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visit us at: <https://acod.mhl.org/>

## Becoming a Disability ALLY

Disability affects more than 1 in 4 (26%) adults in the United States. Meaningfully supporting those with disabilities involves more than simply encouraging people to participate in activities; it requires making sure that adequate policies, accessible programs, and inclusive practices are in effect in a community or organization. Disability inclusion means understanding the relationship between the way people function, how they can participate in society, and making sure everybody has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires.

**A** **Acknowledge** and respect individual experiences and abilities.

**L** **Learn** about different disability types.

**L** **Leverage** your influence to promote accessibility and inclusion.

**Y** **Yield** the floor to people with disabilities to help identify and eliminate barriers.

CDC

- Promote accessibility in your community
- Offer practical assistance
- Support disability rights and advocacy in your community
- Remember: Public spaces are for everyone.



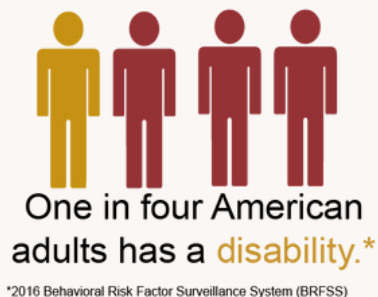
**We all have a role in creating space for everyone in our community.**

# what is disability?

A disability is any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them.

There are many types of disabilities, such as those that affect a person's:

- Vision
- Movement
- Thinking
- Remembering
- Learning
- Communicating
- Hearing
- Mental health
- Social relationships



Although “people with disabilities” sometimes refers to a single population, this is actually a diverse group of people with a wide range of needs. Two people with the same type of disability can be affected in very different ways. Some disabilities may be hidden or not easy to see.

Be an ally.

**Acknowledge** and respect individual experiences and abilities.

**Learn** about different disability types.

**Leverage** your influence to promote accessibility and inclusion.

**Yield** the floor to people with disabilities to help identify and eliminate barriers.



# equity in public spaces

How public space is designed, managed, and operated has the power to influence positive social outcomes. Inclusive, safe, and accessible public space can help tackle inequities that exist within our cities (and towns).

Public spaces are a shared resource and are sometimes the only option for shared social gatherings. When they are intentionally designed to be welcoming to everyone, public spaces can offer opportunities for social, cultural, and economic development. Public space (are places) for people to gather with friends and family, places for personal and political expression, opportunities for rest and relaxation, and centers of community. Functioning public space can create opportunities to forge social connections and strengthen community bonds.

When equitable access is provided to all members of a community irrespective of physical abilities, age, gender, race, ethnicity, income level, or social status, public space promotes inclusion and improves equity.

Open and shared public spaces, and the face-to-face interactions they engender, are the tools for increasing cross-cultural communication. Time spent face-to-face with people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds engenders more trust, generosity, and cooperation than any other sort of interaction

Planning for Equity Policy Guide, 2019

Be a Disability A.L.L.Y. and promote inclusion for all.

\* Acknowledge \* Learn \* Leverage \* Yield \*



Are open spaces designed for all to enjoy?



# Andover Commission on Disability

Is a assembly of 13 appointed community volunteers who, together, seek to improve the lives of those in Andover living with a disability.

- We advise and assist town officials in addressing the needs of people with disabilities & in ensuring compliance with state and federal disability laws.
- We advocate for the full inclusiveness and participation of people with disabilities in the town of Andover.
- We sponsor projects aimed at helping people with disabilities.
- We provide information and referral to people with disabilities.

**Learn more about the Commission!**

**visit us at:**  
<https://acod.mhl.org/>

## **The Path to Accessibility**

Imagine that you need a wheelchair or other mobility aid to access your community in the days before the 1990 American with Disabilities Act.

You need to go to Town Hall to register to vote. These are your concerns before you set out:

Can I get public transportation that will accommodate your wheelchair? Do the sidewalks between your stop and Town Hall have curb cuts and ramps at crossings? If you have private transportation is there adequate handicapped parking? Is that parking designed with enough room for you to exit your vehicle safely? Is the building entrance accessible? Is there a handicapped accessible bathroom in the building and is it large enough to maneuver a wheelchair? Will the elevator accommodate the chair if you have to visit other floors? Is there at least one counter in the office low enough so that you can interact with the staff?

All that for the most basic of citizen rights/responsibilities.

Now try and go to a movie, visit a sporting event, or participate in most other recreational activities...



# A Letter From Ellen Townson

As often happens in life, some of the most meaningful doors open when least expected, and this was exactly what happened in August of 2015 when I answered a phone call from Justin Coppola.

I was new to the Conservation Commission, and he was calling to introduce himself and ask if I'd be willing to help Andover residents with all different abilities to access our conservation land. I thought it would be an easy accomplishment, and immediately came up with a list of ideas, but soon learned there are specific ADA requirements for programming and open space features, and there were multiple challenges to creating equal access.

I think what impacted me the most throughout the whole process was that I had always just assumed everyone was enjoying our fabulous open space in some way or another- I had no idea there were too many barriers to count! And so began my advocacy work, which eventually led me to becoming the official Conservation liaison to the Andover Commission on Disability. It's been an incredible journey- of taking classes, holding site walks and educating the community on regulations and barriers. The best part has been sharing information between both boards, and seeing how increased communication brings accessibility, community connection and progress.

This past March, I moved on from my role on the Conservation Commission and into an elected role on the Select Board, and although I miss my conservation liaison role very much, I know residents will be in great hands with Commissioner Ruby Brown. It's been a privilege to serve as a board liaison and to foster interaction and perspective between boards. In my new role on the Select Board, I look forward to continuing this important work and building additional understanding across a broader perspective. I'm always available to connect about accessibility and ADA ideas, and can be reached at [ellen.townson@andoverma.us](mailto:ellen.townson@andoverma.us).



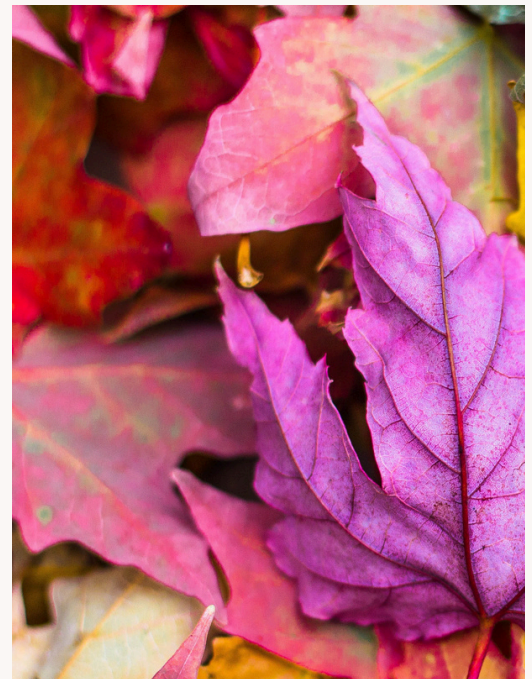
Words can help give meaning to situations, or people, that are foreign to our usual thoughts, or comfort zone.

When referring to a person with a disability, it is important to keep in mind that he or she is a person first and the disability just happens to be one of their traits.

The disability does not define them.

Language is a crucial form of communication, it can convey feelings and attitudes, and using undesirable words can alienate all those involved.

Therefore, it is important to be aware of words and/or phrases that can either befriend.....or offend.





## ACCESSIBLE ANDOVER RESOURCES

### CLOSED CAPTIONING TV

Andover TV, with support from the Town of Andover, is proud to make closed captioning services available to our viewers. Captioning is now offered on most of our Video On Demand content as well as select live broadcasts through Comcast, Verizon, and our live streams.

### PROJECT LIFESAVER

Project Lifesaver relies on proven radio technology and a specially trained search and rescue team. Clients who, are enrolled in the Project Lifesaver program wear a personalized wristband that emits a tracking signal. When caregivers notify 911 that the person is missing, a search and rescue team responds to the wanderer's area and starts searching with the mobile locator tracking system. Search times have been reduced from hours and days to minutes. Nationwide in over 4,223 searches, Recovery times average less than 30 minutes.

Contact: 978-475-0411 Police Business Office for more information

### ELDER/DISABLED RESIDENTIAL TAXATION RELIEF

The Town of Andover is pleased to offer a reduction in residential property tax for qualifying applicants.

- Elder hone owners aged 62 or above
- Disabled homeowner or dependents of elder home owners
- Total individual/ household income of \$40,770/\$54,930

Contact the Robb Center for more information at: 978. 623.8320

### Dependent on Electronic Life Support Equipment?

Does someone in your household depend on electrically powered life support such as a respirator? If the answer is yes please register as a Life Support Customer with National Grid.

Call National Grid at 1.800.322.3223.

