

# ADA Liaison News

Greetings from the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs



CITY OF  
TUCSON

## Welcome to our newest OEOP member Will Rivera, Sr. EO Specialist

Will started on December 30, 2019. He has over 25 years of experience in business development and management primarily in the staffing industry. He has also served on several local boards, spent 7 years fundraising for the UA, is a Marine Corps veteran, and holds a BA in Psychology. Will is a native of New Jersey but calls Arizona home having lived here for over 30 years.



OEOP has received 18 ADA accessibility inquiries/complaints YTD vs. 10 for first quarter 2019. Not all of them are in our jurisdiction. As you might expect, they range in complexity and demonstrate the ongoing need for education and awareness of the challenges experienced by the disabled community. Some examples:

Tucson Rodeo - a blind attendee with a service dog was asked to pay for an extra ticket for their service dog by the gate attendant.

A Local Inn - a wheelchair guest couldn't sign their registration form because the pen lanyard couldn't reach them across a cluttered counter, the armoire blocked wheelchair navigation, the bathroom sink was not to ADA code, door hinges were not set properly, and their van could not be accessed because another guest blocked their handicap access area in the parking lot.

Music Hall - a guest attending an event at the music hall could not find appropriate parking complaining there were not enough disabled parking slots even though they arrived an hour before the event. In this case it was determined the TCC was in compliance with ADA parking regulations. Plans are to expand handicap accessible parking once their new garage is built.

March—June

The Commission on Disability Issues (CODI) meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month. Check the City's website for confirmation of meetings and location. Liaisons are often requested to attend and provide departmental information. Next meeting scheduled for April 15 at 3:30pm.

### Things to remember...

**PLEASE** make sure all customer service personnel and anyone having contact with the public know they should immediately notify you or your replacement when someone asks for a disability accommodation or expresses an ADA concern. Also notify OEOP!

**ALWAYS** begin by reviewing A.D. 2.05-10 when determining whether a call falls under that directive, and also review it when we forward a complaint to you. These are our guidelines to follow to ensure City departments are in compliance with the law.



# News Flash!

## The Americans with Disabilities Act is turning 30. Here's what you should know.

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/478658-the-americans-with-disabilities-act-is-turning>

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and President George H.W. Bush signed it into law. Since then, public places have become more accessible to people using wheelchairs. The law also bans discrimination in other areas of life like employment and education.

What has happened since then?

There have been 20 Supreme Court rulings related to the ADA, four of which narrowed the definition of disability. One of the rulings stated that institutional isolation of people with disabilities was also a form of discrimination.

The ADA Amendments Act was signed in 2008 to “counteract the Supreme Court’s narrow interpretation of disability and provide broad protection from discrimination.” It included language that states learning, reading, thinking and concentrating fall under life activities and mandates schools provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who meet the requirements but may not qualify for services.

Transportation regulations were added and updated since the 90s. New regulations closed some of the gaps, including the most recent 2015 amendment that states transportation entities need to make reasonable modifications or accommodations to ensure people with disabilities have access.

What more needs to be done?

Although access overall has improved for people with disabilities, the employment rate is low. The national employment rate for people with disabilities hovers around 36 or 37 percent. Compare that to the employment rate of people without disabilities in 2018 at 77.2 percent.

More businesses are starting to conduct inclusion training, and more are creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities. But it may take some time before it becomes commonplace. That’s why some advocacy groups are focusing on creating infrastructure and opportunities to support and integrate people with disabilities into the workforce.

In addition, “invisible” disabilities, like chronic illnesses, still encounter discrimination and judgement in public spheres. We still have work to do in terms of awareness and inclusion on this front.

### Parks and Rec in the News!

Intermountain Centers and the Tucson Parks and Recreation Department are planning to build a new autism-friendly park to be located downtown adjacent to Intermountain’s new Integrated Care Center for Children located at 401 N. Bonita Ave. Features include a separate sensory play space for younger children (2-5) and older kids (5-12) as well as five themed zones that have sensory playscapes and equipment. Visit the website <http://bit.ly/sensoryPark> to view the concept plans and provide comments. Public input is needed and valued.

### Stay Tuned...

OEOP has been invited to attend a meeting with the Democratic Disability Caucus in April. We look forward to sharing with you any insights related to their efforts on behalf of the disabled community.