowered Cities website - a hub and resource for this network and municipal disability leaders across the country. <https://empowercities.com>
- Present at the US Conference of Mayor's webinar highlighting the peer-to-peer collaboration to support and uplift individuals with disabilities within Empowered Cities.

- Expand and strengthen the Empowered Cities network of municipal leadership with conversations and interest of joining from the cities of Houston, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Detroit, Portland OR, with additional cities eager to join.
- Meet with the United States Department of Labor to discuss the following topics: Unemployment and Poverty, Medicaid and SSDI Benefits, Remote Work/Virtual Employment, Apprenticeships, Sub-minimum Wage Waivers.
- Participate in multiple webinars and presentations on Covid-19 response and recovery and employment with USDOL Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED).

Other Exchanges of Ideas and Best Practices

MOPD often participates in local, regional and national conferences concerning people with disabilities and is called upon by other jurisdictions for advice and guidance. For example, in May 2021, we partnered with AHRC and others to co-host a virtual symposium entitled *A Call to Action: Eliminating Compounded Disparities for People with Disabilities in a Year of COVID-19*, which explored the intersectionality of disability, race, ethnicity, culture, gender identities, and the political determinants of health.

Additionally, MOPD's work with the Mayor's Office of International Affairs and the Division for Social Policy and Development at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has helped us globally disseminate the information provided in



Images from the 2021 Sapolin Awards.

AccessibleNYC. Government officials and disability rights advocates from countries and cities around the world continue to visit and reach out to MOPD to discuss the programs outlined in the report, including Germany, Australia, France, New Zealand, Israel, Singapore, Canada, Italy, and United Arab Emirates. Many countries and international organizations have invited Commissioner Calise to attend conferences in their countries to discuss access in New York City and the AccessibleNYC report including Germany, France, Canada, and Israel.

Finally, as part of the Disability Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development Network, NYC MOPD is one of the original signatories of a global compact called Cities for All. It is a declaration that aligns key commitments to accessibility, universal design and inclusion within the Sustainable Development Goals, The New Urban Agenda, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the WHO's Age-Friendly Cities Framework. Information about Cities for All is available at www.citiesforall.org.

Recognizing and Celebrating People with Disabilities and Allies

MOPD regularly holds events that recognize and celebrate people with disabilities and their allies. For example, every July to mark the anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, MOPD hosts the **Sapolin Accessibility Awards**, presented to organizations that are actively working toward inclusion and wellness for people with disabilities in the areas of public accommodation, public service, communication and technology, and employment. In addition, every year we award one person with the **Frieda Zames Advocacy Award** for outstanding work within the disability community. Other events that MOPD hosted or co-hosted in 2021 included:

- The agency's first **Disability Justice Poetry Slam** at the Museum of the City of New York.



- The inaugural **MOPD Night at the Movies** in honor of Deaf Awareness Month, which featured a screening of the film CODA starring Marlee Matlin and other deaf actors.

For many years, MOPD played a major role in the planning and organization of New York

City's annual **Disability Pride Parade**. MOPD has now passed that baton to the not-for-profit DisabilityPrideNYC, but will continue to assist behind the scenes. Due to the pandemic, the 2020 and 2021 parades were canceled, but we look forward to a fantastic parade in 2022!



Screening of CODA at Brooklyn Bridge Park, September 2021. Photo Credit: Sara Rawshanara

Conclusion

The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities is committed to working on the programs, services, and projects outlined in this report and will continue to review new proposals for the City to implement. As AccessibleNYC is now required to be produced annually under Mayoral Executive Order No. 73 of 2021, next year MOPD will again report on the progress of the programs outlined here as well as new initiatives.

For more information, please visit us online at [NYC.gov/mopd](https://nyc.gov/mopd).



MOPD staff at the Hometown Heroes Ticker Tape Parade, July 7, 2021.

Appendices



Appendix A: Mayor's Executive Order No. 73 (July 27, 2021)



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10007

EXECUTIVE ORDER 73

July 27, 2021

CELEBRATING AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AND MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, July 2021 marks the 31st anniversary of the passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act;

WHEREAS, nearly one million New Yorkers self-identity as people with disabilities and an estimated six to nine million tourists with disabilities visit the City each year;

WHEREAS, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities has been a vital City agency for decades and was established by Executive Order 81 of 1973 and renamed via Executive Order 17 of 1990; and

WHEREAS, respect for the disability community and their civil rights is a critical priority to ensure that New York is the fairest and most inclusive big city in America;

NOW, THEREFORE, by the power vested in me as the Mayor of the City of New York, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Disability Pride Month. July shall be celebrated as Disability Pride Month annually throughout the City of New York in recognition of the anniversary of the passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, the rights and accomplishments of the disability community, and the vast contributions made by people with disabilities to the City.

§ 2. Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. There shall continue to be a Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) within the office of the Mayor. The MOPD shall be headed by a Commissioner who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Mayor. Under the leadership of the Commissioner, MOPD shall have the power and duty to:

1. In conjunction with all other City agencies and offices, develop and coordinate City policies relating to all people with disabilities, and oversee the implementation of such policies;
2. Act as an advocate for the rights and needs of all people with disabilities;

3. Facilitate communication among people with disabilities, the Mayor, public and private agencies, and the community at large;
4. Propose City, State, and Federal legislation to address the needs of people with disabilities;
5. Monitor the City's compliance with laws concerning the human and civil rights of people with disabilities and work with the appropriate City and non-City entities to rectify issues;
6. Coordinate and analyze existing City programs for people with disabilities, develop and promote additional programs, and act as the liaison between the City and public and private agencies, organizations and individuals in the development of programs affecting people with disabilities;
7. Oversee the Disability Service Facilitator (DSF) program and coordinate with the DSFs of all City agencies to ensure that they fulfill their responsibilities as set forth in Local Law 27 of 2016;
8. Coordinate with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication, and all other City agencies and offices, on making City websites and digital products accessible to individuals with disabilities;
9. With the cooperation of all other City agencies and offices, develop strategies to increase employment of people with disabilities within City government, and work with outside stakeholders to encourage increased employment of people with disabilities by non-City entities;
10. Produce an annual public AccessibleNYC report on the City's current and planned initiatives, programs, and services for people with disabilities;
11. With the cooperation of the Department of City Planning and all other City agencies and offices, compile demographic and statistical data regarding the number of people with disabilities within New York City;
12. In coordination with the Mayor's Office of International Affairs and all other City agencies and offices, promote the City's interests in relation to people with disabilities with public and private stakeholders around the world;
13. Assist people with disabilities through the provision of information and referral services, and by facilitating the resolution of complaints concerning services and the administrative actions of City agencies and others; and
14. Locate and utilize funding sources, both public and private, in order to assist in the implementation of the provisions of this Order.

§ 3. Revocation of Prior Order. Executive Order 17 of 1990 is hereby repealed.

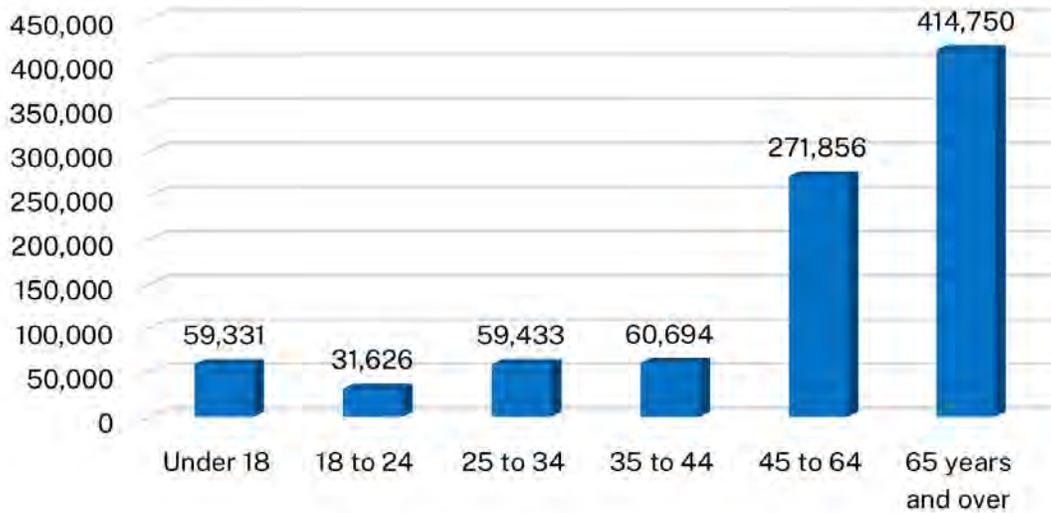
§ 4. Effective Date: This Order shall take effect immediately.



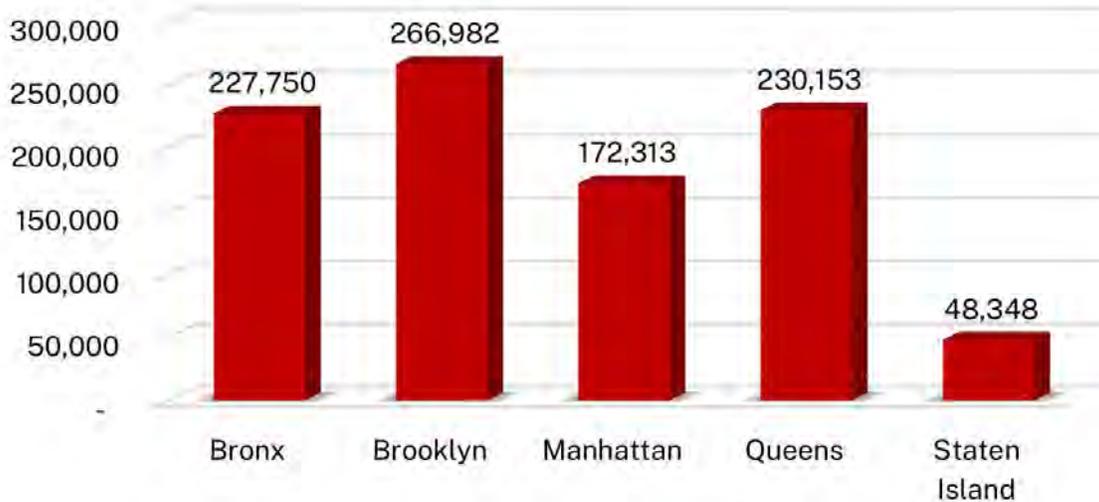
Bill de Blasio,
MAYOR

Appendix B: Statistics Regarding People with Disabilities in NYC

People with Disabilities in NYC by Age



People with Disabilities in NYC by Borough

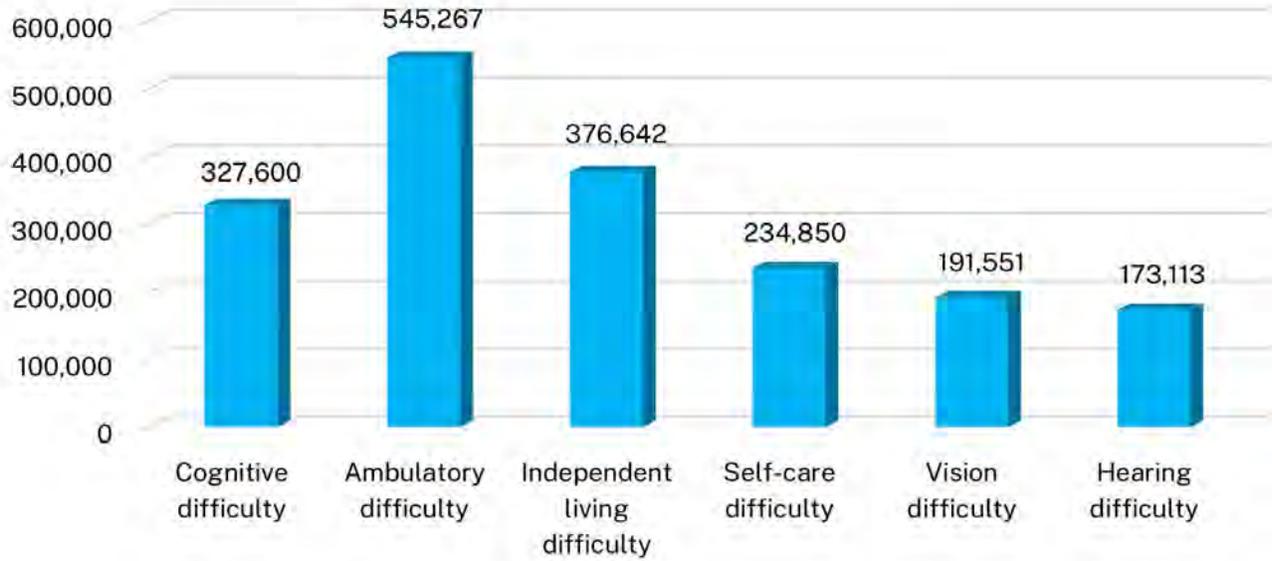


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey – Public Use Microdata File

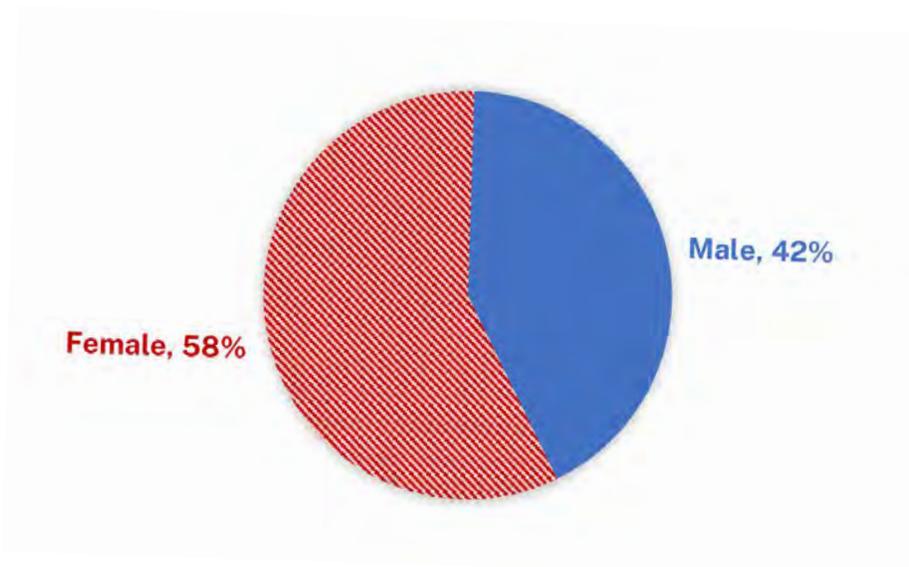
Extracted by MOPD from file provided by the Population Division of New York City Department of City Planning

For more detailed statistics, please visit www.nyc.gov/disabilities

People with Disabilities in NYC by Disability Type

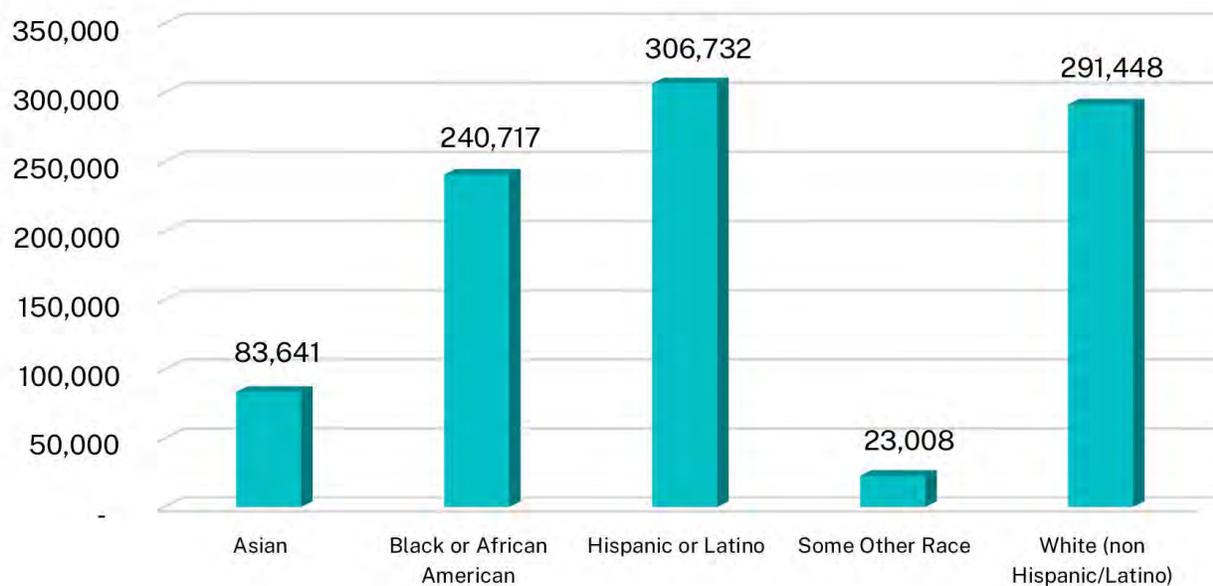


Gender at Birth of People with Disabilities in NYC

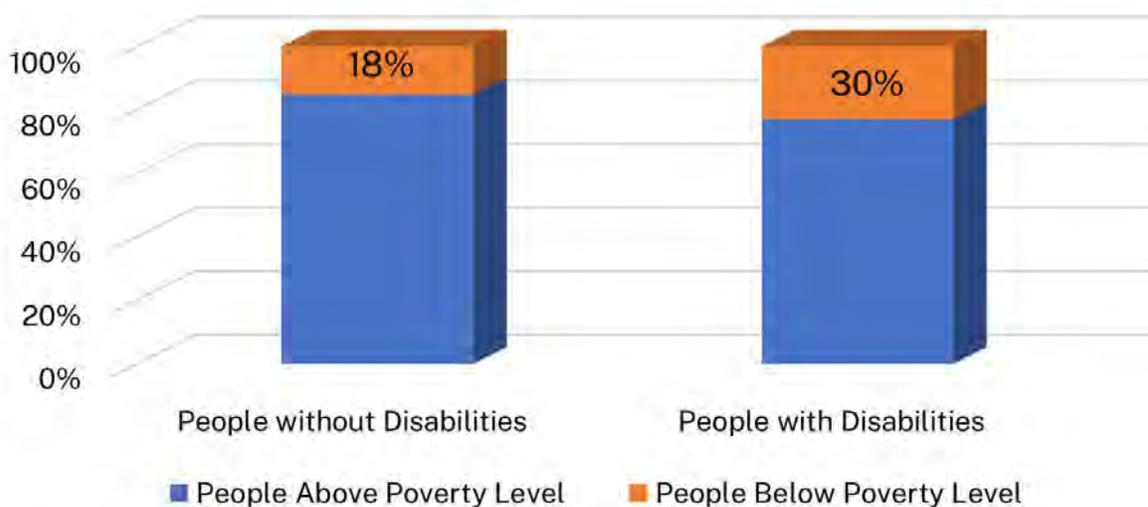


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey – Public Use Microdata File
 Extracted by MOPD from file provided by the Population Division of New York City Department of City Planning
 For more detailed statistics, please visit www.nyc.gov/disabilities

People with Disabilities in NYC by Race



People With and Without Disabilities Below Poverty



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey – Public Use Microdata File

Extracted by MOPD from file provided by the Population Division of New York City Department of City Planning

For more detailed statistics, please visit www.nyc.gov/disabilities

Appendix C: MOPD Inclusive Terminology Guide



**Mayor's Office for
People with Disabilities**

Disability-Inclusive Terminology Guide

Our words matter. How we choose to write and speak about people has the power to help or hinder efforts to create inclusive experiences and a culture respectful of all.

Many commonly used words hold negative connotations that the speaker may not even be aware of. Becoming familiar with these words — and their appropriate alternatives — is important for everyone, but especially those creating content for a public as diverse as New York City.

Everyone has their preferred terms and it is not possible to capture everyone's preferred terms in written language. However, it is important to understand why these words matter and which to avoid when writing about people with disabilities.

Below, you will find a list of words or phrases to avoid, what to use instead, and a short rationale for each.

Offensive Terms and Alternatives

Offensive Term	Appropriate Term	Comments
Handicapped	Accessible or Disabled	Use the appropriate alternatives such as “accessible bathrooms”, “accessible parking spots”, “disabled athletes”, or “athletes with disabilities”.
Retarded / Mentally Retarded	Cognitive, Intellectual, or Developmental Disabilities	Replace the slang word “retarded” with “ridiculous” or something not offensive.
Stupid/idiot/ moron/dumb	Say “that makes no sense” or “that’s ridiculous”. Avoid using these words as an insult.	Did you know that the terms idiot and moron were medical terms and in 1927 the Supreme Court ruled that it was legal to sterilize people who were declared idiots or morons?

Offensive Term	Appropriate Term	Comments
Visually Impaired/ Hearing Impaired	Blind/Low Vision; Deaf/Hard of Hearing	“Impaired” has a negative connotation.
Deaf-mute / Deaf and dumb	Deaf	These terms assume that Deaf people do not vocalize.
Cripple or Gimp	Person with a disability, or people with physical disabilities	Using “cripple” to refer to a person, or as a metaphor, is offensive.
Midget	Little Person, or Dwarf	“Midget” comes from a time when Little People were a source of entertainment. “Dwarf” is a medically acceptable term. “Little Person” is socially acceptable.
Lame	Not cool, dull, awkward, uninteresting, disappointing. Say “poor excuse” instead of “lame excuse”.	Very few people know that the slang word “lame” refers to someone with limited mobility, especially someone who cannot walk. Try saying what you really mean.
Spaz / spastic	Say “got overly excited” instead of “spazzed out”. Say “that was silly of me” instead of “I’m such a spaz”.	The term “spaz” comes from “spastic”, which is a medical term used to refer to spasms, especially spasms related to high muscle tone, which can be a characteristic of someone with cerebral palsy.
Special	Person with disabilities	This term is patronizing. Everyone can have needs, people with disabilities’ needs are not special. Use “students with disabilities” instead of “special ed students”.
Differently Abled	Use person-first or identity-first language (see below chart).	Disabled people are proud of their identity and do not want to be referred to with euphemisms. See the table below.

Offensive Term	Appropriate Term	Comments
Crazy	Wild, out of this world, bizarre, outrageous	Considered an offensive term because it stigmatizes people with mental health disabilities.
OCD / ADHD	Use an alternative term that describes the person’s behavior unless you are actually referring to a medical diagnosis. For example, instead of describing someone as OCD, you could say that they are “hyper-focused”, “picky” or “hard to please”.	OCD and ADHD are medical terms. It can lead to misunderstanding to use these terms in other contexts and may be hurtful to those who have the diagnosis.
Wheelchair Bound	Person with physical disabilities, person who uses a wheelchair, person with an ambulatory disability	People are not bound to their wheelchairs. They transfer out of them all the time.
Victim (of)/ Sufferer/ Suffers from	Use person-first or identity-first language (see below chart).	These terms assume that the person’s experience of disability is necessarily a negative or deficit, and invoke pity, which may promote a feeling of superiority.
Invalid	Person with a disability	Another degrading term. Gives the impression of invalidation.
Disability metaphors such as blind-sided, fall on deaf ears, paralyzed	Unexpected, ambivalent, frozen	It can be harmful for a disabled person to hear their identity used as a metaphor. for ignorance. Say what you mean instead of using expressions like blind-sided.

Person-First and Identity-First Language

Person-first language puts the person first such as “person with a disability”. Identity-first language places the disability first such as “disabled person”. Whenever it’s possible, ask each person how they identify and remember their preference. When that is not possible, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities recommends using “person-first language”.

Below is a list of disability types and their corresponding person-first and identity-first terminologies.

Disability Type	Person-First Language	Identity-First Language
Mobility	Person with mobility disabilities, person with physical disabilities. Person who uses a wheelchair	Disabled person, wheelchair user
Hearing	Person who is Deaf, person who is hard of hearing	Deaf person
Vision	Person who is blind, person who has low vision	Blind person
Mental Health	Person who is living with or experiencing a mental health disability or mental illness. Or, specify the illness or condition: Person who is experiencing psychosis, or person who is living with bipolar disorder.	Identity-first language is usually not favored in this context.
Cognitive/ Intellectual/ Developmental	Person with cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disabilities	Identity-first language is usually not favored in this context.
Neurodiversity	Person who is neurodivergent. Or refer to specific diagnosis: Person with autism or with autism spectrum disorder.	Neurodivergent individual, ASD individual

Additional Resources for Language

[Disability Language Style Guide](#)

[Disability Writing and Journalism Guidelines](#)

[Conscious Style Guide](#)

Appendix D: Accessible Social Media Guide



Mayor's Office for
People with Disabilities

Accessible Social Media Guide

What is accessibility?

Accessibility refers to the design of an experience that can be enjoyed by all people. Something that is not accessible disregards a select population of people that are left out of the experience entirely. Typically, this is thought of in terms of physical spaces (ramps, elevators, etc.) but this also applies to digital ones as well.

Digital accessibility

People with disabilities use assistive technology to interact with computers, tablets and smartphones. A person from the blind community can use a **screen reader** to have the contents of the screen read out loud to them. In order for the screen reader to operate properly, the digital material they are attempting to interact with needs to be prepared in a certain way. If a social media profile does not have content that is digitally accessible, then the screen reader user is less likely to get anything meaningful from the social media account and posts.

How can someone make social media accessible?

Include a written description for any images or photos.



Images add flair to social media posts, making them more attractive, attention grabbing and simpler to understand.

Without an image description a person using a screenreader cannot extract any meaning from the content.

Image Description: Photo of large colorful fireworks lighting up the sky above downtown Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty.

Writing Image Descriptions

Ask the following questions and combine your answers for the description.



Where is the photo being taken?
The Verrazano Bridge

Who is in the photo?
Thousands of runners

What are they doing?
Running in the NYC Marathon

Why is this photo being taken?
To show the spectacle of the Marathon, specifically how the bridge is closed.

Image Description: Photo of the Verrazano Bridge closed down to vehicles as thousands of NYC Marathon Runners run across it in the same direction.

Adding Image Descriptions to Social Media Posts



Descriptions are added with **alt-text**, invisible text written onto the image. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram all support alt-text but they are added in different ways.

 **Twitter** - First, enable alt-text within your account settings under "accessibility." Then, before tweeting an image you will receive a prompt that says "add description."

 **Facebook** - When posting an image, tap "edit photo" and then "add alt-text."

 **Instagram** - When posting, go to "advanced settings" and then "Write alt-text."

Questions? Call MOPD at 311 or email MOPD_DSF@cityhall.nyc.gov

Appendix E: List of Accessible Subway Stations as of November 2021

For a current list of accessible subway stations, please visit:

new.mta.info/accessibility/stations

Accessible Key Stations List

Count	Station	Line
1	125 Street	4, 5, 6
2	175 Street	A
3	42 Street-Port Authority	A, C, E
4	Pelham Bay Park	6
5	Great Kills	SIR
6	51 Street	6
7	Grand Central-42 Street	4, 5, 6
8	World Trade Center	E
9	Simpson Street	2, 5
10	Coney Island-Stillwell Ave	D, F, N, Q
11	34 Street-Herald Square	N, Q, R, W
12	34 Street-Herald Square	B, D, F, M
13	Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall	4, 5, 6
14	3 Avenue-149 Street	2, 5
15	Borough Hall	2, 3
16	Dongan Hills	SIR
17	Flatbush Avenue	2, 5
18	Church Avenue	2, 5
19	34 Street-Penn Station	1, 2, 3
20	61 Street-Woodside	7
21	Flushing-Main Street	7
22	14 St-Union Square	N, Q, R, W
23	Inwood-207 Street	A
24	66 Street-Lincoln Center	1

Count	Station	Line
25	14 Street	A, C, E
26	8 Avenue	L
27	Franklin Avenue	C
28	Franklin Avenue	S
29	161 Street-Yankee Stadium	4
30	161 Street-Yankee Stadium	B, D
31	Grand Central-42 Street	7
32	Grand Central-42 Street	S
33	34 Street-Penn Station	A, C, E
34	Flushing Avenue	J, M
35	Prospect Park	B, Q, S
36	72 Street	1, 2, 3
37	Atlantic Av/Barclays Ctr	D, N, R
38	Atlantic Av/Barclays Ctr	B, Q
39	Atlantic Av/Barclays Ctr	2, 3, 4, 5
40	Howard Beach	A
41	Marcy Avenue	J, M, Z
42	Lexington Avenue/53 St	E, M
43	Utica Avenue	3, 4
44	DeKalb Avenue	B, Q, R
45	West 4 Street	A, B, C, D, E, F, M
46	Jamaica-179 Street	F
47	Times Square-42 Street	N, Q, R, W
48	74 Street-Broadway	7
49	Jackson Hts-Roosevelt Ave	E, F, M, R
50	125 Street	A, B, C, D
51	Euclid Avenue	A, C
52	Fordham Road	4

Count	Station	Line
53	Queens Plaza	E, M, R
54	Times Square-42 Street	1, 2, 3
55	Times Square-42 Street	7
56	231 Street	1
57	Junction Boulevard	7
58	168 Street	A, C
59	Pelham Parkway	2, 5
60	233 Street	2, 5
61	Bowling Green	4, 5
62	Myrtle Avenue	L
63	Wyckoff Avenue	M
64	135 Street	2, 3
65	Church Avenue	F, G
66	St. George	SIR
67	Kew Gardens-Union Tpke	E, F
68	South Ferry	1
69	47-50 Streets-Rock Center	B, D, F, M
70	Chambers Street	1, 2, 3
71	59 Street-Columbus Circle	A, B, C, D
72	59 Street-Columbus Circle	1
73	Jay Street-MetroTech	A, C, F
74	96 Street	1, 2, 3
75	Kings Highway	B, Q
76	Far Rockaway-Mott Avenue	A
77	East 180 Street	2, 5
78	Bay Parkway	D
79	Bleecker Street	6
80	B'way-Lafayette Street	B, D, F, M

Count	Station	Line
81	Forest Hills-71 Avenue	E, F, M, R
82	Utica Avenue	A, C
83	Hunts Point Avenue	6
84	Cortlandt Street	R, W
85	Kingsbridge Road	B, D
86	23 Street	6
87	Lefferts Boulevard	A
88	Times Square-42 Street	S
89	57 Street	N, Q, R, W
90	59 Street	N, R
91	86 Street	R
92	Gun Hill Road	5
93	Chambers Street	J, Z
94	Greenpoint Avenue	G
95	Bedford Avenue	L
96	Rockaway Parkway	L
97	Astoria Boulevard	N, Q
98	Brooklyn Museum	2, 3
99	Bedford Park Blvd	B, D

Accessible Non Key Stations

Count	Station	Line	Remarks
1	50th Street	C, E	Southbound Only
2	Lexington Ave/63rd St.	F, Q	
3	Roosevelt Island	F	
4	21 Street-Queensbridge	F	
5	Jamaica/Van Wyck	E	

Count	Station	Line	Remarks
6	Jamaica Center	E, J, Z	
7	Sutphin Blvd.	E, J, Z	
8	Middle Village-Metropolitan Ave	M	
9	Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St	A, S	
10	Park Place	S	
11	Borough Hall	4, 5	Northbound Only
12	Tottenville	SIR	
13	Canal Street	6	
14	49th Street	N, R, W	Northbound Only
15	14 St-Union Square	L	
16	Gun Hill Road	2, 5	
17	Jay Street-MetroTech	R	
18	Avenue H	Q	
19	Fulton Street	4, 5	
20	Court Square	7	
21	Dyckman St	1	Southbound Only
22	Fulton Street	A, C	
23	Fulton Street	J, Z	
24	Fulton Street	2, 3	
25	34 St-Hudson Yards	7	
26	Aqueduct Racetrack	A	
27	Wilson Av	L	Northbound Only
28	72 St	Q	
29	86 St	Q	
30	96 St	Q	

Count	Station	Line	Remarks
31	Arthur Kill	SIR	
32	WTC Cortlandt	1	
33	28 St	6	Southbound Only
34	62 St - New Utrecht Ave	D	
35	62 St - New Utrecht Ave	N	
36	8 Avenue	N	Northbound Only
37	1 Ave	L	
38	86 St	4, 5, 6	Northbound Local Only
39	Court Sq	E, M	Manhattan-Bound Only

Appendix F: NYCT ADA Station Projects from the MTA 2020-2024 Capital Plan

Projects for which contracts have been awarded as of December 21, 2021 are marked with an asterisk (*).

Manhattan

Station	Line
Harlem-148 St	3
110 St	6
181 St	A *
7 Av	B, D, E
Lexington Av-59 St	N, R, W
59 St	4, 5, 6
Essex St	J, M, Z
Delancey St	F
42 St-Bryant Park	B,D, F, M /5 Av 7
6 Av	L *
14 St	F, M *
14 St	1, 2, 3 *
96 St	B, C
81 St-Museum of Natural History	B, C
Dyckman St	1 *
168 St	1
137 St	1
86 St	4, 5, 6

Brooklyn

Station	Line
18 Av	D
Jefferson St	L
Nostrand Av	A, C
Broadway Junction	A, C
Broadway Junction	J, Z
Broadway Junction	L
Lorimer St	L *
Metropolitan Av	G *
36 St	D, N, R
Church Av	B, Q
Avenue H	Q * (Complete)
Sheepshead Bay	B, Q
Kings Hwy	N
Norwood Av	J, Z
Myrtle Av	J, M, Z
Grand St	L *
Hoyt-Schermerhorn Sts	A, C, G
7 Av	F, G *
Avenue I	F
Kings Hwy	F
Neptune Av	F
Classon Av	G
Junius St	3
New Lots Av	3
Borough Hall	4, 5

The Bronx

Station	Line
Wakefield-241 St	2
Kingsbridge Rd	4
167 St	B, D
Burnside Av	4
3 Av-138 St	6
Van Cortlandt Park-242 St	1
Tremont Av	B, D *
Parkchester	6
E 149 St	6 *
Brook Av	6
Mosholu Pkwy	4

Queens

Station	Line
Court Sq-23 St	E, M
Northern Blvd	M, R
33 St-Rawson St	7
46 St-Bliss Av	7
Parsons Blvd	F
Beach 67 St	A *
Briarwood	E, F
Broadway	N, W
Woodhaven Blvd	M, R
Steinway St	M, R
Rockaway Blvd	A

Staten Island Railway

Station

Clifton

New Dorp *

Huguenot

Appendix G: CCHR Decisions and Orders in Disability Discrimination Cases – 2015-2021

CCHR Decisions and Orders in Disability Discrimination Cases Since 2015

Stamm v. E&E Bagels, Inc. (April 20, 2016): A restaurant was found to have denied services to a patron because she was accompanied by a service dog which, under the NYCHRL, constitutes an unlawful failure to accommodate a disability in a place of public accommodation. The Commission awarded \$7,000 in emotional distress damages to the Complainant and imposed a civil penalty of \$7,000. In addition, the Commission required the respondents to post a notice of rights under the NYCHRL and undergo training on the law.

Blue v. Jovic (May 26, 2017): Respondent landlord refused for three years to provide a bathtub that a tenant with disabilities could safely use. The landlord also engaged in a campaign of harassment against the child with disabilities and her mother by making false complaints to the police and fire department and by filing an unwarranted eviction proceeding against them. Respondent was held liable for disability discrimination and failing to provide a reasonable accommodation. The Commission awarded \$45,000 in emotional distress damages to the child with disabilities, \$50,000 to the child's mother, and imposed a \$60,000 penalty, which could be discounted to \$10,000 if the respondent made the ordered reasonable accommodation promptly. Respondent was also ordered to undergo training and to post a notice of rights at the building.

Commission on Human Rights v. A Nanny on the Net LLC (February 10, 2017): An online employment agency and its owner were held liable for discriminating against NYC job applicants based on disability and criminal history. Respondents targeted and solicited job applicants in NYC and required them to answer discriminatory questions related to their disabilities (such as requiring that applicants explain their "physical/mental restrictions or impairments or congenital defects" and indicate whether they would consent to a physical exam or an HIV test as a condition of employment) and state whether they have ever been arrested, on the online application form. Considering Respondents' small size, limited amount of business within NYC, and the fact that their violations had not been willful and they had already taken steps remedy their violations, the Commission did not impose a civil penalty. Instead, Respondents were required to educate themselves about the Commission's Legal Enforcement Guidance on the Fair Chance Act and post notices of rights on their website.

Commission on Human Rights ex rel. Thomas Gibson v. N.Y.C. Fried Chicken Corp. (September 28, 2018): Respondents were held liable for disability discrimination and failure to provide a reasonable accommodation, after telling Complainant that he was not welcome in their restaurant due to the presence of his seeing eye dog. Among other things, the Commission awarded Complainant \$13,000 in emotional distress damages, imposed a civil penalty of \$18,000, and ordered Respondents to modify their policies and undergo training on the NYCHRL.

Commission on Human Rights ex rel. Carol T. v. Mutual Apartments, (April 12, 2018): Respondents were held liable for failure to accommodate Complainants by refusing to permit them to reside with their emotional support dog. Among other things, the

Commission awarded \$40,000 in emotional distress damages to the mother complainant and \$30,000 in emotional distress damages to the daughter, imposed a civil penalty of \$55,000, and ordered Respondents to modify their policies, undergo training on the NYCHRL, and post several notices of rights.

Commission on Human Rights ex rel. Rodriguez v. A Plus Worldwide Limo, Inc., and John Leonardi, (March 7, 2019): The Commission found Respondents liable for repeatedly denying the complainant Access-A-Ride car services because of the presence of his service dog. The Commission ordered that Respondents pay Complainant \$13,000 in emotional distress damages, undergo training on the NYCHRL, and perform six months of community service or, in the alternative, pay a fine of \$15,000.

Commission on Human Rights ex rel. Goldstein v. Limón Jungle; Commission on Human Rights v. Intermezzo (September 25, 2019): In these consolidated cases, the Commission found that Respondents, who are sophisticated restaurant operators with nine locations in N.Y.C., repeatedly discriminated against customers with service animals. The Commission ordered that Respondents pay Complainant \$14,000 in emotional distress damages, undergo training on the NYCHRL, post a notice of rights, undergo two years of monitoring by the Law Enforcement Bureau, and pay a fine of \$50,000.

Mayor Bill de Blasio

J. Phillip Thompson

Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives

Victor Calise

Commissioner

Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

