

Alachua County Advisory Boards Annual Report

Date: June 16, 2025

Board/Committee Name: Citizens Disability Advisory Committee

Members: Christie King (Chair), Elise Caton, Erin Field, Jenna Gonzalez, Niusha Kazemi, Jaclyn Trenteseaux

Staff Support: Chandra Hampton, Melissa Patterson, Jill Weinsier, Bob Swain, Deputy County Attorney

Board Liaison: Jacqueline Chung, Equal Opportunity Manager

Brief History of Committee: The Citizens Disability Advisory Committee was established in 1984 to assist the County in implementing its responsibilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Members are appointed by the County Manager. The committee assists the Equal Opportunity Manager/ADA Coordinator in reviewing County programs, services, and facilities to ensure equal opportunity/equal access for persons with disabilities.

Requests for Reasonable Accommodations under the ADA

The Equal Opportunity Office (EO) receives accommodation requests from citizens, job applicants and employees with disabilities. Requests for reasonable accommodations are handled on a case-by-case basis, with consideration given to the individual's preferred auxiliary aid or service.

Examples of accommodations or assistance provided:

- Sign-Language Interpreters.
- Closed Captioning of televised meetings.
- Communicating with TDD/TTY Users through the 711 Florida Relay Service.
- Providing documents in Braille or large font.
- Extended time for test-taking and assessments during the hiring process for individuals with learning disabilities.
- Modifying job duties/how work is performed to accommodate employees with disabilities or medical restrictions.

Staff Training

Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (Title I: Employment & Title II: State and Local Government) for County, Library District and CareerSource employees, was provided during the 2-day Equal Opportunity Conference held on June 12-13, 2024. (See flyer attached). Over 600 employees participated in the training and learned about their employee rights under the ADA, as well as their responsibilities as government employees to help ensure that public programs and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities. County employees are also required to complete mandatory online compliance training on Equal Opportunity topics, including the ADA, to supplement the periodic in-person training.

Public Education/Outreach

July is Disability Awareness Month, observing the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act which was signed on July 26, 1990. The Citizens Disability Advisory Committee works with the Equal Opportunity Office to help promote public awareness of disability rights during the month of July. The County Communications Office runs a series of public service announcements on disability rights on Channel 12 throughout the month. The primary community event is the annual Disability Awareness Expo co-sponsored by the County and the City of Gainesville. The 2024 Expo showcased over 40 diverse public agencies and private businesses displaying their products, services and resources for people with disabilities. The expo is well received by attendees, with some stating that they learned about valuable resources in the community.

The public is invited to attend the 2025 Expo scheduled on July 23, 2025. See flyer attached.

Update on Workplan for FY25:

- Conduct walk-through reviews of newly constructed or renovated County facilities to identify any potential access concerns. Participate in reviews of ongoing ADA upgrades and provide feedback on concerns relevant to accessibility.
 - The Parks Department met with the Committee in January 2025 to give an update on the accessibility improvements and ongoing ADA projects in County parks. See copy of report attached.
- Assist the Equal Opportunity Office in conducting an ADA Self-Assessment of County programs and services.
 - A Consultant was hired to conduct the ADA Assessment. 19 departmental focus groups were held to review the survey responses. The CDAC members participated in the Codes Enforcement session which was held during their regular meeting in May 2025. The consultant will complete the evaluation of County programs and report on the findings by September 30, 2025.
- Plan public education/outreach events.

- The annual Disability Awareness Expo will be held on July 23, 2025.
- The committee proposed a new initiative to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Disability Employment Awareness in October 2025. The inaugural Disability-Friendly Employer Award will be open for submission from June 23, 2025 through August 12, 2025. Entries will be evaluated by the committee and winners recognized at a County Commission Meeting in October 2025. See flyer attached.