



**A SELF-HELP GUIDE TO ADA AWARENESS
AND ACTION PLANNING**

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Since the passage of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), communities around the country have examined strategies and methods that may facilitate the efforts of people with disabilities to exercise their rights under this important civil rights legislation. They seek ways to increase public awareness of the ADA, enforce this law, assess the needs of Americans with disabilities, and create agendas for community change. This brief self-help guide is intended to provide guidance on how to facilitate social planning and capacity building among people with disabilities. This model was developed based on the experience of the staff members of the Hispanic ADA Project at the Institute on Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago, in partnership with the National Center for Latinos with Disabilities (formerly known as Illinois Fiesta Educativa). In addition, several of the steps outlined in this guide were adapted from the Handbook of the Disabled Citizens' Concerns Report Method (Fawcett, Suarez, Johnson, Whang-Ramos, Seekins, & Bradford, 1987). This method has been pilot-tested and validated with several groups of people with disabilities across the country (Suarez-Balcazar, Bradford, & Fawcett, 1988). We recommend that this needs assessment and action planning initiative be done in collaboration between a local advocacy or support group of people with disabilities, a university unit, and/or a community agency.

Like the public in general, people with disabilities and their families may not be fully aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its titles. Therefore, the strategies outlined in this guide are intended to promote ADA awareness and consumer involvement. Our goals are to assist citizens with disabilities and/or family members in identifying specific areas of concern and need, discussing dimensions of the issues and alternative solutions, and forming planning committees to take action on selected issues. These goals are accomplished through organizing

focus groups, community forums, and action groups. The ultimate purpose is to increase ADA awareness and to reduce community barriers therefore enhancing the quality of life of citizens with disabilities.

This “how to” guide consists of three main phases: (1) the ADA needs assessment, (2) the public forum in which people with disabilities have the opportunity to discuss barriers and solutions to such barriers; finally, (3) action committees. This guide is intended for practitioners, community leaders, and agency staff. Ideally, community partnerships between agencies, self-advocacy groups and community organizations are formed to develop initiatives to promote ADA awareness and community improvement.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is the most comprehensive civil rights law for people with disabilities to date. Passage of the act was a response to political pressure from persons with disabilities and their supporters, who sought full inclusion of those with disabilities into mainstream society. Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the ADA is expected to have a significant impact on the working and living environments of citizens with disabilities. The law seeks to prohibit employer discrimination, remove transportation and communication barriers, and improve access to public goods and services (Johnson & Balwin, 1993). The law covers the following titles: Title I employment, Title II government services, Title III accessibility, Title IV communication, and Title V others.

Many individuals are required to comply with the ADA, including employers, state and local governments policy makers, business owners, and providers of goods and services. Under

the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), they may have to make reasonable accommodations, to remove architectural, communications, and accessibility barriers; modify rules, policies, and procedures; and provide auxiliary aids and services. Success of the ADA is highly dependent on the actions of those individuals. However, individuals with disabilities, their families, and supporters might help by becoming aware of the ADA and of ways to enhance their rights; by taking actions towards improving their communities and by advocating for compliance with the law. This guide is intended to assist people with disabilities in that effort. Currently, ten disability and business technical assistance centers are available around the country to provide free consultation to business and organizations on how to comply with the ADA. These centers can be contacted through the following telephone number: 1-800-949- 4232.

I. The Americans with Disabilities Act Needs Assessment Phase

The needs assessment phase involves the development of an ADA survey addressing the titles specified by the act. The authors of this guide developed a sample survey as part of a demonstration project with the Latino community in Chicago. We recommend using this survey and adapting it to fit the culture of the group (see appendix A). The needs assessment phase also involves administering the survey in small groups, providing information about the ADA, and conducting focus group discussions to give individuals an opportunity to talk about their personal experiences. After all small groups have been completed, the information is summarized and prepared for presentation at a local public forum.

Common Questions about the process:

1. How many small groups should an agency run?

It depends on the number of individuals they want to survey. Each group should be no more than 15 people. In the first application of the project with the Latino community we conducted 5 groups.

2. Should we run the small group survey administration and the focus group together?

We do recommend doing both together. Most individuals know little about the ADA and after the survey they are more eager to talk.

1. Developing an ADA survey

The needs assessment phase starts with the development of an ADA survey. The proposed ADA survey we developed covers primarily titles I and III of the act: employment and access to goods and services. In addition, some questions regarding telecommunications, transportation, and ADA awareness have been added. The survey consists of two parts: a 25-item questionnaire addressing ADA issues and a demographic page. Items on the survey were developed based on the information provided under the ADA titles, the values of people with disabilities such as dignity and accessibility, and feedback from consumers. We recommend that groups adapt the proposed survey to their particular needs. The ADA survey is also available in Spanish (see Appendix B). While the titles and areas covered may remain, the survey in general needs to be tailored to the particular consumer group. To pilot test the final copy of the survey, you may want to consider a small group of about four to six individuals who might represent different genders, educational backgrounds, and disability types.

Recommendations for survey adaptation

- * have two or three persons with disabilities check each item for accuracy
- * have persons with disabilities check the wording of the items
- * have persons with disabilities check completeness of survey items in terms of areas covered
- * persons with disabilities can add survey items
- * persons with disabilities can delete survey items
- * have service providers, community leaders, and other partners review the ADA survey
- * Make sure every survey item addresses only one question or area
- * Check survey items for clarity and simplicity
- * Incorporate all changes into a new revised survey



The survey has two types of questions for each item: one question asks about the importance of the particular issue; the other, about the individual's satisfaction with the community's effort to address the issue. An example might read:

| | How important is It to you that... | | | | How satisfied are you that ... | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|------------------|---|
| | Very Important | 3 | Not Important | 1 | Very Satisfied | 3 | Not Satisfied | 1 |
| Local businesses are making a special effort to recruit and hire people with disabilities | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Curb cuts for persons using wheelchairs are present on all street corners in your community | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

By asking consumers to rate the importance and satisfaction with each item, potential strengths and problems can be identified. Those items that are rated high in importance and at the same time low in satisfaction present potential problems or concerns. Those items rated high in importance and high in satisfaction are potential strengths.

The demographic page goes at the end of the survey and it should include questions that will provide a descriptive profile of those individuals who answered the survey. Typical questions on a demographic page include: gender, age, ethnicity, yearly income, disability type, employment status, educational background and services received. See appendix A (ADA survey) for a sample of the demographic page.

2. Needs assessment survey administration and ADA awareness

There are different strategies one could use to administer the ADA needs assessment survey, such as mailing or face-to-face distribution. However, we believe the survey administration is most usefully thought of as an opportunity to give people with disabilities information about the ADA. We have found that many groups of people with disabilities do not know details about the ADA. This was the case with the first demonstration project in the Latino community. Therefore, we recommend using small group administration along with a focus group as a survey distribution strategy.

We suggest contacting several support groups in the community that serve people with disabilities. In the Chicago study together with the partner agency (The National Center for Latinos with Disabilities), we contacted other agencies and support groups (e.g., El Valor--a service agency for Latinos with disabilities--and LUNES--a parent support group) to sponsor a group administration of the survey along with a focus group.

Small group administration is highly recommended because of the one-to-one assistance that can be provided to people with visual, auditory, motor, and linguistic difficulties. We recommend three parts to the small group survey administration: First, the ADA is introduced and briefly described. This explanation is very brief, in order not to influence the survey responses. Second, individuals complete the survey. Completing the survey takes about 30 to 40 minutes. During the small group administration participants may complete the survey on their own or the facilitator may read the survey items out loud and ask participants to write their answers but not to say them out loud. In the Latino project, most groups had the facilitator read the survey items. The final part includes a focus group in which participants share their

experiences regarding the areas covered by the ADA and the facilitator takes questions about the ADA. The whole process takes about two hours.

Preliminary activities:



- * Contact local agencies that serve citizens with disabilities and their families in your community.
- * Contact support groups for citizens with disabilities and their families in your community
 - * Explain the needs assessment and action planning process to agency staff and/or support group leader
 - * Request their collaboration and invite them to sponsor a small group administration
 - * Schedule a group administration
- * Contact individuals with disabilities (using telephone numbers and mailing address) and invite them to participate in small group discussions.
- * Call consumers one or two nights before to remind them of the meeting

Recommendations for small group ADA survey administration:

During the meeting:

- * introduce yourself and the sponsors (5 min.)
- * have participants introduce themselves (5 min.)
- * introduce briefly the project, explain ADA and its titles (10 minutes)
- * administer the ADA survey (40 minutes)
- * read every item out loud (if requested by participants)
- * provide refreshments
- * provide a 10 minute break
- * continue with the focus group (50 minutes)



We recommend using the following brief description of ADA when conducting the small group administration.

Describing ADA to Participants

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990. The ADA is intended to protect the civic rights of individuals with disabilities. It is designed to remove barriers in the areas of **employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, and telecommunications.**

According to the ADA, job applicants and employees with disabilities are to be given equal access to employment opportunities and services.

Regarding state and local services, according to the law, people with disabilities should be given equal access to state and local government services such as access to the court house or post office.

According to the ADA, businesses and places of public accommodation (e.g., stores, restaurants) should provide equal access to goods and services to people with disabilities.

Finally, according to the ADA, citizens with disabilities should have access to telecommunications. Overall, citizens are responsible for enforcing the ADA.

The _____ (the name of your agency) is interested in learning what obstacles or barriers you have experienced in pursuing the areas listed above.

3. Conducting Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus groups is to provide people with disabilities and their families an opportunity to become aware of the ADA and discuss dimensions of the titles and how the law has affected them personally. The focus groups could be organized separate from the small group administration of the survey or in conjunction with the survey administration. We recommend doing both together because based on our experience, many individuals with disabilities and their family members are not aware of the ADA. After the survey administration, they usually have a number of questions and personal concerns they want to share.

If both are done together, then in order not to bias people's responses to the survey, the survey should be done first, after a brief explanation of ADA and titles covered by it. When all participants have completed the survey, then the focus group can begin.

The focus group should be co-organized with the agency or support group. Support services such as transportation, child care, and sign-language interpreters should be provided if requested. Ideally, a small group administration of the ADA survey should not exceed 15 people. We usually invited between 25 to 30 people and 12 to 15 came to the meetings. Have at least one more person to help you with the group administration. Each community organization can sponsor more than one group with different people.



Recommendations for conducting focus groups:

- * explain the purpose of the session
- * take questions about the ADA
- * ask participants to express their concerns and experiences as they relate to ADA titles and areas
- * have someone take notes of what participants say
- * allow everyone in the group the opportunity to talk
- * at the end of the focus group discussion, ask consumers if they would like to be part of planning committees. Take consumers' names and telephone numbers.
- * distribute printed materials about ADA
- * tell participants about the planned public forum. Give them flyers with date, time, purpose and place.

Resources needed for group administration:

- * an accessible meeting place
- * sufficient copies of the survey (in Spanish and English)
- * pencils
- * a note pad
- * brochures about ADA
- * at least two people per meeting to provide one to one assistance
- * refreshments

Based on our experience after participants have had an opportunity to go over the ADA survey, they have questions and issues to discuss and share. They are basically eager to talk about it! The following are some questions one could ask during this informal focus group.

Recommended Open-ended Questions for Focus Groups:

1. What are some supports that you have experienced in the area of employment? Examples include accessibility of the work place, employee benefits, and job opportunities.
2. What are some barriers that you have experienced in the area of employment? Examples include lack of accessibility of the work place and discrimination when applying for a job.

Ask the same questions 1 and 2 for every ADA title including: state and local government services (e.g., curb cuts in your community, access to government buildings, schools etc.), public accommodations (e.g. access to stores, libraries, etc.) and communications (e.g., access to telecommunication devices).

During the group discussion prompt participants to talk about their personal experiences as they relate to the above issues. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to express their opinion.

Remember to:

- * Take notes
- * Meetings could be taped recorded if necessary (optional) and if approved by participants
- * Plan for a two-hour meeting (including the survey administration and informal focus group).
- * Allow everyone in the group to talk
- * At the end of the meeting ask individuals if they would like to be part of an action group. Take individuals names and telephone numbers
- * Announce the public forum in which all individuals with



disabilities and their families are invited to participate in the brainstorming of solutions, hand out flyers and call participants later to remind them of the public forum.

4. Summarizing ADA survey data

To compute the results of the survey, computer data-base and data analysis programs such as SPPSS and ACCESS would allow you to analyze the results of the needs assessment. For the analysis of the data, we recommend first totaling the total number of responses for the importance and satisfaction scales per item. Second, you can compute the average percentage of importance and the average percentage of satisfaction for each item by using the following formula:

$$\text{* \% Importance/ Satisfaction} = \frac{4n(4) + 3n(3) + 2n(2) + 1n(1)}{N(4)} \times 100$$



* The formula used to compute percentage satisfaction/importance was developed by Don Bushell Jr. based on his work with School Clients Annual Local Evaluation.

where $4n(4)$ = total number of people who responded 4 to the item multiplied by 4;

$3n(3)$ = total number of people who responded 3 to the item multiplied by 3;

$2n(2)$ = total number of people who responded 2 to the item multiplied by 2; and

$1n(1)$ = total number of people who responded 1 to the item multiplied by 1

N = total number of people responding to the item.

You should repeat these procedures for both satisfaction and importance scores for each item. Importance and satisfaction ratings are converted into percentage ratings. Items are ranked by average percentage of importance and average percentage of satisfaction. Problem items are likely to have low satisfaction ratings and high importance ratings. For example, for the question

the job place should be accessible to employees with disabilities, a community responded an average of 3.7 for importance and 2 for satisfaction. These averages are converted into a percentage (where 100% is the highest possible importance/satisfaction and where 0% is lowest). Strength or positive items are likely to have a high importance rating and a high satisfaction rating. When preparing your list of top problems and community strengths (top six) you should list both the importance and satisfaction scores for the item.

Remember that problems are those survey items that participants rated high in importance and low in satisfaction. Strengths on the other hand, are those items that were rated high in importance and high in satisfaction. We also recommend developing a summary of the dimensions of the issues discussed in the focus groups. We recommend reporting a list of support systems/facilitators and a list of barriers for each title. Finally, the demographic information is analyzed in order to provide a profile of those who completed the ADA survey. Tabulate the frequencies for each demographic questions. These could be done using a database such as SPSS or ACCESS.

The information obtained through the needs assessment process is a critical step in planning efforts designed to remove barriers and enhance support systems in the compliance of the ADA. The needs assessment data may be used to set agendas and action planning to improve local communities' capacity to facilitate the compliance with the ADA.

Once the data is summarized you need to put together a brief report highlighting the results of the ADA needs assessment. In the report, list the top concerns and strengths as identified them by people with disabilities and their families. Brief reports of the results should be distributed to all participating agencies, advocacy and support groups.



II. The Public Forum

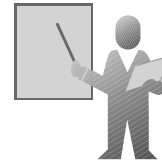
The purpose of the public forum is two-fold. First, to inform people with disabilities and their families of the ADA issues and concerns and to increase their awareness about the ADA. Second, to provide participants an opportunity to brainstorm solutions to the identified issues and become part of action committees that will work on the community issues of most concern to those attending the forum. The following are the steps involved in this phase.

1. Organizing a Community forum

The community forum or “Town meeting” is an opportunity to conduct a problem-solving session in which consumers and family members discuss the results of the ADA survey. In this well-publicized 3-hour meeting, facilitators or advocates lead a discussion of identified community issues. Forum participants interpret the results, discuss dimensions of the issues and possible solutions and join an action committee devoted to the issue they would like to work on. Ideally, an action committee for each ADA title is formed. During the public forum, participants are invited to join a committee. Committee members discuss the dimensions of the issues and potential solutions and use this information for subsequent disability planning.

In the Latino project a public forum was held to present preliminary results from the needs assessment surveys to approximately 50 citizens with disabilities and their families. After

the results were presented, participants were asked to form small groups based on ADA titles and brain storm possible solutions. Participants were then recruited to form action groups which now meet monthly. Approximately six to eight people comprise each committee, which include Latinos with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, and project staff. Members discuss issues, propose solutions, and plan specific actions to be taken.



Recommendations for planning the public forum:

- * Find a meeting room that is fully accessible, like a local public library or the sponsoring agency
- * Reserve the room for at least 3 hours
- * Schedule a meeting time and day that is appropriate for consumers and their families to attend (e.g., Saturday morning)
- * Arrange for interpreter services, child care, and transportation if needed
- * Prepare a public forum announcement
- * Distribute the announcement to consumers on the mailing lists gathered through the sponsoring agencies and support groups and all those who participated in the small groups and focus groups
- * Post announcements on agencies bulletin boards,
- * Contact the local radio station to announce the town meeting
- * Provide refreshments

Resources needed for the public forum

- * one overhead projector or flip chart with summaries of the data
- * several blank transparencies and transparency pens and/or felt tip markers and newsprint to record suggestions

- * copies of a summary of the results to distribute to participants
- * copies of the survey
- * refreshments and lunch (e.g., coffee, pizza)
- * big chart paper and markers for each ADA committee to write on
- * extra pencils
- * extra human resources to assist the small groups (about 3). Assistants should be fluent in the languages most comfortably spoken by forum participants.
- * name tags



2. Conduct the Public Forum

The public forum is an opportunity for the community to come together and work towards a common goal. A well advertised public forum should bring at least 30 people with disabilities and their families or supporters. If this project is done in collaboration with other agencies or university units, the facilitators should represent the different parties or agencies involved. We recommend inviting participants in the focus groups to help plan and assist in the public forum. The following are a series of steps that we recommend in running the public forum:

Overall Steps in Leading the Public Forum:

Opening and Introductions (about 20 minutes)

1. Call the group to order
2. Introduce yourself
3. Introduce your collaborators
4. Ask participants to introduce themselves
5. Describe the purpose of the meeting



7. Explain briefly ADA and its titles
8. Describe briefly the steps already accomplished

Present summary of preliminary results (about 20 minutes)

9. Describe a summary of the data and preliminary results. Provide a brief summary of the issues discuss during the focus groups. Present the summary by ADA titles
10. Ask for general comments or questions
11. Take a break (about 10 minutes)

Form small groups (about 40 minutes)

12. Ask members to select one area they will like to work on in smaller group. We recommend dividing into groups by ADA titles: employment, government services, public accommodations, and telecommunications.
13. Ask for volunteers in facilitating each group, have people from your group seat one at each group, have also someone taking notes at each group. Provide each group a flip-chart size paper and markers to write down a summary of their discussion
14. Describe the group discussion rules. We recommend asking groups to spend about 15-20 minutes discussing the dimensions of the issues and about 15-20 minutes discussing the possible alternative solutions
15. Questions to consider during the discussion include:
 - a) Why do you think this is a problem?
 - b) How are you as a consumer or family member personally affected by the problem?

c) What can we do to address this problem?

d) What have other communities or disability groups done to solve similar problems?

Groups report to the larger group (about 60 minutes)

16. Call the smaller groups to form a large group

17. Have each group present a summary of its discussion

18. Use the transparencies or flip chart to write each summary

19. List solutions to problems by title

20. Do a brief summary of solutions presented

21. Ask for additional comments or concerns

Wrap-up (about 20 minutes)

22. To wrap-up ask participants to sign up under one title if they would like to work on regular basis in one of the ADA committees. Request that those interested write down their names and phone numbers. Remind them that someone from the team will call them to invite them to a planning meeting of the action committees.

23. Explain briefly the role of the action committees.

committees will meet regularly (once a month)

committees will use the minutes from the public forum as a basis for planning actions to address issues

Invite participants to select a meeting day and place for action committees. We recommend setting a time and place for the first meeting of each action committee.

24. Ask for volunteers to call participants and remind them of the action

committee meetings.

25. State appreciation for their help in the process, state the value of the discussion. Thank everyone for coming.



What about serving FOOD!

Serving food is very important. Particularly, in a three hour meeting. There are several options you want to consider. We recommend one of the following two: Having coffee and doughnuts to start and a refreshment break before the small groups; or having coffee and drinks to start and food (e.g., pizza or chips and munchies) at the end of the forum.

We have tried both and they seem to work well.

III. Action Committees

The purpose of the action committees is to facilitate the organizing of community members around issues of concern on which they may want to take action (see Appendix C for a copy of a summary of problems and suggestions discussed at a public forum in the Latino Project) We recommend having four action committees, one per major ADA title. We also recommend finding a common meeting place and time for all committees so people can report to each other what they are working on and receive feedback. For the first demonstration of the ADA project with the Latino community most members selected Saturdays in the morning as the best possible day and time for most interested individuals. Families are invited with their children and child care services are provided. Ideally, each action committee should have about five to eight group members.



1. Form Action Committees

The action groups is one way in which people who share a common concern can work together toward a specific goal designed to improve the overall quality of life for people with disabilities and their families. The action committees should be formed mostly of community members and leaders. We recommend having one member of the project team seat in each committee. This person should not necessarily be the facilitator but may provide support. Action group members should meet as often as necessary. However, we recommend a meeting at least once a month. We have found that group members like to have one common meeting a month. These common meetings help communicate to each other their accomplishment and recruit assistance from other group members when needed. In fact, we had two groups working together towards the common goal of implementing an ADA media campaign.

Examples of actions planned and taken by action group members have included: A media campaign in which Spanish language public service announcements promoting the ADA were obtained from the New York Disability and Technical Assistance Center. These announcements have been aired on three local Hispanic television stations. In addition, a speakers' bureau was organized for the purpose of providing education about the ADA to community groups. A group of six individuals with disabilities received intensive training about the ADA. They are currently conducting educational training sessions for local chambers of commerce and other groups.

Preliminary Activities:

- * send reminders about the meeting
- * call individuals by phone
- * arrange for child care
- * reserve an accessible meeting room (e.g., public library, or local recreation center)
- * by refreshments



Recommendations for conducting action committees

- * call the group to order
- * introduce yourself
- * have individuals introduce themselves
- * Briefly review the purpose of the action committees and progress to date of the ADA project
- * Provide a brief description of the ADA titles
- * Provide a brief summary of ideas discussed at the public forum
- * Ask participants to break in small groups by title areas
- * Make sure each group has a facilitator
- * Have each group use the minutes of the public forum (distribute summaries) as a basis for their discussions
- * Ask each group to discuss the issues and potential solutions
- * Give small groups about 45 minutes to work
- * Distribute copies of the Action Planning Logs
Ask members to complete one per group. Have the facilitator write down the issue discussed, the actions planned, who is responsible for taking action, and when the action is to be taken.
- * Once every group is done ask participants to open the large group
- * Ask each group to report a summary of its discussion and to describe any actions planned.
- * Ask for any additional comments or questions

- * Remind participants of the next meeting
- * Remind group facilitator and community leaders to call others and remind them of the next meeting
- * Thank participants for coming

Action committees may decide to meet in between meetings of the larger group. This happens often when the group is working on a specific issue which needs attention immediately and/or more than one group member is needed to take action on an issue. We recommend that each group meets as often as they need to, usually at least once a month in addition to the total group meetings. Make sure each group has a facilitator from the community (not your staff). Facilitating provides potential community leaders an opportunity to enhance their skills, build their capacity, and also prompt other community members to come to the meetings.



2. Monitor Actions

It is important to remind members to keep a record of the actions taken by group members. In every subsequent meeting one of the first things that each group needs to do is to report any actions taken and outcomes resulting from their actions. The facilitator needs to

record this information. See Appendix D for a sample summary of an Action Planning Log.

Recruiting new members for the committees is an important issue to think about. We recommend asking existing members to invite other people with disabilities and their families they might know off. The action committees are open to new members any time. If new members are present during a given meeting, ask them to select a committee they would like to work with.

If committee members are absent, a group member or facilitator should call them, find out what happened to them, and provide them with the information they missed.

Although individuals work in small groups most of the time, everyone should be encouraged to support or assist others in their efforts. Actions and accomplishments by members and groups should be celebrated by all.



Conclusion

This self-help guide is intended to facilitate a community process to increase awareness and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is a capacity building approach that allows consumers and advocates to advance the agenda for people with disabilities in their own communities. Since the enforcement of the ADA rests with the US Department of Justice--a process that has resulted in a tremendous backlog of cases--local initiatives to address and encourage voluntary compliance can become real forces of community change. This process could be considered as an initial step in the process of promoting ADA compliance. Consumers and advocates can file formal complaints with the Department of Justice should this effort fail. We do not believe however, that all disputes have to be settled legally. Voluntary compliance should become the most effective force for community change. The process requires community education and a direct effort to provide accurate information to business owners about their responsibilities under the ADA. The capacity building process also has the beneficial effect of developing the leadership of individuals with disabilities or family members as advocates. In many cases this advocacy process starts by encouraging people with disabilities to come out and become an active part of the community. Such an attempt often reveals the types of barriers to community accessibility that are faced by individuals with disabilities. Effective advocacy can eventually open up opportunities for individuals with disabilities to become employed and overcome the bigger barrier of all--the pervasive poverty that bounds so many people with disabilities. Real gains in the income level of people with disabilities will result in increased spending, which in turn will provide an added incentive for businesses to become more accessible.

The empowerment of people with disabilities and their families is not an ideal but a reality when they become actively involved in setting the local disability agenda and in promoting ADA compliance. It does not matter the level of education or amount of previous advocacy experience, with the appropriate support and encouragement, all individuals can contribute to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families.

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Action Planning Activity Log

We recommend completing one Action Planning Activity Log per meeting per group Action Group: _____

Date: _____

| Issue | Actions | By Whom | By When | Resources needed | Date action taken | Follow-up |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| What type of issue is the group addressing? | What type of actions are necessary? | Who will take action? | By what date will the action be done? | What financial, material, and human resources are needed to take action? | When was the action taken? | What happened as a result of the action? |
| | | | | | | |