

ADA Newsletter

July 5, 2007

For general distribution and feedback.

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About Jason...

I was fortunate to learn from Don Brandon as the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) ADA Coordinator for the past two and a half years. DOLWD was able to accomplish a lot through ADA training, architectural reviews, and technical assistance to employees and the public. I helped Don develop our service animal and parking policies, and found him instrumental in developing policy guidance for civil rights compliance in the workforce investment system.

During that time I was also the Equal Opportunity Officer for the Alaska Job Center Network, and had direct oversight and coordination of the Veterans, Reemployment Services, Fidelity Bonding and Tax Credits, and Disability Program Navigator programs. My prior state experience is within central office for DOLWD/Business Partnerships and Employment Security, and includes policy coordinator, Workforce Investment Board support, grants administrator, and training provider certification. When I first came to Juneau after a brief stint as a dog handler for an Iditarod Musher, I worked as an Admin Clerk III in Janet Clarke's office.

Prior to state service I worked in grants with the Indian Health Service, and as the administrative assistant for the Director of Human Resources for the National Institutes of Health.

I hold a B.S.B.A. in International Business and Marketing, and am a third of the way through the MPA program at UAS. I volunteer as Vice-Chair of the Rainforest Recovery Center Advisory Board at Bartlett Hospital and as a Pilot and 1st Lieutenant in the Civil Air Patrol, SE Composite Squadron.

Where's Don?

Don accepted a job as Director for the Disability Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC), Northwest Region. DBTACs are funded through the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research, which serves public, non-profit and private organizations with ADA technical assistance. You may visit the NW [DBTAC website](#) for more details.

Welcome New ADA Coordinators

Welcome to Barbara Thompson with Education and Early Development , Rick Turcic with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and Melanie Lesh with Natural Resources.

What Happened this Month?

While settling in with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, I've been reaching out to various cohorts around the state. I visited some key contacts in Anchorage on disability matters to get a clearer idea of how the Task Force can help promote access and inclusion. I especially appreciated meeting with John Dunham and Kim Mahoney with DOT, Millie Ryan with the Governor's Council, and DoA/DOP staff. I also reviewed architectural accessibility with Job Corps campus in Palmer, the Meadow Creek Correctional Center in Eagle River, among other feedback on ADA upgrades to existing facilities. The office received and responded to two written complaints, four informal/verbal complaints, and about ten accommodation requests. Day-to-day requests for technical assistance run the gamut.

Policy Matters

Administrative Order (AO) 129 ensures Alaska's services, programs, activities and employment are readily accessible and usable for people with disabilities. It also supplements earlier Admin Orders by setting the controlling policies in regard to disability issues. The evolving arena of disability information, technology, court decisions, resources, and partnerships will determine how the Task Force implements compliance with AO 129.

Specifically, the ADA Task Force sets state level policy and approves modifications or revisions. Additional procedure and technical guidance may be developed by the State, department, or division offices consistent with the state policy. Thus far we will be considering adjustment and guidance on the 2006 parking policy, and updates to the 2002 Internet Accessibility policy and 1994 ADA Notice/Tagline policy.

Priorities

Following are some priorities identified during my transition. Please feel free to comment on any of these or any other items in a reply letter to me.

Announcements – We are considering a Press Release for the ADA program in addition to new laminated ADA posters that notify employees and the public of our policy and role. Such notices should occur and be posted in prominent places and in communications pertinent to programs, services, and employment. We are developing an ADA contact list for regular communications and will announce amended publications and websites as necessary.

Training – I plan to travel for outreach and training on nine occasions this year, combined with architectural reviews. A tentative schedule follows this letter. I am working with the Division of Personnel to better streamline our training processes. One aim is to promote awareness of current ADA matters; another is to standardize outreach to disability communities for employment and service matters.

Internet Accessibility – Recently I met with the Internet Services Functional Workgroup, Diane Kiesel, and Jason Caputo regarding updating our policy for Internet Accessibility. Currently many departments are subject to Section 508 standards, and the FWG is reviewing for compliance with at least W3C level one standards. Both are under review, and there are a lot of new tools and practices to improve usability. We hope to reinstitute updated standards, training and monitoring for all State websites and applications. Ideally a web accessibility policy and statement will be posted on main web pages to indicate functionality and alternative communication.

Building Accessibility – The State’s ADA transition plan in 1994 reviewed ADA Building accessibility. We are looking to transfer these data to a new database this year. We are exploring ways to review facilities and will address potential actions during our next meeting.

Ergonomics – Although not exclusively in the ADA realm, many accommodations support and benefit from ergonomics principles. We are looking to assess outcomes in productivity and cost for office ergonomics programs to present to Assistant Labor Commissioner Guy Bell for recommendation. The [Job Accommodation Network](#) provides a good insight into ergonomics. Let us know if any of your divisions or subunits have instituted ergonomics practices. We are interested to hear of any results or suggestions.

Parks Accessibility – We will work with Melaine Lesh in DNR and the Division of Parks and Recreation to update and supplement the Parks Survey performed in 2002.

Remote Internet Access – Given the increase in online service delivery, we are planning to review aspects of remote Internet access and usability for persons with disabilities. This may involve contracting to perform exploratory research to identify barriers and improve access.

Self-Evaluations – This annual report provides a general review of departmental ADA compliance. We can customize it to review more thoroughly. It can also be helpful in setting goals for the upcoming year. We will draft the revised evaluation by mid September and evaluations should be due in early February.

Technical Assistance

- We continue to improve the user-friendliness of the [AK ADA website](#) for various user groups and welcome your feedback. We will post new contacts in the near future.
- We developed and will distribute a new brochure describing ADA technical assistance services. Thanks to Jason C. and Don for their efforts on this.
- We are putting together a **desk reference** for ADA Coordinators. Ideally it will encompass policy, legal background, training materials, and topical items.
- We are mailing a booklet to you entitled “**Reasonable Accommodation: What the Courts Say about the Interactive Process.**”

- **Person First Language:** In January 2006 the State enacted legislation to update the terminology on disability and modernize the language in existing statutes. The [full text of the law](#) provides context. Largely, this updates the nomenclature from “handicap” to “disability” and the use of “person” first, before a disability. This will help recognize the ability of persons with disabilities to contribute to society without minimizing people. The American Psychological Association [style page](#) offers a good treatment with some of the latest terminology.
- The 2007 Midnight Sun **Assistive Technology (AT) Conference** will be held in Anchorage from August 7th to August 9th. This is a great opportunity to catch up on a wide variety of AT and disability topics. There will be more than 60 sessions and 40 exhibitors. See www.akatconf.com for registration and details.
- A recent Training and Employment [Notice](#) from the USDOL speaks to **mobility management** efforts across the US to improve transportation access to employment and human services. Complementary efforts are underway within our state.
- **Web Resource:**
 - The [Law, Health, Policy and Disability Center](#) out of the University of Iowa offers a wealth of current and relevant disability and employment information.

Meeting

Carolyn Stephens and Kathy Rado of DVR will coordinate scheduling of our upcoming quarterly meeting. I propose meeting **August 16th at 10:00 am**, at the Goldbelt Building DVR Conference Room if that works for everyone. You are welcome to propose agenda items in addition to any responses on the above. I look forward to working with you to help modernize accessibility in our programs, services, buildings, facilities and employment.

Jason’s Schedule

This is subject to change. I hope to provide outreach to organizations and more rural areas during each travel period, and to meet ADA contacts, present, train, and survey buildings. Please let me know if you’d like to arrange something in advance.

Aug 6 – 10	Anchorage AT Conference
Aug 23 – Sep 10	Personal Leave
Sep 11 – Sep 17	National EO Conference
October	Fairbanks – Northern
November	Anchorage
December	Ketchikan
January	Kenai
February	Anchorage
March	Kotzebue – Nome
April	TBA
May	Bethel – YK

June	TBA
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