

# The Hollywood Disability Toolkit: The RespectAbility Guide to Inclusion in the Entertainment Industry

#InclusionRider  
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## 1. Introduction

Entertainment professionals across all platforms are working to become more inclusive of minorities. This is our opportunity to ensure inclusion and equality for all people – including America’s largest minority – the one-in-five Americans with a disability. Opening the inclusion umbrella is the *right* thing to do as well as economically *smart* given that the disability market is valued at more than \$1 trillion.

According to [Nielsen Research](#), consumers with disabilities represent a \$1 billion market segment. When you include their families, friends and associates, that total expands to more than \$1 trillion. Americans with disabilities represent the third largest market behind Baby Boomers and the mature market.

People with disabilities and their loved ones are your audience. There are 56 million Americans and 1.2 billion people around the world living with a disability, and a majority of people has a loved one with a disability. When it comes to storytellers in film and television, there often are glaring errors when covering the disability community – errors that are easy to avoid.

RespectAbility is here to support your success. We have been working with leaders in the entertainment industry to ensure more accurate, positive portrayals of people with disabilities in film and television. This comprehensive guide for disability inclusion is for entertainment professionals who wish to ensure they are as inclusive of people with disabilities as possible.

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For generations, television and movies have represented people with disabilities as objects of pity. From the Jerry Lewis telethons to stories covering school teams as heroes for allowing one child with a disability to play on the court or field for a few minutes, society’s screens have propelled stigmas undermining people who have disabilities.

What we see and hear impacts our thoughts and feelings, which can have life and death consequences. People with disabilities lack adequate access to healthcare, education and employment opportunities. An increase in positive, diverse and accurate portrayals of people with disabilities in television and film would significantly help to end stigmas. Actors, producers and directors can use their talents through inclusion riders and other means to fight stigmas and advance opportunities. This is especially critical for the 22 million working-age Americans with disabilities, of which only one-in-three has a job.

While people with disabilities are the largest minority in America (roughly [20 percent](#) of the population), the disability community often is forgotten in conversations about inclusion and diversity. According to [GLAAD](#), fewer than two percent of scripted television characters (16) had disabilities in 2017. The amount of regular primetime broadcast characters counted who have a disability has slightly increased to 1.8 percent, but that number still vastly underrepresents the actual number of Americans with disabilities. Furthermore, actors *without* disabilities play more than [95 percent](#) of all characters with disabilities on television.

According to a recent report by [The Media, Diversity, & Social Change](#) (MDSC) Initiative at USC’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, only 2.7 percent of all speaking or named characters in film were shown to have a disability in 2016 (up from 2.4 percent in 2015). None of the leading characters were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group or the LGBTQ community. “The results of this analysis on characters with disabilities reveal clear discrepancies between the real world and the ‘reel world,’” [the report](#) says. “Stories that reflect the full lives of characters with disabilities and the demographic diversity of this community remain elusive in film.”

The representation that does exist is misleading. Almost all portrayals of people with disabilities in media are [white](#), but disability impacts all. Anyone can join the disability community at any point and people with disabilities come from all communities – including African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, LGBTQ and other communities.

For example, famous African Americans with disability include actresses [Halle Berry](#) (diabetes), [Diana Elizabeth Jordan](#) (Cerebral Palsy) and [Whoopi Goldberg](#) (dyslexia); journalist [Clarence Page](#) (ADHD); performers [Missy Elliott](#) (Grave's disease), [Solange Knowles](#) (ADHD) and Stevie Wonder (blind); Olympic champion [Simone Biles](#) (ADHD); champion boxer [Muhammad Ali](#) (Parkinson's and dyslexia); civil rights advocates [Maya Angelou](#) (selective mutism), [Lois Curtis](#) (intellectual disability) and [Harriet Tubman](#) (epilepsy); lawyers [Haben Girma](#) (Deafblind) and [Claudia Gordon](#) (deaf); and business leader and *Shark Tank* superstar [Daymond John](#) (dyslexia).

Additionally, famous Hispanics and Latinos with disabilities include actresses [Cristina Sanz](#) (Down syndrome), [Gina Rodriguez](#) (anxiety), [Michelle Rodriguez](#) (ADD) and [Salma Hayek](#) (dyslexia); artist [Frida Kahlo](#) (mobility impairments); singers [Demi Lovato](#) (depression) and [Selena Gomez](#) (Lupus); nonprofit founder [Jeison Aristizabal](#) (Cerebral Palsy); and Professor [Victor Pineda](#) (wheelchair user).

It is our view that everyone who works on any aspect of diversity in Hollywood will be able to help ALL – as a rising tide lifts all ships. Television programming and films that represent the talents, innovation and inclusion of ALL of us simply are better.

RespectAbility calls on Hollywood to include diverse people with disabilities in all television shows and movies. Depictions of disability should be focused on the abilities and contributions of people with disabilities, not just the disability. For example, in scenes where people are working as doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc., a character could have a disability – without the focus being on the disability. Additionally, even simple inclusion in crowd scenes is important.

It is also vital for storytelling to show the correlation between disability and negative consequences for people with “multiple minority status” who face “double discrimination.” For example, children of color and English as Second Language Learners with disabilities frequently do not get their disabilities diagnosed or the early intervention they need to succeed. This can lead to school suspensions, drop-outs and expulsions – and an entrance into the “school-to-prison pipeline.” The lack of early intervention can lead to homelessness, trafficking, addiction, poverty and shorter life expectancy. Moreover, a significant proportion of innocent people killed by the police are people of color with disabilities, whose disabilities were not understood or addressed in the interactions with law enforcement.

Authentic, raw and real storytelling including actual facts about disability can help enable people with disabilities to get the education, skills and jobs they need to succeed. Indeed, some of the most talented people on earth have or had disabilities. Stephen Hawking used a wheelchair and assistive technology for speech while unlocking the secrets of the universe. Thomas Edison had learning disabilities and had to be home schooled as a result. The founder of EY – Arthur Young – was deaf. Beethoven also was deaf, and some of the greatest singers of all time – including Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles and Andrea Bocelli – are blind. Richard Branson and Charles Schwab, like several talents of color with disabilities listed above, have dyslexia.

This can start with more people with disabilities being visible in front of and behind the camera. Diversity and inclusion processes also are needed inside networks and studios so diversity and accurate portrayals become natural and consistent. Changing attitudes and behaviors takes great communicating, delivery systems and message repetition.

We hope this resource guide will assist you in this work. The tools begin with terminology, lexicon tips, common acronyms and etiquette tips on interacting with people with disabilities. Next readers will find a series of frequently asked questions. As part of the FAQ, we have included more in-depth information on specific disabilities, although this list is not exhaustive. Appendix A includes a variety of resources – such as places for captioning and sign language interpreters – as well as where to find people with disabilities for both in front of and behind the camera. We are here to be a resource and answer any additional questions, so please contact us for help. If we do not know the answer, we will find out who does.

Sincerely,



Calvin Harris  
Chair  
RespectAbility



Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi  
President  
RespectAbility



Lauren Appelbaum  
Communications Director  
RespectAbility

## 2. How RespectAbility Can Help in Your Work

RespectAbility is working help Hollywood ensure accurate and positive media portrayals of people with disabilities. We partner with leaders in the entertainment industry for the full inclusion of people with disabilities – both in front of and behind the camera. Now, we are inviting new partners to help move the needle on three core issues: 1) diversity, equity and equality inclusion and diversity in Hollywood; 2) more positive and accurate portrayals of people with disabilities; and 3) the employment of people with disabilities.

Through work with our partners, including disability experts and self-advocates, we support entertainment and media professionals: studio and network heads, directors, showrunners, producers, writers, casting directors, talent agents, actors and diversity/social responsibility leaders in their success. Our focus is on the importance of disability inclusion, accessibility and acceptance. This collaborative work is propelled forward through RespectAbility’s educational tools, including fact sheets, consultations and script reviews. We also offer engaging events such as panel discussions, screenings, roundtables, briefings, individual meetings and site visits.

### **RespectAbility is entertainment’s partner to:**

- Identify the diverse talent needed to reflect the fact that 56 million people in the United States and more than one-billion people worldwide live with disabilities.
- Create both entertaining content for and with people with disabilities and assist in improving the bottom line of networks by tapping into this trillion-dollar market.
- Access raw, real, compelling, diverse and inclusive stories that will make TV and film more relevant.
- Set the bar higher in the creation of welcoming entertainment that powerfully resonates with audiences.
- Become the go-to creative and marketing ally that can help established voices and a new generation of artists and filmmakers reach new heights.
- Acquire facts, resources and contacts needed to tell authentic disability stories in a way that will win audiences and advance dignity for all.
- Understand disability etiquette and ensure disability is not viewed through the “pity lens.”
- Update lexicons to ensure that scripts are culturally sensitive to the one-in-five people with disabilities and the people who love them.
- Deliver free and impactful assistance to support the making and marketing of diverse films and TV shows that advance the inclusion and opportunities for people with disabilities.

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### 3. Examples of Best Practices

These programs positively change the way Americans feel about people with disabilities; they prove that TV series and films with storylines or characters with a disability are good business.

- Not an ordinary reality show, ***Born This Way*** stars seven diverse young adults with Down syndrome as they move toward full independence and deal with issues around employment, independent living, education and romance. By promoting success stories of people with disabilities, *Born This Way* helps to change negative perceptions of people with disabilities. *Born This Way* has won three Emmy awards, including for being the best-unstructured reality show on TV today.
- In scripted television, ***Speechless*** is a sitcom centered on a family that happens to include a son with cerebral palsy, J.J. The fact that J.J. is played by Micah Fowler, an actor with cerebral palsy, is important. Actors without disabilities play more than [95 percent](#) of characters with disabilities on television.
- Also in scripted television, ***NCIS: New Orleans*** features a character in a wheelchair, Patton Plame. Daryl “Chill” Mitchell, an African American actor who uses a wheelchair, plays Plame. Currently, a large majority of people with disabilities that are portrayed in film and on TV are white, which makes Mitchell’s role on the show important. People with disabilities come from all communities, and they deserve more representation.
- In children’s television, ***Sesame Street*** has been educating children since the early 1960s. In the 1970s, Linda Bove, who is deaf, played a librarian on the show, educating millions of children to what it means to be deaf and how to use sign language. More recently, the show introduced Julia, a puppet character who has autism. Sesame Workshop’s goal was simple – to create a better understanding of autism in children. The character began in storybook format and then went to broadcast television. Stacey Gordon, whose son has autism, provides Julia’s voice.
- Also in children’s television, ***Pablo*** aims to educate society about autism spectrum disorder. Produced by Paper Owl Productions, the show’s creative director, Grainne McGuinness, wanted to tell Pablo’s story to help children better understand the diagnosis. McGuinness’ inspiration behind Pablo is her nephew who has autism. Not only is *Pablo* voiced by a boy with autism but also many of the creators involved behind-the-scenes also have autism.
- In film, Oscar-winner ***The Silent Child*** features Maisie Sly, a young girl who is deaf. She plays Libby, a four-year-old girl who lives in a world of silence until she learns how to communicate using sign language – thanks to a caring social worker. It is important to note that Sly, the actress, is deaf in real life, as the majority of films winning for portrayal of disability often feature actors without the disability. This short story, inspired by real events, shows how deaf children can learn to communicate and relays the importance of educating children who are deaf.

- In children’s film, *Finding Dory* – a Pixar box office success – stars many characters with disabilities. Dory, the titular character, has short-term memory loss. Nemo has physical disabilities with his little fin and Hank is an octopus that is missing a tentacle. Destiny is visually impaired by her myopia, and Bailey has difficulty with echolocation. Disability is not something Dory needs to overcome, but something she needs to learn to live with, work with and accept to accomplish things “in her own Dory way.” In addition to putting a positive spin on Dory’s journey, *Finding Dory* highlights the importance of community for people with disabilities. Throughout the film, Dory is helped by Hank, Destiny, Bailey and, of course, Nemo and his father Marlin, many of whom have disabilities themselves.

## 4. Terminology Tips: Using the Appropriate Lexicon

The use of certain words or phrases can express bias either intentionally or unintentionally. Especially when working on a script, it is vital to ensure you are using appropriate terminology.

- **Disability language style guide:** The National Center on Disability and Journalism (NCDJ) provides the industry's only disability language style guide. The guide is intended for journalists, communication professionals and members of the general public who are seeking the appropriate and accurate language to use when writing or talking about people living with disabilities. The guide covers general terms and words on physical disabilities, hearing and visual impairments, mental and cognitive disabilities and seizure disorders. Please note that many of the language suggestions found throughout this guide are based on these NCDJ guidelines.
  - <http://ncdj.org/style-guide/>
- **Use person-first language to keep the person first, not his or her disability.** Language shapes perceptions, so a small word choice can make a big difference in communicating attitudes toward people with disabilities and assumptions about the quality of their lives. Person-first language puts the person first instead of his or her disability. By referring to an individual as a “person with a disability” instead of a “disabled person,” you are providing an objective description instead of a label. While opinions differ on some words, the Research & Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas offers a glossary of preferred terms for many visible and invisible disabilities, illustrated with person-first language.
  - <http://rtcil.org/products/media/guidelines#Person-First>
- **If you are working with individuals with disabilities, ask them their preference.** While many professionals within the disability community push person-first language (person with a disability), some individuals with disabilities prefer identity-first (disabled person). While it is generally a safe bet to use person-first language, there are members of certain disability groups in the United States who prefer *not* to use it. For example, some within the Deaf community prefer the term Deaf while some people who are blind prefer the term “blind.” Likewise, among people on the Autism spectrum, some prefer to be called Autistic people or Autistics. Their reasoning is that they consider their disabilities to be inseparable parts of who they are. Just as you may ask people for their gender pronoun preferences, you should ask people with disabilities you work with how they choose to be identified.
- **Think about other language that you use.** What is considered acceptable language regarding disabilities has changed over time. Standards are changing as understanding evolves. Many once widely used terms now are considered offensive and are taken to imply inferiority or have other negative connotations. Other terms are outdated medical or colloquial terms. Avoid terms like “wheelchair-bound” and “suffers from.” People with disabilities are not “victims.” This companion piece to the National Center on Disability and Journalism’s Style Guide outlines some of the biggest mistakes to avoid.
  - <http://ncdj.org/2015/09/terms-to-avoid-when-writing-about-disability/>

- **People with disabilities should not be described as “inspirational” or “courageous” just because they have a disability.** Inspiration porn is when people with disabilities are called inspirational or brave for doing something as simple as exercising or being invited to a prom. Per the TV show *Speechless*, “It’s a portrayal of people with disabilities as one-dimensional saints who only exist to warm the hearts and open the minds of able-bodied people.” Inspiration porn assumes that anyone with a disability must have it so much worse, and it uses people with disabilities to make nondisabled people feel good about themselves or to make them do something, like exercise. Falling into this trap leads to stigmatizing disabilities.
- **Use the word “disability.” Terms like “physically challenged,” “special” and “differently-abled” can be seen by some as patronizing.** Saying "differently-abled" or "special," for instance, may seem on the surface to convey that someone with a disability has positive qualities about him or her. However, terms like these tend to be euphemistic, and frequently are not used by the people to whom they refer. In addition, people with disabilities are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. People with “special needs” are not.
- **People without disabilities are not “normal.” Saying “normal” infers that people with disabilities are “abnormal.”** While people without disabilities often are referred to as “able-bodied,” some members of the disability community oppose its use because it implies that all people living with disabilities lack “able bodies.” Instead, use the term “nondisabled,” “does not have a disability” or “is not living with a disability.” In some cases, the word “typical” can be used to describe a nondisabled condition.

## 5. Common Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AAC	Alternative Augmentative Communication
ABA	Applied Behavioral Analysis
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD/ADHD	Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ADLs	Activities of Daily Living
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorders
AT	Assistive Technology
BD	Behavioral Disorder
BOE	Board of Education
CD	Cognitive Delay
CF	Cystic Fibrosis
COTA	Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant
CP	Cerebral Palsy
DB	Deafblind
DD/ID	Developmental Disability/Intellectual Disability
DOE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DS	Down Syndrome
EBD	Emotional Disturbance
ED	U.S. Department of Education
EHDI	Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program
EI	Early Intervention
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FAS	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
GE	General Education
GT	Gifted and Talented
HI	Hearing Impaired
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEE	Individualized Educational Evaluation
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
ITP	Individualized Transition Plan
LD	Learning Disability
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MD	Muscular Dystrophy
MD or MH	Multiple Disabilities or Multiple Handicapped
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act (Elementary and Secondary Education Act)
O&M	Orientation and Mobility Services

Acronym	Definition
OCD	Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
ODD	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
OHI	Other Health Impairment
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
OT	Occupational Therapist
PBS	Positive Behavioral Supports
PD	Physical Disability
PDD	Pervasive Developmental Disorder
PT	Physical Therapist
PTA	Physical Therapist Assistant
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PwDs	People with Disabilities
RTI	Response to Intervention
SB	Spina Bifida
SE	Special Education
Section 504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
Section 508	Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act
SED	Serious Emotional Disturbance
SI	Sensory Integration
SLI	Speech/Language Impairment
SLP	Speech/Language Pathologist
SLPA	Speech/Language Pathologist Assistant
SSDI	Social Security Disability Income
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
TDD	Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf
TS	Tourette Syndrome
TTY	Teletypewriter (Telephone System for Individuals With Hearing Impairments)
TWWIIA	Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act
VI	Visual Impairment
Voc Ed	Vocational Education
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation

## 6. Etiquette: Interacting With People With Disabilities

- **People with disabilities are human.** Acknowledge their differences as you would acknowledge anyone else's uniqueness and treat them "as normal." Do not talk down to them literally or figuratively. If they use a wheelchair, use a chair to be on their same eye level if you are having a long conversation.
- **Put the person first.** Say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person." Say "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled." For specific disabilities, saying "person with Tourette syndrome" or "person who has cerebral palsy" is usually a safe bet. Still, individuals do have their own preferences. If you are not sure what words to use, ask. Avoid outdated terms like "handicapped," "crippled" or "retarded." Please see more details on this point in our "Terminology Tips: Using the Correct Lexicon" section.
- **Speak directly to a person with a disability,** not to their companion or sign language interpreter. A lack of immediate response does not indicate that the person can't or won't respond.
- **Adults with disabilities are adults and deserve to be treated and spoken to as adults.** Do not make decisions for them. Do not tell them what to do or use baby talk. Provide them with every option you provide those without disabilities. If the option they choose presents a difficulty concerning their disability, discuss ways you could modify or adapt the choice.
- **If you are unsure of how you should interact with a person with a disability, just ask him or her.** Just because someone has a disability, do not assume they need help. Do not give assistance without asking first if they want it. You can ask if the person would like help, but don't ask repeatedly or qualify their response with "are you sure?" Respect someone's choice even if it looks like they're struggling. If there is a dangerous situation, help just as you would help someone without a disability.
- **A person's mobility equipment, such as a wheelchair, scooter or cane, is part of his or her personal space.** Do not touch or move it without permission, even if someone puts it down or chooses to leave it somewhere. Leaning on someone's wheelchair is like leaning on his or her shoulder. Putting something in someone's carry basket is like putting something in his or her backpack. It is vital that the owner knows where his or her equipment is at all times.
- **Listen attentively when you are talking with a person who has difficulty speaking.** Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short or close-ended questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.
- **People who have psychiatric disabilities may have varying personalities and different ways of coping with their disability.** Some may have trouble picking up on social cues; others may be supersensitive. One person may be very high energy, while someone else may appear sluggish. Treat each person as an individual. Ask what will

make him or her most comfortable and respect his or her needs to the maximum extent possible.

- **There are visible disabilities as well as invisible disabilities, meaning not all disabilities are apparent.** A person may make a request or act in a way that seems strange to you. That request or behavior may be disability-related. For example, you may give seemingly simple verbal directions to someone, but the person asks you to write the information down. He or she may have a learning disability that makes written communication easier. Even though these disabilities are hidden, they are real.
- **Please note it is considered offensive to pretend to have a disability,** and disability simulation experiences should be done for design/navigational purposes only.

Learn more by reading the United Spinal Association's Disability Etiquette booklet: <https://unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>.

## 7. Disability FAQ

### What is considered a disability?

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, an individual with a disability is a person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more "major life activities," (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

The ADA does not set forth an exclusive list of conditions it covers. The regulations define "physical or mental impairment" as any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement or anatomical loss affecting one or more body systems, such as neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, immune, circulatory, hemic, lymphatic, skin and endocrine. The regulations also cover any mental or psychological disorder, such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness and specific learning disabilities.

Although there is not an exhaustive list of disabilities under the ADA, the regulations identify medical conditions that would easily be considered a disability within the meaning of the law. These medical conditions include:

- Auditory processing challenges
- Autism
- Bipolar disorder
- Blindness
- Cancer
- Cerebral palsy
- Deafness
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- HIV infection
- Intellectual disabilities
- Major depressive disorder
- Mobility impairments requiring the use of a wheelchair
- Multiple sclerosis
- Muscular dystrophy
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Partial or completely missing limbs
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Sensory processing challenges

Major life activities are functions like caring for yourself, bathing, dressing, shaving, preparing a meal, going to the restroom, performing manual tasks, eating, sleeping, standing, walking, lifting, reaching, bending, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, interacting with others and working.

As a result of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act, major life activities now include the operation of any major bodily function, like functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine and reproductive (procreation) functions, among others.

In the context of the ADA, “disability” is a legal term rather than a medical one. Because “disability” has a legal definition, the ADA’s definition of disability differs from how disability is defined under some other laws.

### **What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?**

The ADA is the nation's primary disability nondiscrimination law. It became law in 1990. It is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections) that relate to different areas of public life.

In 2008, the ADA was amended and thus is referred to as the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) in certain contexts. There are [ADA centers](https://adata.org/find-your-region) around the country that can assist you: <https://adata.org/find-your-region>.

### **What is ableism?**

Ableism is discrimination in favor of people without disabilities. It is the belief that people who have disabilities are somehow less human, less valuable and less capable than others.

### **What is an inclusion rider? How can they help people with disabilities in Hollywood?**

An inclusion rider is a provision that ensures diversity and inclusion in not only the cast of a Hollywood project but also the crew. The result can lead to a Hollywood A-list actor or studio ensuring gender, racial, LGBTQ and disability equality via his or her employment contracts. Equitable hiring can lead to equal roles and pay for women, people of color, the LGBT community and performers with disabilities. An inclusion rider is available to anyone who does a negotiation on a film. Inclusion riders can help eliminate bias in the hiring and casting process and would produce films that more accurately reflect real-world diversity. Riders can be applicable to conferences and speaking engagements. But many actors talking about the inclusion rider today are doing so in the context of ethnicities, races and sexual orientations – leaving out the one-in-five Americans with a disability. This minority group – the largest minority in the U.S. – needs to be included in all Inclusion Riders.

## What is person-first language? Does everyone use it?

Person-first or people-first language is a way of describing disability that involves putting the word "person" or "people" before the word "disability" or the name of a disability, rather than placing the disability first and using it as an adjective. Person-first language literally puts the person first instead of his or her disability. Respect individuals with disabilities as people, not projects or people to pity. By referring to an individual as a "person with a disability" instead of a "disabled person," you are providing an objective description instead of a label. The purpose of people-first language is to promote the fact that someone's disability label is just a disability label—not the defining characteristic of the entire individual. Many guides on disability language and etiquette emphasize using person-first language, except, perhaps, when discussing certain disability cultural groups that explicitly describe themselves with disability-first language.

While it is generally a safe bet to use person-first language, there are members of certain disability groups in the U.S. who prefer *not* to use it, such as the American Deaf community, people who are blind and a number of Autistic people/Autistics. Their reasoning is that they consider their disabilities to be inseparable parts of who they are. Using person-first language, some also argue, makes the disability into something negative, which can and should be separated from the person. Refer to "Terminology Tips: Using the Appropriate Lexicon" for more information.

## What does it mean to "reclaim" a word, and why is reclaiming important?

When members of a group "reclaim" a word, they take a term that was used against them as a slur and give it a positive meaning, within that particular group, as an expression of solidarity and pride in one's identity. Some members of the LGBTQ community have reclaimed the term "queer," a longtime degrading term for LGBTQ people. Similarly, some disability cultural groups have reclaimed negative terms like "crip." However, in some cases, reclaimed terms may be very context-dependent, continuing to retain their original, negative connotations outside of the communities that seek to reclaim them. While it may be appropriate for someone who is a member of a group to use a term in a reclaimed way, it may not be appropriate for someone outside of the group to use a reclaimed word.

## How does intersectionality play into all of this?

Intersectionality is a sociological theory of how different types of discrimination interact. It describes multiple threats of discrimination when an individual's identities overlap with a number of minority classes, such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, disability and other characteristics. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw coined the term in [her 1989 essay](#) "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color."

People of color and English as second language learners with disabilities have unique barriers. People who live with multiple minority status are more at risk for school suspensions, dropping out of school, homelessness, incarceration and other issues. Issues such as immigration, the school-to-prison pipeline, trafficking and foster care all have both race and disability angles.

## What are some concrete steps to ensure we are inclusive?

1. Decide that you want to be inclusive of people of disabilities in the same way that you are on other diversity measures.
2. Set a specific goal and timeline to achieve those goals.
3. Have a point person who is responsible for ensuring progress.
4. Establish an inclusion committee.
5. Show people with disabilities in all photos of your work in an inclusive way.
6. Ensure that people with disabilities are on panels and programs, especially those on education, poverty, healthcare, employment and social justice.
7. Use vendors who are or who hire people with disabilities.
8. Invest in social enterprises that hire people with and without disabilities.
9. Ensure that all your events are held in accessible locations and that accommodations (i.e. sign language) are provided when requested.
10. Ensure that the disability lens is a part of your storytelling. For example, when telling stories around poverty, homelessness, addiction, incarceration and abuse, there often is a disability angle to the story. Frequently, that is because the individual did not receive the disability diagnosis and early intervention he or she needed as a child and entered the “school to-prison” pipeline. This is especially true for children of color and English as Second Language Learners with disabilities who often are under-resourced, and their talents under-estimated.
11. Build a more inclusive environment by learning and using respectful language.
12. Include people with disabilities, who are experts in disability issues, on the board, senior staff and inclusion/diversity committees.
13. Put captions on all videos so people with hearing impairments can access them.
14. Ensure screen reader accessibility so people with vision impairments can access your documents, social media and website.
15. Recruit people with disabilities to be volunteers and care GIVERS (i.e. do not see us through the lens of pity; see us through a lens of empowerment and people wanting to contribute).
16. Proactively reach out to enable people with disabilities to have access to the democratic process and to jobs.

The Chicago Community Trust created an ADA Compliance Guide for Nonprofits that can be an additional excellent resource: <http://www.cct.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2015ADAComplianceGuide.pdf>.

## How can I communicate that I am welcoming of people with disabilities?

It is a good idea to explicitly communicate your desire to include individuals with disabilities. Create policies to facilitate inclusion. For example, have a process to ask people what is needed or an established procedure for individuals to request accommodations. Create a process for responding to requests for modification and assistance. Outline guidelines to assure inclusion on event planning forms and other internal documents.

The message that all people are of equal value and must be respected and heard fairly should be communicated from top leadership. Your mission statement and inclusion policy should be on your website. Signs can help demonstrate that your organization is being inclusive of people with disabilities.

On your website, visually promote the steps you are taking to become more inclusive of individuals with disabilities, including mental health disabilities. The photographs and stories you share, events you advertise, and language you use in your mission statement, “about us” and other sections should reflect that individuals with disabilities are welcomed, valued and included.

## How do I ensure my events are inclusive and accessible?

The following sample event checklist will assist you in ensuring accessibility at your events.

### Invitation/Notification of Event

- Does the invitation clearly indicate that people with all abilities are welcome?
- Do appropriate icons appear (e.g., physical access, sign language interpreter available)?
- Is the writing clear, in an easily legible font and size?
- Is the information embedded in an email as well as an attachment?
- Do the visual images depict inclusion, e.g., people with disabilities?
- Have you included a contact name and number for inquiries regarding accommodations?
- Is the notification of the event on your website as well as in hard copy?

### Facilities

- Is the facility accessible – for wheelchairs, walkers and scooters?
- Are the bathrooms accessible? Are there designated information/ rest areas available?
- Is there handicapped parking?
- If transportation is being provided, is it accessible?
- Is the lighting appropriate for people with visual impairments?

### Communication

- Will there be a sign language interpreter?
- If there are videos, will there be subtitles?
- Will there be assistive listening devices?
- Have you made sure that signers, etc. will be visible to those in wheelchairs?
- Is the website where the event is posted accessible?
- Is the event available as a webcast?

### Staff/Volunteers

- Have you arranged for volunteers?
- Have they received orientation/sensitization and training to respond to inquiries?

### What is some sample inclusion language to use for accommodations?

The following examples support the ADA and are provided by the Great Lakes ADA Center. These statements may be used to communicate that you are an inclusive organization and invite individuals to let you know about their need for accommodations. The regulations implementing the ADA do not require specific language to be used in notifying the public. The obligation under the ADA is for entities covered to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services in order to allow for individuals with disabilities to participate in the programs, activities or services.

- Individuals needing accommodations to participate in the meeting should contact \_\_\_\_\_ at 222-222-222, no later than \_\_\_\_\_. (name) (deadline if appropriate)
- Accommodation requests should be directed to \_\_\_\_\_ at 222-222-222 no later than \_\_\_\_\_. (name) (deadline if appropriate)
- Direct requests for accommodations to \_\_\_\_\_ at 222-222-2222, no later than \_\_\_\_\_. (name) (deadline if appropriate)
- Requests for sign language interpreter or materials in alternative format should be made no later than \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ at 222-222-2222. (deadline if appropriate) (name)
- Individuals with disabilities requiring additional services to participate in the meeting should call 222-222-2222 by \_\_\_\_\_. (deadline if appropriate)
- Additional language may be added to state that requests for accommodations made after the advertised date will be honored to the maximum extent feasible.

### How do I ensure my space is accessible physically?

There are some free, easy steps to take that can make an immediate difference. Keep interior spaces neat and organized so people with mobility limitations can navigate through the space. There should be a five-foot circle or T-shaped area within the space for people using a wheelchair to reverse direction. Floors should be free of potential tripping hazards or barriers so individuals with visual disabilities or those using walkers or wheelchairs can move around and find a place to sit. Oftentimes items can be moved or rearranged to increase equal access.

When hosting an event, ensure that seating is available during all parts of the event including during parts when most people typically would stand. Space for wheelchairs should be distributed throughout the venue with companion seats nearby. Have a plan in place to support those who may have difficulty juggling plates and utensils. Consider having assistive listening devices readily available. Is there a formal way to ask guests what accommodations they may need, either prior to or during the event?

If you want to allocate minimal additional resources, a little can go a long way in terms of ensuring your interior space is accessible. Adjust lighting to facilitate lip reading and reading in general. Lighting should be even, glare-free and bright throughout the building. Inexpensive changes can lessen abrupt changes in floor surfacing. The carpet should be no more than a half-inch high and edges securely attached. Light switches could be moved low enough to be reachable by people using wheelchairs and people of short stature. Adding adjustable workspaces for those who use wheelchairs/scooters or need to sit while working also can be beneficial. Switch to unscented/hypoallergenic cleaning products, candles, soaps and air fresheners for those with various chemical sensitivities.

Thinking bigger, does your building meet ADA code? Install automatic door openers so people with physical limitations can open interior doors without assistance. The criteria are that the door handle is not higher than 48 inches, and the maximum force needed to open the door is five pounds. Have a route of travel that is at least 36 inches wide without any stairs throughout the building for a person using a wheelchair. Ensure that all staircases have continuous rails. Have an elevator or lift if stairs are unavoidable. Ensure that there are accessible restrooms and wheelchair-accessible water fountains.

Has someone who uses a wheelchair personally checked the physical accessibility of your offices and programs for people who use wheelchairs?

### **How do I ensure my exterior space is accessible physically?**

Ensure that sidewalks and exterior spaces are accessible for all by keeping them clear, including having a plan to keep them clear in inclement weather. Reserve ample parking spaces close to the entrance for those with handicapped parking permits. Signage should welcome all and direct guests to the building entrance. Curbs at parking and drop-off areas should have curb cuts. Is there a welcoming, accessible entrance that can be used independently by individuals with disabilities? Can people with physical limitations open other exterior doors without assistance? Everyone should be able to enter through the same main doorway. If not the main door, then ensure that the accessible entrance is a door with dignity, not in the back with the trash.

### **What signage do I need to be more accessible?**

Communication starts by asking people what they need. Consider adding signs for accessible entrances, exits and restrooms. Bold decals can be used to mark glass doors, so no one runs into them. Explore alternative communication methods for individuals with specific needs or hearing impairments (MD Relay, text, email, phone with TTD to call in about inclement weather). Interior signs should be mounted with a centerline 60 inches from the floor with bold, high contrast, raised characters and braille text.

### **How do I ensure my website is fully accessible?**

People with disabilities use the Internet, so websites need to be set up for use by screen readers and people who need captions. Best practice is to ensure that millions of people who use screen readers can access your website. By making your website fully accessible for those who have either visual or auditory disabilities, you will be able to reach millions of additional views. In order to do so, all online videos and audio files should include captions. Add textual descriptions,

often called “alternative text,” to charts, graphs, images and maps so that they are discernible by assistive technology. Add audio description for materials presented visually. Ensure your website includes a site index. Conduct usability studies for your highest traffic URLs for both your external and internal websites to verify that your websites work effectively with screen reading and other assistive technology. Have a plan in place to ensure that social media postings are accessible, including blog posts and newsletters. Many of these things also increase your Search Engine Optimization, increasing your reach. Watch RespectAbility’s webinar on web accessibility: [https://youtu.be/hSrfeCk\\_Bzw](https://youtu.be/hSrfeCk_Bzw). Has a person who is blind and who uses adaptive computer technology checked your website for accessibility?

### **How do I add captions to my online videos for free?**

While studios and networks ensure their television and film content includes closed captioning, sometimes videos on websites are forgotten. This may include a video in your recruitment hiring section or a preview of an upcoming film. Video hosting sites such as [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) have free tools that allow users to add automated subtitles to their clips, but this is not as reliable. Auto captioning, which is great technology, is not always perfect. We would recommend ensuring the accuracy of the captions. Making a transcript of the video available online is also an incredibly helpful resource for users who have auditory disabilities, like Deafness or Hard of Hearing.

### **How do I ensure my other materials are accessible?**

You should have multiple ways to share materials. Handouts should be provided in an electronic version during meetings and presentations for individuals who need or want to use technology to access and manipulate the materials. Provide individuals with transcripts for purely audio files that do not have a visual component. Offer people a way to sign up for an event without using a computer, like registering via phone.

### **How can I tell if an animal is really a service animal and not just a pet?**

To determine if an animal is a service animal, you may ask two questions:

1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

You may not ask these questions if the need for the service animal is obvious. Examples include when a dog is guiding an individual who is blind or is pulling a person’s wheelchair. You also may not:

- Ask about the nature or extent of an individual’s disability.
- Require proof that the animal has been certified, trained or licensed as a service animal.
- Require the animal to wear an identifying vest or tag.
- Ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the task or work.

Under the ADA, it is the training that distinguishes a service animal from other animals. Some service animals are professionally trained; others are trained by their owners. However, the task that the service animal is trained to do must be directly related to the owner’s disability.

## What do I need to know regarding hiring employees with disabilities?

Create a plan to both hire and retain employees with disabilities. Being a truly inclusive employer of people with disabilities will not happen by accident; it must be an *intentional* decision and driven by a process. Your television shows and films will more accurately reflect your community if you include people with disabilities on your staff.

Evaluations of human resources managers should include diversity, including the hiring of employees with disabilities, as a performance metric. Use established resources to increase the qualified candidates with disabilities in your hiring pool. Look at places like [USBLN](#), [National Organization on Disability](#) and [ASKJAN.org](#) – all great resources on recruitment and hiring. ASKJAN can problem solve inclusive employment questions for free. Please see a full list of resources in Appendix A.

Create an Employee Resource Group for employees with disabilities. How many employees with disabilities, or employees with family members with disabilities, does your company or organization have? Do they feel comfortable to bring their authentic 360-degree selves to work? Do they have a support system with other members of the team? Also ensure that people who identify as a woman, African American or LGBTQ who also have a disability are welcomed into that particular group as well. People who live with “multiple minority status” should be able to feel comfortable in all groups.

## How can I be more inclusive in my hiring process?

People with disabilities have a lot to bring to the table, but they might need accommodations to get to the table in the first place. Make sure that candidates are aware that you are willing to accommodate them. Schedule interviews at an accessible location and keep transportation in mind. The most important thing to do is to treat any candidate with a disability with the same respect you would treat any other candidate.

## What is an example of non-discrimination language to include?

This company provides equal employment opportunities (EEO) to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetics. In addition to federal law requirements, this company complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training. This company expressly prohibits any form of workplace harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability or veteran status.

## What tax and other incentives do employers have to hire people with disabilities?

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit for businesses that decide to hire a diverse and inclusive group of people, more commonly referred to as a target group. This target group includes people with disabilities. Employers who hire employees from target groups, such as people with disabilities, receive a federal tax credit incentive of up to \$9,600.

This has been a valuable tool to support access to quality jobs for Americans all over the country. The Congressional Research Service has identified that in the year 2012, almost 900,000 individuals got jobs that qualified their employers for the WOTC. Likewise, the Disabled Access Credit directly addresses the cost to small businesses that make their workplaces accessible to people with disabilities. A small business can receive up to \$5,000 to enable access.

At the state level, the California Employment Development Department maintains a variety of tax incentives to boost economic opportunities for marginalized communities, recruit employees with disabilities and promote inclusive workplaces through reasonable accommodations. For example, the Assistive Technology Exchange is a free service that connects Californians with disabilities with the devices they need to live and work independently. California Capital Access Program for Small Business offers loans to small businesses and such tools could enable an entrepreneur with disabilities to establish a business within the broader entertainment industry. The California Competes Tax Credit, overseen by the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, is an income tax credit that incentivizes business to establish operations in the Golden State.

However, disability is missing from other efforts to use tax credits to promote diversity and inclusion in California. Tax incentives can mean big business for a state. Just last year, sources credit the California Film and Television Tax Credit Program, valued at more than \$300 million, for being a key factor in ending "a 20-year slump" in film and television production in California. Last year, the Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism, & Internet Media of the California State Assembly examined evidence that a more diverse workforce for the entertainment industry has been a positive, if unintended, consequence of this program. Likewise, the California Film Commission has presented findings that called for adding new "diversity benchmarks" to the state's tax incentives. However, disability was noticeably absent from the conversation in Sacramento. The state legislature offers another avenue for advocacy. As the state of California considers tax incentives to empower more women and minorities within film and television, people with disabilities, as well as all sexual orientations, need to be part of that conversation.

The largest incentive of all for disability inclusion is the sheer market size of people with disabilities and their loved ones. According to [Nielsen Research](#), consumers with disabilities represent a \$1 billion market segment. When you include their families, friends and associates, that total expands to more than \$1 trillion. Americans with disabilities represent the third largest market behind Baby Boomers and the mature market.

People with disabilities and their loved ones are your audience. There are 56 million Americans and 1.2 billion people on earth living with a disability, and a majority of people has a loved one with a disability. When it comes to storytellers in film and television, there often are glaring errors when covering the disability community – errors that would be easy to avoid if people with disabilities were involved in every step of the process.

## Where can I look to find examples of companies who are effective at including people with disabilities?

It is clear that hiring people with disabilities is not just the right thing to do; it also is good for a business' bottom line. As more companies realize this truth, they are starting to take action. RespectAbility's #RespectTheAbility campaign has featured employers all over the country who have seen the success of hiring talented candidates with disabilities. Companies featured include IBM, NBCUniversal, Freddie Mac, Booz Allen Hamilton and Microsoft. You can read more about these companies' practices: <https://www.respectability.org/category/respecttheability/>.

## 7.1. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)/Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

*“I have a tireless curiosity about people in general, and I love to find interesting stories. I’m no expert, but those characteristics seem to go productively well with the symptoms of ADHD.”*



– [Clarence Page](#), Award-Winning Journalist

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Olympic gymnast [Simone Biles](#), *Shark Tank*’s [Robert Herjavec](#) and pop star [Solange Knowles](#) also have ADHD.

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a brain disorder that is characterized by an individual’s consistent inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. While everyone experiences these symptoms at one point or another, what classifies these behaviors under ADHD is when it begins to affect normal day-to-day functioning and/or development. ADHD is typically diagnosed in children. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 6.4 million children have been diagnosed with ADHD in the United States – 11 percent of children ages four to 17. ADHD is not a learning disability. However, ADHD can interfere with learning. According to [understood.org](#), experts estimate that one-third to one-half of individuals with a learning disability also have ADHD.

ADHD Predominantly Inattentive Type, also known as ADD, is a type of ADHD that does not involve hyperactivity. People with ADD may have trouble finishing tasks or following directions, and might be easily distracted. But the symptoms are generally less noticeable for ADD than ADHD, and as a result many people with ADD are unfortunately overlooked.

### National organizations for people with ADHD/ADD:

- **The Attention Deficit Disorder Association** provides information, resources and networking opportunities to help adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder lead better lives.
  - o [Add.org](#)
- **CHADD** is a membership organization that was founded in 1987 in response to the frustration and sense of isolation experienced by parents and their children with ADHD. They produce Attention Magazine for their members and they sponsor an annual conference.
  - o [Chadd.org](#)

- **Understood**'s goal is to help the millions of parents whose children, ages three to 20, have learning and attention issues. They want to empower them to understand their children's issues and relate to their experiences. With this knowledge, parents can make effective choices that propel their children from simply coping to truly thriving.
  - o [understood.org](http://understood.org)

## 7.2. Amputation/Amputee

*“Amputation is a part of who I am but not the sum total of what I am. I am an amputee father, grandfather, certified private pilot and PADI Scuba Instructor. I can portray more character roles than just an amputee.”*



– John Lawson, *Westworld*, *American Horror Story*, *Law and Order*

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Former *Dancing with the Stars* contestant Amy Purdy, actress [Katy Sullivan](#), Divas With Disabilities Project's [Donna Walton](#) and *Sons of Anarchy*'s Kurt Yaeger also are amputees.

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An amputee is someone who does not have all or part of at least one limb. Amputees may choose to wear a prosthesis. They may use assistive devices like a wheelchair, crutches or a cane to get around. It is possible that they experience phantom pains or sensations in the limb that is not there. Some amputees may require physical accessibility such as ramps or elevators. Some amputees may also require items that are easy to grasp.

According to Limbs for Life, on average, 507 people lose a limb each day, joining more than 2.1 million amputees living with limb loss in the United States. Diseases including diabetes and vascular disease, accidents, birth defects and warfare are the primary causes of limb loss. Both “someone with an amputation” and amputee are acceptable terms to use.

### National organizations for people with an amputation:

- **Amputee Coalition**'s mission is to reach out to and empower people affected by limb loss to achieve their full potential through education, support and advocacy, and to promote limb loss prevention.
  - o [Amputee-coalition.org](http://Amputee-coalition.org)

- **The Limbs for Life Foundation** is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to providing fully functional prosthetic care for individuals who cannot otherwise afford it and raising awareness of the challenges facing amputees.
  - [Limbsforlife.org](http://Limbsforlife.org)
- **The National Amputation Foundation** was founded in 1919 by a group of amputee veterans from World War I. Since then, the Foundation has expanded its facilities to include civilian amputees as well.
  - [Nationalamputation.org](http://Nationalamputation.org)
- **The National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics** is a nonprofit trade association dedicated to educating the public and promoting public policy in the interest of the O&P patient. They focus on healthcare legislation and regulation through government relations, advocacy and education of policymakers.
  - [naaop.org](http://naaop.org)

### 7.3. Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

*“I am so proud that I have been able to play roles of people on the spectrum but I also would love to be considered for roles that are not characters with autism.”*



– [Coby Bird](#), *The Good Doctor*, *Speechless* and *The Miracle Project*

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Producer Dan Harmon and actor [Mickey Rowe](#) also have autism.

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Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that refers to a group of complex disorders of brain development. According to the [Autism Society](#), “some of the behaviors associated with autism include delayed learning of language; difficulty making eye contact or holding a conversation; difficulty with executive functioning, which relates to reasoning and planning; narrow, intense interests; poor motor skills; and sensory sensitivities.” However, symptoms vary across the spectrum. In 2012, the label of Asperger’s syndrome was brought under the umbrella of ASD, although some people who were originally diagnosed with Asperger’s may still refer to themselves as such, due to fewer stigmas associated with Asperger’s than with ASD.

More than 3.5 million Americans live with ASD. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2016 ADDM autism prevalence report, the prevalence of autism had risen to one in every 68 births in the United States – nearly twice as great as the 2004 rate of one in 125 – and almost one in 54 boys. Some people with autism prefer to be called a “person with autism,” while others prefer to be called “autistic person.”

There is a misconception that individuals with autism cannot focus or attend to the demands that might be made on them in a professional TV, film or theatrical environment. This oftentimes causes production companies to hire those without autism to portray a character with autism. In actuality, actors with autism who have had proper theatrical training can be the best people for the job. They are prompt, follow directions, stay focused, rarely make distracting small talk and can memorize dialogue with minimal rehearsal time. Mostly they are experts in what autism is so their portrayal is authentic.

### National organizations for people with autism:

- **Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization run by and for autistic people. ASAN was created to serve as a national grassroots disability rights organization for the autistic community run by and for autistic Americans, advocating for systems change and ensuring that the voices of autistic people are heard in policy debates and the halls of power. Their staff works to educate communities, support self-advocacy in all its forms and improve public perceptions of autism. ASAN’s members and supporters include autistic adults and youth, cross-disability advocates, and non-autistic family members, professionals, educators and friends.
  - o [autisticadvocacy.org](http://autisticadvocacy.org)
- **Autism Society of America** has been improving the lives of all affected by autism for more than 50 years and envisions a world where individuals and families living with autism are able to maximize their quality of life, are treated with the highest level of dignity and live in a society in which their talents and skills are appreciated and valued. They provide advocacy, education, information and referral, support and community at national, state and local levels through their strong nationwide network of Affiliates.
  - o Matthew Asner: [masner@autism-society.org](mailto:masner@autism-society.org)
  - o [autism-society.org](http://autism-society.org)
- **Autism Speaks** is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the lifespan, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism spectrum disorder; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions.
  - o [autismspeaks.org](http://autismspeaks.org)

## 7.4. Blind/Vision Loss

*“Disability is never the barrier.”*



– [Haben Girma](#), Deafblind Lawyer, Harvard Law School graduate

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Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
[Ollie Cantos](#) and musician Stevie Wonder also are blind.

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Blindness is severe vision impairment, not correctable by standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine or surgery. It interferes with a person’s ability to perform everyday activities. A person is legally blind when corrected vision in the best eye is 20/200 or less. Many people with vision loss are not considered blind but instead are considered to have low vision or limited vision. According to the CDC, more than 1 million Americans are blind and more than 12 million are visually impaired.

When meeting someone who is blind, identify yourself and introduce anyone else who is present. If walking from one location to another, offer your arm as a guide and alert the person to any obstacles such as steps, curbs or low arches. If dining, orient the person as to the location of silverware or other items. Let the person know when you are leaving.

Some people who are blind consider themselves visual thinkers and would not want to be called visually impaired or visually challenged.

There are several apps that people who are blind can use to live independently:

- **Aira** is today’s fastest growing assistive community, revolutionizing the everyday lifestyles of people who are blind or low vision. Advanced wearable technology with wireless access to a distributed network of trained human professionals unlocks the potential for Aira explorers to efficiently accomplish any task, big or small.
  - o [aira.io](#)
- “**Be My Eyes**” connects people who are blind with a sighted person through a video call to provide immediate assistance with a simple task that can prove difficult without vision.
  - o [bemyeyes.com](#)

- **BlindSquare** is an accessible GPS-app developed for people who are blind and have low vision. It describes the environment, announces points of interest and street intersections as you travel. The most important BlindSquare functions can be accessed through an audio menu via any headset or speaker that supports Apple's music controller.
  - o [blindsquare.com](http://blindsquare.com)
- **KNFB Reader** is a mobile app that reads print aloud. Take a photo and the app reads the text aloud or publishes it in Braille with a refreshable display.
  - o [knfbreader.com](http://knfbreader.com)
- **Taptilo** is a wireless Braille device that syncs to your smartphone to help you learn Braille in a fast, easy and fun way. It is equipped with the latest Braille cell technology, multiple teaching options, interactive audio instructions and various self-study games.
  - o [taptilo.com](http://taptilo.com)

### National organizations for people who are blind or have vision loss:

- **The American Council of the Blind (ACB)** strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity and quality of life for people who are blind and visually impaired. Since its inception, ACB and its affiliates have been at the forefront of the creation of policies that have shaped the opportunities that are now available to people with disabilities in the U.S. ACB also has effectively collaborated with Vision Rehabilitation Service providers to develop the principles and values that should be at the heart of providing adjustment and placement services to people who are blind.
  - o [acb.org](http://acb.org)
- **The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)**'s mission is to create a world of no limits for people who are blind or visually impaired. They mobilize leaders, advance understanding and champion impactful policies and practices using research and data. A national nonprofit with offices in five U.S. cities, AFB champions access and equality and stands at the forefront of new technologies and evidence-based advocacy.
  - o [afb.org](http://afb.org)
- **The Blinded Veterans Association**'s mission is to operate as a not-for-profit corporation exclusively for charitable, educational, patriotic and civic improvement purposes; to promote the welfare of blinded veterans so that, notwithstanding their disabilities, they may take their rightful place in the community and work with their fellow citizens toward the creation of a peaceful world; to preserve and strengthen a spirit of fellowship among blinded veterans so that they may give mutual aid and assistance to one another; and to maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom and to encourage loyalty to the Constitution and laws of the United States and of the States in which they reside.
  - o [bva.org](http://bva.org)

- **Bookshare** opens up the world of reading for people with low vision, a physical disability or learning disability. Their books are “accessible,” which means you can read their books many different ways. Schools and many organizations around the globe can access the books they need for school, work, career advancement, skill development and the simple love of reading in formats that work for them.
  - [bookshare.org](http://bookshare.org)
- Since 1942, **Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB)** has been creating partnerships between people, dogs and communities. With exceptional client services and a robust network of instructors, puppy raisers, donors and volunteers, GDB prepares highly qualified guide dogs to serve and empower individuals who are blind or have low vision from throughout the United States and Canada.
  - [guidedogs.com](http://guidedogs.com)
- Since 1893, **Helen Keller Services (HKS)** has been enabling individuals who are blind, visually impaired or deafblind, or have combined hearing and vision loss to live, work and thrive in the communities of their choice.
  - [helenkeller.org](http://helenkeller.org)
- **Learning Ally**’s mission is to promote personal achievement when access and reading are barriers to learning by advancing the use of accessible and effective educational solutions. Formerly called Recording for the Blind, Learning Ally not only provides high-quality audio textbooks, but also connects people with a community of their peers.
  - [learningally.org](http://learningally.org)
- For fifty years, the **National Association of Blind Students** has worked to promote the equality of the blind by serving as a source of information, forum for networking and vehicle for collective action for blind students. They are dedicated to changing what it means to be blind, by both changing perceptions among the general public of the capabilities of the blind and encouraging students who are blind to strive to achieve their maximum potential and realize their dreams.
  - [nabslink.org](http://nabslink.org)
- **The National Council of State Agencies for Blind** promotes through advocacy, coordination and education the delivery of specialized services that enable individuals who are blind and visually impaired to achieve personal and vocational independence.
  - [ncsab.org](http://ncsab.org)

- **The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped**, under the Library of Congress, is a free braille and talking book library service for people with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness or a physical disability that prevents them from reading or holding the printed page. Through a national network of cooperating libraries, NLS offers books the way you want them: in braille or audio, mailed to your door for free or instantly downloadable.
  - [loc.gov/programs/national-library-service-for-the-blind-and-physically-handicapped/about-this-service](http://loc.gov/programs/national-library-service-for-the-blind-and-physically-handicapped/about-this-service)
- **The National Federation of the Blind (NFB)** believes in the full capacity of people who are blind. Their democratically elected leaders and diverse nationwide membership are made up of people who are blind, their families and their friends. NFB knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day they raise the expectations of people who are blind because low expectations create obstacles.
  - [nfb.org](http://nfb.org)
- **National Industries for the Blind** has focused on enhancing the opportunities for economic and personal independence of people who are blind, primarily through creating, sustaining and improving employment.
  - [nib.org](http://nib.org)
- **The National Organization of Parents of Blind Children** believes that the exact level of a child's eyesight should not restrict the choice of tools and techniques, and instead ask, "Which are the skills and tools that will best enable this child to succeed?" They ensure access to the entire range of skills and tools available. These 'skills and tools of blindness,' as they are called, are essential for the child's success both at home and at school.
  - [nopbc.org](http://nopbc.org)
- **The Perkins School for the Blind** has a mission to provide children and young adults who are blind with the education, confidence and skills they need to realize their potential.
  - [perkins.org](http://perkins.org)
- **The United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA)** provides life-enriching sports opportunities for Americans with visual impairments. A member of the U.S. Olympic Committee, USABA provides athletic opportunities in various sports including, but not limited to track and field, nordic and alpine skiing, biathlon, wrestling, swimming, tandem cycling, powerlifting and goalball (a team sport for the blind and visually impaired). Combating stereotypes is achieved by both educating the public through various media avenues as well as by training athletes to enter schools and community organizations to directly address disability issues.
  - [usaba.org](http://usaba.org)

- **The World Blind Union (WBU)** represents the 285 million blind and partially sighted people in 190 member countries. They speak to governments and international bodies on issues concerning blindness and low vision in conjunction with their members. WBU brings together all the major national and international organizations of people who are blind and those organizations providing services to people with low vision to work on the issues affecting the quality of life for people who are blind.
  - o [worldblindunion.org](http://worldblindunion.org)

## 7.5. Cerebral Palsy

*"I chose to be an actor in my REAL LIFE so I could play many characters, from banker and social worker to homeless person and space alien, and tell many stories in my REEL LIFE where my disability, cerebral palsy, which mildly affects my speech and gait, is incidental to the character or storyline."*



– [Diana Elizabeth Jordan](#), Actress, Writer, Producer and Director

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CNN's 2016 Hero of the Year [Jeison Aristizábal](#) and *Speechless*' Micah Fowler and Zach Anner also have Cerebral Palsy.

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Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a nonprogressive group of disorders that affects an individual's muscle tone and movement, caused by brain damage before, during birth or within the first few years of a child's life. People who have cerebral palsy can have mild to severe issues with balance, muscle and motor control, but how cerebral palsy affects each person is very individual. This can include walking (possibly requiring the use of a wheelchair), balance, fine motor and gross motor skills and speech (ranging from very mild to severe). Some people who have cerebral palsy may require accommodations (for example, a ramp) while others may not. It is important to remember to ask an individual what accommodations, if any, he or she may require in a work environment. According to [cerebralpalsy.org](http://cerebralpalsy.org), about 746,000 children and adults currently have CP.

When talking about someone with CP, say "someone with cerebral palsy" or "someone living with cerebral palsy." Do not refer to someone as "spastic" or "spaz."

### National organizations for people with CP:

- **The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke** is an Institute within the National Institutes of Health that aims to seek fundamental knowledge about the brain and nervous system.
  - o [ninds.nih.gov](http://ninds.nih.gov)

- **United Cerebral Palsy** educates, advocates and provides support services to ensure a life without limits for people with a spectrum of disabilities. Its mission is to advance the independence, productivity and full citizenship of people with disabilities through an affiliate network.
  - o [ucp.org](http://ucp.org)

## 7.6. Deaf/Hard of Hearing

*“Some people don’t even want to try to communicate with a deaf person and seem afraid to talk to us or ask questions. We are just regular people too. Don’t be afraid. Talk to me! I love talking to people.”*



– [Treshelle Marie Edmond](#), *Glee*, *House*, *Master of None*

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Lawyers [Haben Girma](#) and [Claudia Gordon](#), actor Nyle DiMarco, Academy Award winning actress Marlee Matlin, *The Silent Child*'s [Maisie Sly](#) and filmmakers [Delbert Whetter](#) and Jevon Whetter also are deaf.

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Deafness is defined as a hearing loss that prevents a person from understanding speech through the ear. People who are hard of hearing have a more mild or moderate hearing loss that may or may not be corrected with amplification. A person who is deaf may also have speech difficulties. According to the Disability Compendium, more than four million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing.

To get the person’s attention, touch the person lightly, wave your hand or use some other physical sign. If an interpreter is being used, speak directly to the person who is deaf rather than to the interpreter. If the person is lip-reading, look directly at the person, speak slowly and clearly, but do not exaggerate your lip movements and especially do not shout. Speak expressively because the person will use your facial expressions, gestures and body movements to help understand what you are saying. Keep your hands and any other objects away from your mouth when speaking. If you are still having trouble communicating, feel free to use written notes.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons often have different preferences as to mode of communications. Some may wish to communicate via e-mail and/or text/SMS. Social media also has become a popular means of informal communication. Others may wish to communicate through a "relay interpreter," often referred to as a “relay operator” or “communications assistant.” It is important to ask the individual what the preferred mode of communication is.

In early years, people who are deaf and hard of hearing would communicate through telecommunications devices known as TTYs or TDDs, either between two users of such devices or between a user and a relay operator. Although there remain numerous references to such devices in many contemporary resource guides, it is important to note that they are generally no longer in widespread use.

Today, many telephone communications take place through a video-based relay service (“Video Relay Services”) or a text-based relay services. These services differ only with respect to the user experience of the deaf or hard of hearing caller. The user experience of the hearing caller will remain in the same manner as with any other telephone call. The relay call will be conducted by the communications assistant (“CA”) voicing everything to you that the Relay User types or signs, and by the CA signing or typing to the Relay User everything that you voice.

There is no cost to use these services, nor is there a special telephone number. If given a telephone number by a deaf or hard of hearing individual that utilizes a relay service, you need only to call that number. The relay interpreter/operator will automatically facilitate the telephone call for you.

If you are unfamiliar with Relay, ask the operator to explain how Relay works. When the CA says, “Go Ahead,” that means it is your turn to respond. Speak slowly and directly to the deaf/hard of hearing caller, not to the CA. When you are finished speaking, say, “Go Ahead” to signal that it is the other persons turn to talk.

Some people who are deaf would not like to be called hearing impaired due to the negativity of the word impaired. Say “person who is deaf” or “person who is hard of hearing.” If someone is both deaf and blind, the term is deafblind. Never say deaf and dumb. Many people in the Deaf community prefer use of a lowercase “d” to refer to audiological status and the use of a capital “D” when referring to the culture and community of Deaf people.

When hiring a sign language interpreter through a service, do so as early as possible. Two weeks is recommended. Be sure to confirm that the sign language interpreter is certified and experienced, and let the interpreter know it is for an entertainment industry event. Interpreting in the theatre, television or film industry requires more than just knowledge of sign language. It takes knowledge of the industry as well as the performing arts. A certified interpreter is someone who has met a minimum of hours of training on a regular basis, and abides by a code of professional conduct. This is important to ensure that your communications, and the conduct of the interpreter(s), meet the appropriate quality, ethical and professional standards. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) maintains a [searchable directory](#) of interpreters and their certification status.

Hiring an interpreter for a person who is Deafblind may require a specially trained, qualified interpreter, who is available through interpreting agencies. When hiring an interpreter for a person who is Deafblind, disclose the appropriate circumstances and requirements and confirm that the interpreter will be certified.

Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDI) are deaf professionals that have specialized training and/or experience in bridging the language and cultural gaps that sometimes exist between Deaf/Hard of Hearing and hearing parties. They possess native or near-native fluency in American Sign Language and may be recommended for circumstances where language difficulties or cultural differences occur, for instance, in highly traumatic emergency or medical situations, legal proceedings and technically complex assignments. CDI's work alongside ASL interpreters as a team and can play an instrumental role in ensuring that communications on set are efficient and effective.

A list of interpreters is available in Appendix A.

### National organizations for people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- **The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)** is the national professional, scientific and credentialing association for 198,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.
  - o [asha.org](http://asha.org)
- **The American Society for Deaf Children** is a nonprofit parent-helping-parent organization promoting a positive attitude toward signing and Deaf culture. It also provides support, encouragement and current information about deafness to families with deaf and hard of hearing children.
  - o [deafchildren.org](http://deafchildren.org)
- **Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness (GLAD)** provides support and advances the life of deaf and hard of hearing individuals by empowering them with information, training and opportunities. GLAD also provides training and technical assistance to hearing service providers, employers and community organizations and agencies. GLAD runs the LifeSigns interpreting agency and is a good resource for Deaf culture.
  - o [gladinc.org/human-services](http://gladinc.org/human-services)
- **Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)** provides assistance and resources for people with hearing loss and their families to learn how to adjust to living with hearing loss. HLAA works to eradicate the stigma associated with hearing loss and raise public awareness about the need for prevention, treatment, and regular hearing screenings.
  - o [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org)
- **National Association of the Deaf** is the nation's premier civil rights organization of, by, and for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the United States of America. Established in 1880, the NAD was shaped by deaf leaders who believed in the right of the American deaf community to use sign language, to congregate on issues important to them, and to have its interests represented at the national level.
  - o [nad.org](http://nad.org)

- **National Black Deaf Advocates** is an organization that promotes leadership, deaf awareness and active participation in the political, educational, and economic processes that affect the lives of black deaf citizens.
  - o [nbda.org](http://nbda.org)
- **National Center on Deafness at California State University at Northridge's** advocacy, programs and services support the acquisition of marketable skills and lifetime opportunities for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind students. The center is a good local resource with a deaf studies department, professors and students.
  - o [csun.edu/ncod](http://csun.edu/ncod)
- **The National Council of Hispano Deaf and Hard of Hearing's** mission is to ensure equal access of the Hispano deaf and hard of hearing community in the areas of social, recreational, cultural, educational and vocational welfare.
  - o [ldhhamdc.org](http://ldhhamdc.org)
- **TDI (formerly known as Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.)** was established in 1968 originally to promote further distribution of TTYs in the deaf community and to publish an annual national directory of TTY numbers. Today, it is an active national advocacy organization focusing its energies and resources to address equal access issues in telecommunications and media for people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened and deafblind.
  - o [tdiforaccess.org](http://tdiforaccess.org)

## 7.7. Down Syndrome

*“[Born This Way] tells our stories, our dreams. People can see that our lives are most of the time very typical. People with disabilities have jobs, fall in love, have businesses and enjoy time with friends.”*



– [Cristina Sanz](#), *Born This Way*

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American Horror Story's [Jamie Brewer](#), Glee's Lauren Potter and the cast of *Born This Way*, Elena Ashmore, Megan Bomgaars, Steven Clark, Sean McElwee, Rachel Osterbach and [John Tucker](#), also have Down syndrome.

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Down syndrome is a chromosomal condition that is associated with intellectual disability, a characteristic facial appearance and weak muscle tone (hypotonia) in infancy. All affected individuals experience cognitive delays, but the intellectual disability is usually mild to moderate. Per the National Institutes of Health, more than 400,000 people currently live with Down syndrome in the United States today. About 600 babies are born with Down syndrome in the United States every year, according to the National Down syndrome Society.

Use people first language; say that someone is a “person with Down syndrome,” “has Down syndrome” or “is living with Down syndrome.” Do not say “Down person” or that a person “suffers from” or is “afflicted with” Down syndrome.

The National Down syndrome Society has a preferred language guide that can serve as an additional resource for you: <https://www.ndss.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NDSS-Preferred-Language-Guide-2015.pdf>

### National organizations for people with Down syndrome:

- **The Global Down Syndrome Foundation** is a public nonprofit dedicated to significantly improving the lives of people with Down syndrome through research, medical care, education and advocacy.
  - o [globaldownsyndrome.org](http://globaldownsyndrome.org)
- **The National Down Syndrome Congress** is a membership-sustained not-for-profit organization dedicated to an improved world for individuals with Down syndrome. Founded in 1973, its mission is to provide information, advocacy and support concerning all aspects of life for individuals with Down syndrome.
  - o [ndscenter.org](http://ndscenter.org)
- **The National Down Syndrome Society** is the leading human rights organization for individuals with Down syndrome. The mission of the National Down Syndrome Society is to be the national advocate for the value, acceptance and inclusion of people with Down syndrome.
  - o [ndss.org](http://ndss.org)

## 7.8. Dyslexia and Other Learning Disabilities

*“Some people read really fast, but you’ll ask them questions about the script and they’ll forget. I take a long time to read a script, but I read it only once. I directed a movie, and I never brought the script to set.”*



– [Salma Hayek](#), *Frida*, *Ugly Betty*

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Champion boxer [Muhammad Ali](#), Virgin Records’ [Richard Branson](#), actress [Whoopi Goldberg](#) and Sharks [Barbara Corcoran](#), [Daymond John](#) and [Kevin O’Leary](#) also have dyslexia.

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The most common disability among children in the United States is a learning disability, which is a neurologically based condition that may manifest itself as difficulty learning and using skills in reading (called dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), mathematics (dyscalculia) and other cognitive processes due to differences in how the brain processes information. A learning disability is not an intellectual disability. Individuals with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence, and the term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of another cause, such as intellectual disabilities or lack of educational opportunity. ADHD is not a learning disability. However, ADHD can interfere with learning. According to [understood.org](#), experts estimate that one-third to one-half of individuals with a learning disability also have ADHD.

Dyslexia is a learning disability that likely affects more than 40 million Americans, but only two million know they have it. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that often is unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. It is a common learning disability among children, although adolescents and adults living with dyslexia often exhibit symptoms as well.

Use person-first language when describing someone with dyslexia. Say “someone has dyslexia” or is “living with dyslexia.” Do not call a person “a dyslexic person” or use dyslexic as a noun, like “He is dyslexic.” For general learning disability, say, “he is a person with a learning disability.” Do not use the words “slow learner” or “retarded.”

## National organizations for people with learning disabilities:

- **Bookshare** opens up the world of reading for people with low vision, a physical disability or learning disability. Their books are “accessible,” which means you can read their books many different ways. Schools and many organizations around the globe can access the books they need for school, work, career advancement, skill development and the simple love of reading in formats that work for them.
  - o [bookshare.org](http://bookshare.org)
- **The Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD)**, an international organization composed of professionals who represent diverse disciplines, is committed to enhancing the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities across the life span. CLD accomplishes this by promoting and disseminating evidence-based research and practices related to the education of individuals with learning disabilities. In addition, CLD fosters (a) collaboration among professionals; (b) development of leaders in the field; and (c) advocacy for policies that support individuals with learning disabilities at local, state, and national levels.
  - o [council-for-learning-disabilities.org](http://council-for-learning-disabilities.org)
- **The Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD)** is an international professional organization consisting of teachers, psychologists, clinicians, administrators, higher education professionals, parents and others. The major purposes of DLD are: to promote the education and general welfare of persons with learning disabilities to provide a forum for discussion of issues facing the field of learning disabilities; to encourage interaction among the many disciplinary groups whose research and service efforts affect persons with learning disabilities; to foster research regarding the varied disabilities subsumed in the term "learning disabilities" and promote dissemination of research findings; to advocate exemplary professional training practices to insure the highest quality of services in the field of learning disabilities; and to promote exemplary diagnostic and teaching practices in a context of tolerance for new and divergent ideas.
  - o [teachingld.org](http://teachingld.org)
- **The Dyslexia Foundation** is a nonprofit organization, established in 1989 to identify and assist children with dyslexia – to establish higher levels of learning through specialized programs promoting better reading. Their mission is to promote scientific breakthroughs in the early detection, prevention and remediation of dyslexia and related reading difficulties; to disseminate new findings and deploy new evidence-based approaches; and to prevent the suffering caused by reading failure and unlock the full potential of children and adults with dyslexia so that they may personally succeed and contribute to society.
  - o [dyslexiafoundation.org](http://dyslexiafoundation.org)
- **The International Dyslexia Association’s** mission is to create a future for all individuals with dyslexia and other related reading differences so that they may have richer, more robust lives and access to the tools and resources they need.
  - o [dyslexiaida.org](http://dyslexiaida.org)

- **Learning Disabilities Association of America** visualizes a world in which: all individuals with learning disabilities are empowered to thrive and participate fully in society; the incidence of learning disabilities is reduced; and learning disabilities are universally understood and effectively addressed. LDA's mission is to create opportunities for success for all individuals affected by learning disabilities and to reduce the incidence of learning disabilities in future generations.
  - o [ldaamerica.org](http://ldaamerica.org)
- **The National Center for Learning Disabilities'** mission is to improve the lives of the one-in-five children and adults nationwide with learning and attention issues—by empowering parents and young adults, transforming schools and advocating for equal rights and opportunities. They are working to create a society in which every individual possesses the academic, social and emotional skills needed to succeed in school, at work and in life.
  - o [nclld.org](http://nclld.org)
- **Understood's** goal is to help the millions of parents whose children, ages three to 20, have learning and attention issues. They want to empower them to understand their children's issues and relate to their experiences. With this knowledge, parents can make effective choices that propel their children from simply coping to truly thriving.
  - o [understood.org](http://understood.org)

## 7.9. Epilepsy

*"We have entertainers and comedians who make fun of us and that is very heartbreaking. Young people with epilepsy need to know that they can succeed at whatever they want to do if they have a real desire. That the American dream includes them."*



– Tony Coelho, former Congressman and author of the Americans with Disabilities Act

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[Harriet Tubman](#) had epilepsy after acquiring a traumatic brain injury when a slave owner struck her in the head. Additionally, football star Tiki Barber and musicians Lindsey Buckingham, Lil Wayne and Neil Young have epilepsy.

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Epilepsy is a chronic neurological and developmental disorder that affects one in 26 people in their lifetime and 48 in 100,000 people each year. According to the Epilepsy Foundation, epilepsy is the fourth most common neurological disorder. It is characterized by “recurrent, unprovoked seizures.”

Use person-first language when talking about someone with epilepsy. Say “girl with epilepsy.” Do not use epileptic as a noun to describe the person. Say that a person had a seizure, not a fit or an epileptic fit.

### National organizations for people with epilepsy:

- **The American Epilepsy Society** is one of the oldest neurological professional organizations in this country. The Society seeks to promote interdisciplinary communications, scientific investigation and exchange of clinical information about epilepsy.
  - o [aesnet.org](http://aesnet.org)
- **Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy (CURE)** is the leading nongovernmental agency fully committed to funding research in epilepsy. CURE’s mission is to cure epilepsy, transforming and saving millions of lives. They identify and fund cutting-edge research, challenging scientists worldwide to collaborate and innovate in pursuit of this goal.
  - o [cureepilepsy.org](http://cureepilepsy.org)
- **The Epilepsy Foundation** is a community-based, family-led organization dedicated to improving the lives of all people impacted by seizures.
  - o [epilepsy.com](http://epilepsy.com)

## 7.10. Little People/Dwarfism

*“[People with disabilities] is the largest minority group in the country. But yet we do not see ourselves represented. We’re in less than one percent of TV shows and movies. Five years ago, I was sick of those same statistics. And I decided I wanted to take action.”*



– [Nic Novicki](#), Creator of the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge

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*Game of Thrones’ Peter Dinklage, NCIS: Los Angeles’ Linda Hunt and Seinfeld’s Danny Woodburn also are Little People.*

A little person is one of the more than 200 medical conditions known as dwarfism. Dwarfism is a medical or genetic condition that usually results in an adult height of 4'10" or shorter, although in some cases a person with a form of dwarfism may be slightly taller than that. The condition that causes dwarfism may also cause other symptoms. The average height of an adult with dwarfism is 4'0", but typical heights range from 2'8" to 4'8".

Do not crouch or kneel when speaking to a Little Person. Appropriate terms include little person, person of short stature, dwarf or LP, though it is most respectful to refer to someone just by name. The word "midget" is considered highly offensive. A little person may choose not to identify as a person with a disability or part of the disability community.

Because dwarfism can be caused by so many different genetic or medical conditions, it is difficult to get an accurate number of individuals affected. However, according to [Understanding Dwarfism](#), it has been estimated that 30,000 people in the United States are affected.

### National organizations for little people:

- **Little People of America (LPA)** is a national nonprofit organization that provides support and information to people of short stature and their families. LPA has more than 6000 members across the United States and internationally. LPA provides social interaction, parent and peer support, medical support and education, scholarships and grants. Dwarfism cuts across all religions, ethnicities, and economic levels.
  - o [lpaonline.org](http://lpaonline.org)
- **The Human Growth Foundation's** objectives vary with the opportunities to provide support, services and education to children with disorders of growth and adults with growth hormone deficiency, and to the medical profession; and, with the availability of funding and communications media to support the programs and activities, and general office operations necessary to provide them.
  - o [hgfound.org](http://hgfound.org)
- **The Understanding Dwarfism Program's** website is the foundation for a larger educational and awareness program. It can be used as a tool in schools, social discussions, for new parents and in many other areas as a central hub for different educational opportunities. The website is designed to educate the general public with a simple and direct approach focusing on educating and offering people the opportunity to gain a better understanding.
  - o [udprogram.com](http://udprogram.com)

## 7.11. Mental Illness, including Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, Depression and More

*“It’s important to speak up about the things you believe in, because your voice will be heard no matter what position you’re in. I just happen to be in a position where more people would hear my voice.”*



– [Demi Lovato](#), *Barney and Friends*, *Camp Rock*, *Sonny With a Chance*

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Journalist Jane Pauley and actress Catherine Zeta-Jones also have bipolar disorder. *Jane the Virgin*’s [Gina Rodriguez](#) and *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*’s [Rachel Bloom](#) have anxiety. Actress Kristen Bell and television host Ellen DeGeneres have depression.

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A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day. Each person will have different experiences, even people with the same diagnosis. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one-in-five Americans lives with some form of mental illness. Say “person with a mental illness,” not “crazy,” “psycho,” or “lunatic.”

Anxiety is made up of a number of disorders that cause fear as well as severe worrying to the point where it begins to take over a person’s life, according to NAMI. It is classified as the most common health disorder in the U.S. Although general anxiety is classified as normal, anxiety disorders are more difficult to cope with. Eighteen percent of adults in the U.S. have an anxiety disorder. Eight percent of children experience anxiety disorders as well.

Bipolar disorder is defined as a brain disorder that tends to cause unusual shifts in mood, energy and day-to-day activities. Changes in mood are more evident for those who possess bipolar disorder. The signs and symptoms of bipolar disorder often consist of altered sleep patterns, unusual behaviors and changing activity levels. Many people who are diagnosed with bipolar disorder have another illness such as anxiety disorder or substance abuse. Family genes and brain structure contribute to the disorder. Two and half percent of the U.S. population has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Eighty-three percent of cases are classified as severe. According to the NAMI, an estimated [10 million people](#) live with bipolar disorder.

Depression is a serious mental illness that negatively impacts how a person feels, thinks and behaves around others. Feelings of sadness and a loss of interest are the most obvious symptoms of depression, according to the American Psychiatric Association. If not treated appropriately, emotional and physical problems can occur as a result of depression. Symptoms of depression can range from mild to severe. Depression can come into a person's life at any time, but the most common times are the late teens or mid 20's. The death of a loved one, loss of a job or end of a relationship can result in severe depression. Seven percent of the population has had at least one depressive episode, which are 16 million adults in total. Depression does not discriminate by racial background or socioeconomic status.

### National organizations for people with mental illness:

- **The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law** was founded in 1972 by a group of committed lawyers and professionals in mental health and mental disabilities. In decades of landmark advocacy, the Bazelon Center has led the way in efforts to define and advance the rights of people with mental disabilities in many aspects of their lives. On the federal policy front, the Bazelon Center's leadership in the mental health arena is reflected in laws and policies that today protect the rights of people with mental disabilities and fund critical services for them.
  - o [bazelon.org](http://bazelon.org)
- **Mental Health America (MHA)**, founded in 1909, is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to helping all Americans achieve wellness by living mentally healthier lives. Their work is driven by their commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, and integrated care and treatment for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.
  - o [mentalhealthamerica.net](http://mentalhealthamerica.net)
- **The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** is the foundation for hundreds of NAMI State Organizations, NAMI Affiliates and volunteer leaders who work in local communities to raise awareness and provide essential and free education, advocacy and support group programs. NAMI is a nonprofit membership organization.
  - o [nami.org](http://nami.org)
- **The National Council for Behavioral Health** is the unifying voice of America's health care organizations that deliver mental health and addictions treatment and services. Together with 2,900 member organizations serving more than 10 million adults, children and families living with mental illnesses and addictions, the National Council is committed to all Americans having access to comprehensive, high-quality care that affords every opportunity for recovery.
  - o [thenationalcouncil.org](http://thenationalcouncil.org)

## 7.12. Mobility Impairments Requiring the Use of a Wheelchair

*“I always say separate your abilities from your disabilities. You know, if I could play the violin, I don’t have to play it standing up. I can play it sitting down and so on.”*



– Itzhak Perlman, Emmy and Grammy-award winning classical musician

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Journalist John Charles Hockenberry and actor Daryl “Chill” Mitchell also are wheelchair users. Internationally renowned physicist Stephen Hawking also was a wheelchair user.

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People can use a wheelchair for a large number of reasons. They may have been born with a condition that requires the use of a wheelchair or acquired the need to use a wheelchair after an injury. The reason someone uses a wheelchair is private health information and must be volunteered only if the person wants to disclose that information. Wheelchair users can require their wheelchairs all the time, some of the time or just when they travel certain distances. No matter how often they use their wheelchair, they are not “wheelchair bound.” In reality, wheelchairs and other assistive devices represent independence for their users, not a burden. Wheelchair users require physical accessibility such as ramps, door buttons and lowered surfaces.

Consider a person’s wheelchair part of the person. It is not polite to touch or lean on the chair unless the person gives permission. Never pat a person in a wheelchair on the head. Do not crouch or kneel to speak with someone in a wheelchair. Use a chair to speak at eye level. Still, eye contact is more important than eye level.

According to the [NIH](#), 2.2 million people in the United States use a wheelchair, and 6.5 million people use a cane, walker or crutches.

### National organizations for people who use wheelchairs:

- **The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation** is dedicated to advancing quality of life and discovering cures for spinal cord injury in the here and now. Its mission is curing spinal cord injury by funding innovative research, and improving the quality of life for people living with paralysis through grants, information and advocacy.
  - o [christopherreeve.org](http://christopherreeve.org)
- **Humanity & Inclusion**, formerly Handicap International, is a 35-year-old independent organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster that was

a co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, Humanity & Inclusion (the new name of Handicap International) is a 35-year-old independent and impartial organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. With local partners, they run programs in health and rehabilitation and social and economic integration.

- o [hi-us.org](http://hi-us.org)
- **Paralyzed Veterans of America**, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1946, has a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of their members – veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction. They advocate for health care, research and education, employment, benefits and independence for their members.
  - o [pva.org](http://pva.org)
- **The United Spinal Association** is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of all people living with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), including veterans, and providing support and information to loved ones, care providers and professionals. Their goal is to provide people living with SCI/D programs and services that maximize their independence and enable them to remain active in their communities.
  - o [unitedspinal.org](http://unitedspinal.org)

### 7.13. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

*“In order to practice and be good at the art of magic, you have to do the same thing over and over and over again. Little did I know how much Obsessive Compulsive Disorder was a positive aspect of becoming a magician and also becoming a performer.”*



– [Marc Summers](#), TV Host, *Double Dare*, *Unwrapped*

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Actress Jessica Alba and host Howie Mandel also have OCD.

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Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a mental health disorder that affects 3.3 million people. According to National Institute of Mental Health, OCD is characterized by intrusive thoughts that produce anxiety (obsessions), repetitive behaviors that are engaged in to reduce anxiety (compulsions) or a combination of both. People with OCD are unable to control their anxiety-producing thoughts and their need to engage in ritualized behaviors. Although OCD symptoms typically develop during teen years or early adulthood, research shows that at least one-third of adult cases began during childhood.

OCD has many stereotypes and misconceptions. Do not use OCD as an adjective for someone who obsesses over certain things but has not been formally diagnosed as having OCD.

### National organizations for people with OCD:

- **The International OCD Foundation**'s mission is to help everyone affected by OCD and related disorders to live full and productive lives. Their aim is to increase access to effective treatment, end the stigma associated with mental health issues and foster a community for those affected by OCD and the professionals who treat them.
  - o [iocdf.org](http://iocdf.org)
- **The National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)** is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI is an association of hundreds of local affiliates, state organizations and volunteers who work in the community to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need.
  - o [nami.org](http://nami.org)
- **The Peace of Mind Foundation** is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help improve the quality of life of people with OCD through education, research, support and advocacy. The Foundation created and fully subsidizes the OCD Challenge, a free online self-help website for individuals with OCD.
  - o [peaceofmind.com](http://peaceofmind.com)

## Appendix A: Resources

### A.1. Audio Description Services

Audio Description, also known as Descriptive Audio or Video Description, narrates the relevant visual information contained in a video and is an accommodation for blind and low-vision viewers. These descriptions fit into natural pauses in the video's audio track to provide context, to clarify speakers, and to articulate visual elements that are critical to gain a comprehensive understanding of the video.

- **Deluxe Media Services'** in-house audio description department has described more than 130 feature films. Certified by the American Council for the blind, they have a database of more than 200 professional voice talents. They can provide audio description in foreign languages.
  - 818-565-3600 (Los Angeles location)
  - 212-824-5388 (New York City location)
  - [bydeluxemedia.com](http://bydeluxemedia.com)
- **Descriptive Video Works** specializes in descriptive video for broadcast programming and feature films. They have completed audio description for more than 20,000 television shows and feature films. Their audio description for U.S. networks and film studios give 22 million American viewers access to a wide variety of broadcast programming.
  - 866-818-3897
  - [descriptivevideoworks.com](http://descriptivevideoworks.com)
- **WGBH's Media Access Group** has pioneered and delivered captioned and described media for more than 30 years to people in their homes, classrooms at work and in the community. WGBH serves 35 million people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision. For feature films, DVS® Theatrical® allows moviegoers who are blind to hear descriptions of the film's key visual elements without distracting other patrons.
  - 617-300-3600
  - [access@wgbh.org](mailto:access@wgbh.org)
  - [access.wgbh.org](http://access.wgbh.org)
- **Woman of Her Word** provides the specialized voiceover style required for audio description. Michele Spitz has produced and narrated AD for 50 films, as well as voiced AD for museum tours, educational videos and audio newsletters that provide access to information for the low vision and blind communities. Michele is a disability advocate, public speaker and philanthropist supporting arts and accessibility.
  - [womanofherword.com](http://womanofherword.com)
  - [michele@womanofherword.com](mailto:michele@womanofherword.com)

## A.2. Closed Captioning Services

Closed captioning and subtitling are both processes of displaying the audio portion of a television program or video as text on the screen or other visual display, providing a critical link to news, entertainment and information for individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

- **3Play Media** provides closed captioning, transcription and audio description services to make video accessibility easy. They are based in Boston, MA and have been operating since 2007.
  - o 617-764-5189
  - o [info@3playmedia.com](mailto:info@3playmedia.com)
  - o [3playmedia.com](http://3playmedia.com)
  
- **Closed Captioning Services** was established in 1989, CCS offers a broad array of services including, live captioning, offline captioning, multi-language captioning, internet captioning, audio description and conference/meeting captioning from their full-service facilities in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania and North Hollywood, California.
  - o North Hollywood: 818-775-0410
  - o Canonsburg: 724-514-4000
  - o [ccscaption.com](http://ccscaption.com)
  
- **The National Captioning Institute** is a nonprofit corporation created in 1979 whose primary purposes are to deliver effective captioning services and encourage, develop and fund the continuing development of captioning, subtitling and other media access services for the benefit of people who require additional access to auditory and visual information. In 1979, NCI developed the decoder box, and a decade later, NCI partnered with ITT Corporation to invent the first caption-decoding microchip for television sets.
  - o 818-238-0068
  - o [jagudelo@ncicap.org](mailto:jagudelo@ncicap.org)
  - o [ncicap.org](http://ncicap.org)
  
- **WGBH's Media Access Group** provides captioning for television shows, feature films and online videos. Its MoPix® service is a patented Rear Window® Captioning System that enables theater patrons who are deaf and hard of hearing to watch closed-captioned movies along with the general audience during any regular showing of a captioned film.
  - o 617-300-3600
  - o [access@wgbh.org](mailto:access@wgbh.org)
  - o [access.wgbh.org](http://access.wgbh.org)

## A.3. Sign Language Interpreters

The world of entertainment is a small one. Projects are produced for audiences worldwide and communication is essential for success. Interpreting in the theatre, television or film industry requires knowledge of Sign Language and knowledge of the industry. When hiring an interpreter through a service, be sure to let them know it is for an entertainment industry event.

### A.3.1. National

- **The National Alliance of Black Interpreter's** mission is to promote excellence and empowerment of African Americans/Blacks in the profession of sign language interpreting in the context of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual environment. NAOBI is the only national organization that supports sign language interpreters from the African diaspora, and whose goal is to increase the talent pool of skilled African American/ Black Interpreters nationwide.
  - o [naobidc.org](http://naobidc.org)
- **The Sign Language Company** provides behind-the-camera interpreters to facilitate communication among the actor, director and other cast members on the set, in pre- and post-production meetings, cast reads and rehearsals, both in the studio and on location. The Sign Language Company provides services in Los Angeles, California and around the entire country.
  - o (888) 684-8884/(818) 728-4241
  - o [contact@signlanguageco.com](mailto:contact@signlanguageco.com)
  - o [signlanguageco.com](http://signlanguageco.com)

### A.3.2. Los Angeles Area

- **LIFESIGNS, Inc.** was established in 1986 to provide emergency sign language interpreting services for health care, mental health and law enforcement agencies. LIFESIGNS, Inc. responds to 40 to 50 emergencies a month and approximately 10,000+ requests annually. LIFESIGNS, Inc. provides a full spectrum of interpreter services in ten counties in the greater Los Angeles area, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
  - o (888) 930-7776 Toll-Free Voice
  - o (323) 550-4210 Voice
  - o [lifesigns@lifesignsinc.org](mailto:lifesigns@lifesignsinc.org)
  - o [lifesignsinc.org](http://lifesignsinc.org)
- **RISE Interpreting** is a family-owned small business based in Riverside, California. RISE launched in the summer 2007 by the brother and sister team of Phil Carmona and Adonis Parker. Each is nationally certified and combined have more than 20 years of professional interpreting experience. Their mission is to make effective communication fully accessible between Deaf and Hearing individuals through quality interpreting and community education.
  - o (951) 565-4422
  - o [riseinterpreting.com](http://riseinterpreting.com)

### A.3.3. New York City Region

- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Interpreting Services (DHIS), Inc.** serves the New York City and the tri-state area. Established in 1996, DHIS provides ASL, spoken English, signed English, CART, foreign sign language and other services.

- o 212-647-1092
- o [info@dhisnyc.com](mailto:info@dhisnyc.com)
- o [dhisnyc.com](http://dhisnyc.com)
- **LC Interpreting Services** provides interpreters for communication access for people who are deaf on the sets of TV shows, talk shows, game shows, reality TV and more. Sign Language NYC is based in New York, NY.
  - o 917-210-5804 (Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. ET)
  - o 347-842-0188 (After Hours and Weekends)
  - o [info@lcinterpretingservices.com](mailto:info@lcinterpretingservices.com)
  - o [signlanguagenyc.com](http://signlanguagenyc.com)

#### A.4. Disability Advocacy Resources

- **Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts:** The Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts advocates for full diversity American theatre, film and television. They promote authentic dialogue about race, culture and disability that embraces the complexity of underlying social and historical issues.
  - o [info@inclusioninthearts.org](mailto:info@inclusioninthearts.org)
  - o [inclusioninthearts.org](http://inclusioninthearts.org)
- **CinemAbility:** This documentary takes a detailed look at the evolution of disability in entertainment through interviews with filmmakers, studio executives, film historians and celebrities on the powerful impact that entertainment and the media has on society.
  - o [cine@goldpictures.com](mailto:cine@goldpictures.com)
  - o [cinemability.com](http://cinemability.com)
- **City of Los Angeles Department on Disability:** The Department on Disability, on behalf of the City of Los Angeles, is committed to ensuring full access to employment, programs, facilities and services; through strategic management and partnership education, advocacy, training, research and improved service delivery; for the benefit of persons with disabilities, providers of essential resources and policymakers.
  - o [Geoffrey.Straniere@lacity.org](mailto:Geoffrey.Straniere@lacity.org)
  - o [disability.lacity.org](http://disability.lacity.org)
- **Easterseals Disability Film Challenge:** The Easterseals Disability Film Challenge gives filmmakers—with and without disabilities—the opportunity to collaborate to tell unique stories that showcase disability in its many forms. The film challenge is a weekend-long filmmaking contest, open to all, that provides a platform for new voices in the entertainment industry. Each year, aspiring storytellers are prompted to creatively write, produce and complete a short film. Challenge winners receive invaluable access to entertainment professionals, opening the door to an industry notoriously difficult to enter.
  - o [info@disabilityfilmchallenge.com](mailto:info@disabilityfilmchallenge.com)
  - o [disabilityfilmchallenge.com](http://disabilityfilmchallenge.com)

- **GLAAD:** As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD is the only organization to track the number of characters with disabilities on scripted television:  
<https://www.glaad.org/whereweareontv17>.
  - [mtownsend@glaad.org](mailto:mtownsend@glaad.org)
  - [glaad.org](http://glaad.org)
- **Hands On:** Hands On offers interpreted performances in the nonprofit theatrical arena, as well as information on deafness and the arts across the country.
  - [info@handson.org](mailto:info@handson.org)
  - [handson.org](http://handson.org)
- **Hollywood, Health & Society (HH&S)** provides entertainment industry professionals with accurate and timely information for health, safety and national security story lines. A program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, HH&S recognizes the profound impact that entertainment media have on individual knowledge and behavior.
  - [hhs@usc.edu](mailto:hhs@usc.edu)
  - 800-283-0676
  - [hollywoodhealthandsociety.org](http://hollywoodhealthandsociety.org)
- **Media Access Awards:** The Media Access Awards honors members of the entertainment and broadcast industries for their efforts in promoting awareness of the disability experience, accessibility for people with disabilities and the accurate depiction of characters with disabilities.
  - [DebCalla@CallaProductions.com](mailto:DebCalla@CallaProductions.com)
  - [mediaaccessawards.com](http://mediaaccessawards.com)
- **National Arts & Disability Center:** The National Arts & Disability Center promotes the full inclusion of audiences and artists with disabilities in all facets of the arts community.
  - 310-825-5054
  - [nadc.ucla.edu](http://nadc.ucla.edu)
- **ReelAbilities Film Festival:** Initiated in New York in 2007, the ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest festival in the U.S. dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of people with different disabilities. The festival presents award winning films by and about people with disabilities in multiple locations throughout each hosting city. Post-screening discussions and other engaging programs bring together the community to explore, discuss, embrace and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience.
  - [ReelAbilitiesNA@JCCManhattan.org](mailto:ReelAbilitiesNA@JCCManhattan.org)
  - [reelabilities.org](http://reelabilities.org)

- **RespectAbility:** RespectAbility is working to change the narrative in Hollywood to ensure accurate and positive cultural media portrayals of people with disabilities. RespectAbility partners with leaders in the entertainment industry on the full inclusion of people with disabilities – both in front of and behind the camera – and is inviting additional partners to help move the needle on three core issues: 1) inclusion and diversity in Hollywood; 2) more positive and accurate portrayals of people with disabilities; and 3) the employment of people with disabilities.
  - [LaurenA@RespectAbility.org](mailto:LaurenA@RespectAbility.org)
  - [respectability.org](http://respectability.org)
- **Ruderman Family Foundation:** The Ruderman Family Foundation believes that inclusion and understanding of all people is essential to a fair and flourishing community. Guided by their Jewish values, they advocate for and advance the inclusion of people with disabilities throughout our society.
  - [rudermanfoundation.org](http://rudermanfoundation.org)

## A.5. Hiring Performers With Disabilities

- **The Art of Autism:** The Art of Autism is an international collaboration of talented individuals who have come together to display the creative abilities of people on the autism spectrum and others who are neurodivergent. They provide a forum to connect with those who wish to employ these abilities.
  - [the-art-of-autism.com](http://the-art-of-autism.com)
- **Born to Act Players:** The Born to Act Players is a unique theater company comprised of professional performers with and without disabilities. Many members of the company are working actors.
  - [BTAP@earthlink.net](mailto:BTAP@earthlink.net)
  - [borntoactplayers.com](http://borntoactplayers.com)
- **The Divas With Disabilities Project:** This campaign is bringing together women of color with disabilities throughout the world to reject and discredit stereotyped imagery historically portrayed by mass media. Its mission is to help shape the perception of what “disability” looks like by promoting women of color through various media platforms.
  - [donnawalton@leggtalk.com](mailto:donnawalton@leggtalk.com)
  - [divaswithdisabilities.com](http://divaswithdisabilities.com)
- **Down Syndrome in Arts & Media (DSiAM):** DSiAM is a casting liaison service for individuals with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities like William’s syndrome, Cerebral Palsy and those on the autism spectrum.
  - [Gail@DSiAM.org](mailto:Gail@DSiAM.org)
  - [dsiam.org](http://dsiam.org)

- **Deaf West Theatre:** Deaf West Theatre Company serves as a model for deaf theater worldwide. Founded to directly improve and enrich the cultural lives of the 1.2 million deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who live in the Los Angeles area, it is the first professional resident Sign Language Theatre in the western half of the United States.
  - [info@deafwest.org](mailto:info@deafwest.org)
  - [deafwest.org](http://deafwest.org)
- **Coach E Productions:** Elaine Hall was a top Hollywood acting coach when her life changed dramatically after her son was diagnosed with autism. After merging her interests of acting and autism to create The Miracle Project, Hall's Coach E Productions provides on-set acting coaching, consulting and production advising.
  - [coache@coacheproductions.com](mailto:coache@coacheproductions.com)
  - [coacheproductions.com](http://coacheproductions.com)
- **Kazarian/Measures/Ruskin & Associates (KMR):** KMR is one of the country's leading bi-coastal talent agencies. The diversity department specializes in character actors and models with diverse disabilities for film, television, commercials, theatre, print and live appearances. KMR is a resource for finding just the right actor for that "hard to find" character when it comes to a disability.
  - [GWilliamson@kmrtalent.com](mailto:GWilliamson@kmrtalent.com)
  - [kmrtalent.com](http://kmrtalent.com)
- **The Miracle Project:** The Miracle Project provides individuals with autism and other disabilities tools to build communication, social skills, community and greater self-esteem through inclusive theater, film and expressive arts programs. This acclaimed arts program was documented in the HBO double Emmy Award-winning documentary, AUTISM: THE MUSICAL. The Miracle Project has an advanced professional training program for those interested in pursuing a career in the entertainment field.
  - [elaine@themiracleproject.org](mailto:elaine@themiracleproject.org)
  - [themiracleproject.org](http://themiracleproject.org)
- **National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD):** In 1967 when NTD began, Sign Language was seen as a stigma. By placing Sign Language on stage, the NTD showed the world that Sign Language was a beautiful, powerful, visual language.
  - [info@ntd.org](mailto:info@ntd.org)
  - [ntd.org](http://ntd.org)
- **Performing Arts Studio West (PASW):** Founded in 1998, PASW represents culturally and disability diverse actors who have been featured in more than 2000 roles in film, television, theater, music videos, commercials, industrials and print ads. PASW also provides hands-on individualized training, career management and on-location support.
  - [info@pastudiowest.com](mailto:info@pastudiowest.com)
  - [pastudiowest.com](http://pastudiowest.com)

- **Trained Actors with Real Disabilities for Film & TV:** This Facebook page is building a database of trained and highly skilled actors who have real physical challenges, to promote for all-inclusive diversity in Entertainment.
  - o [staskelv@gmail.com](mailto:staskelv@gmail.com)
  - o [facebook.com/TrainedActorsWhoAreDifferent](https://www.facebook.com/TrainedActorsWhoAreDifferent)

## A.6. Hiring People With Disabilities Behind The Scenes

- **AFA HUB:** AFA Hub is a media and technology organization that provides vocational training in animation, video game design, film, visual effects, coding and 360 VR. It provides media & technology training to reduce the current unemployment rate of people with disabilities. AFA also has programs to assist students in finding employment after they finish their training.
  - o [actorsforautism@aol.com](mailto:actorsforautism@aol.com)
  - o [afahub.com](http://afahub.com)
- **Exceptional Minds (EM):** EM is a nonprofit vocational school and working studio preparing young adults on the autism spectrum for careers in digital animation and visual effects.
  - o [susan@exceptionalmindsstudio.org](mailto:susan@exceptionalmindsstudio.org)
  - o [exceptionalmindsstudio.org](http://exceptionalmindsstudio.org)
- **From the Heart Productions:** From the Heart Productions is dedicated to helping independent filmmakers with unique films that contribute to society get their films funded.
  - o [info@fromtheheartproductions.com](mailto:info@fromtheheartproductions.com)
  - o [fromtheheartproductions.com](http://fromtheheartproductions.com)
- **Inclusion Films:** Inclusion Films, started in 2007 by veteran filmmaker Joey Travolta, teaches filmmaking to children and adults with developmental disabilities. In addition to workshops in California, they travel the country doing short film camps for children and teens with autism.
  - o [Rachel@InclusionFilms.com](mailto:Rachel@InclusionFilms.com)
  - o [inclusionfilms.com](http://inclusionfilms.com)

## A.7. Disability Media Sources

- For more than 25 years, *ABILITY Magazine* has been the leading publication for health, disability and human potential. It shatters myths and stereotypes surrounding disabilities and brings attention to the issues, showing disability is part of the fabric in our lives. It covers the latest on topics people read every day, like health and sports. Writers and contributors include MDs, PhDs, JDs, best-selling authors, U.S. senators and advocates. *ABILITY Magazine* is the first to embed VOICEYE (a high-density matrix barcode

system) on its editorial pages to hear print through smartphones and tablets, giving greater access to people with low vision, blindness or reading challenges in 58 languages.

- o [abilitymagazine.com](http://abilitymagazine.com)
- **Disability Scoop** is the nation's largest news organization devoted to covering developmental disabilities. Readers include teachers, special educators, school administrators, therapists and other disability professionals in addition to parents and caregivers. What's more, lawmakers and the nation's most influential disability advocates rely on Disability Scoop to stay in the know.
  - o [disabilityscoop.com](http://disabilityscoop.com)
- **The Mighty** is a digital health community created to empower and connect people facing health challenges and disabilities. Contributors and partners include almost 300 nonprofits and thousands of writers with all kinds of disabilities. They contribute prose, stories, videos and other media on topics important to them, highlighting how disability fits into daily life.
  - o [themighty.com](http://themighty.com)
- A colorful, award-winning lifestyle magazine, **New Mobility**, encourages the integration of active wheelchair users into mainstream society with articles on advocacy, travel, employment, relationships, recreation, media, and more. Ninety percent of its writers live with disabilities, creating a vibrant culture of disability journalism and advocacy within each monthly edition. *New Mobility* is the official publication of the United Spinal Association. It advances the organization's mission to improve quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries.
  - o [newmobility.com](http://newmobility.com)
- **NOS Magazine** is a source of thought and analysis about neurodiversity culture; a culture in which neurological differences in the brain (like Autism) are celebrated as natural. It includes long form journalism, reviews of pop culture and more. NOS stands for 'Not Otherwise Specified,' a tongue-in-cheek reference to when a condition does not strictly fit the diagnostic criteria. People who identify as a part of the neurodiversity community will be given publication preference in order to ensure that this publication is a voice of the community.
  - o [nosmag.org](http://nosmag.org)
- **The RespectAbility Report** is a political commentary on U.S. elections with a focus on disability issues. Published by the nonpartisan, nonprofit organization RespectAbility, the report does not endorse candidates or legislation. Chief political writers for *The RespectAbility Report* include Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, former political and training director for *Campaigns & Elections* magazine and regular columnist for *The Daily Record*, and Lauren Appelbaum, former political researcher for NBC News. A majority of its writers are people with a variety of visible and invisible disabilities.
  - o [therespectabilityreport.org](http://therespectabilityreport.org)

## A.8. Training Programs for Minorities

- **The National Hispanic Media Coalition Writers Program** is for advanced writers who are interested in writing TV scripts for genres in comedy and drama.
  - 626-792-6462 (Pasadena Office)
  - 202-596-2063 (DC Office)
  - [nhmc.org/writersprogram](http://nhmc.org/writersprogram)
- **The Second City – Bob Curry Fellowship** seeks diverse candidates from ethnic backgrounds who are interested in the world of acting for their 10-week professional development program.
  - 323-464-8542
  - [outreach@secondcity.com](mailto:outreach@secondcity.com)
  - [secondcity.com/diversity-inclusion](http://secondcity.com/diversity-inclusion)
- **The CBS Writers Mentoring Program** offers a career development internship preparing writers for employment in TV. Once selected, members are mentored by a CBS network or studio executive in which feedback is given as well as advice and support regarding the interns career goals.
  - 212-975-4321
  - [cbscorporation.com/diversity/diversity-institute/writers-mentoring-program](http://cbscorporation.com/diversity/diversity-institute/writers-mentoring-program)
- **The Sundance Native Film Program** focuses on individuals of Native descent ensuring their work is made and shown in Native territories.
  - 310-360-1981
  - [institute@sundance.org](mailto:institute@sundance.org)
  - [sundance.org/programs/native-program#](http://sundance.org/programs/native-program#)
- **The T. Howard Foundation** offers internships that are geared toward minority students interested in the multimedia and entertainment industry. They have a comprehensive approach for dealing with diversity. The paid internships provide networking opportunities, scholarships, and professional development training.
  - 301-588-6767
  - [inquiry@t-howard.org](mailto:inquiry@t-howard.org)
  - [t-howard.org/internship](http://t-howard.org/internship)
- **WGAW Women in Film** connects selected members with professionals who offer advice and guidance. This is an opportunity for women to learn about business practices, focus their efforts and hone their skills that are vital to the entertainment industry so that they are able to take advantage of the experiences that are offered.
  - 323-935-2211
  - [info@wif.org](mailto:info@wif.org)
  - [womeninfilm.org](http://womeninfilm.org)

## A.9. Employment Resources

Companies including [Comcast NBCUniversal](#), [IBM](#), [JP Morgan Chase](#), [Microsoft](#), [UPS](#), [Pepsi](#), [Starbucks](#), [Walgreens](#) and others have shown that employees with disabilities are loyal, successful and help them make more money. That's because people with disabilities bring unique characteristics, talents, innovations and loyalty to the workplace that benefit employers and organizations. If we find the right jobs for the right people, it can and does increase the bottom line of companies. People with disabilities can work in any field; television shows and films should reflect this.

### A.9.1. Business-Focused Disability Organizations

- **Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities** provides corporate sponsors with a customized value-added benefit in return for their corporate support through a number of products, services and events.
  - [cosdonline.org](http://cosdonline.org)
- **Disability Solutions** delivers custom solutions in outreach, recruiting, talent management and compliance. They focus on helping corporations tap new channels for qualified talent, manage culture change, leverage federal and state hiring incentives, respond to a changing regulatory environment and strengthen their workforce through diversity.
  - [disabilitysolutionsatwork.org](http://disabilitysolutionsatwork.org)
- **The National Business & Disability Council at the Viscardi Center** is an employer organization and comprehensive resource for disability best practices. Its corporate partners are predominantly Fortune 1000 companies and government employers committed to disability diversity. By becoming a NBDC Corporate Partner, companies can proactively strengthen and diversify their workforce as well as comply with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal regulations.
  - [viscardicenter.org/services/nalt-business-disability-council](http://viscardicenter.org/services/nalt-business-disability-council)
- **The National Organization on Disability** promotes the full participation of America's 56 million people with disabilities in all aspects of life. Their subject matter experts in disability and employment provide consulting services to public agencies and employers seeking to harness the unique talents that people with disabilities can bring to the workforce.
  - [nod.org](http://nod.org)
- **Return on Disability** aims to establish disability as the number one emerging global market. They provide strategic advice that delivers a customized plan to attract people with disabilities to companies, product and experience development that helps companies adjust their products, customer experience and recruiting process, and investments by delivering outperformance through identifying public companies that profit by service people with disabilities.
  - [rod-group.com](http://rod-group.com)

- **Talent Acquisition Portal** led by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and The National Employment Team (NET) in partnership with disABLEDperson, Inc. TAP is an online system that includes both a national talent pool of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) candidates looking for employment and a job posting system for businesses looking to hire individuals with disability. TAP was developed in response to the need and demand of businesses who needed access to a centralized talent pool of individuals with disabilities, but who also needed the ability to connect to support at the local, state, and national level.
  - o [tapability.org](http://tapability.org)
- **The U.S. Business Leadership Network** unites businesses around disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain and marketplace. USBLN has more than 130 corporate partners spanning the technology, healthcare, financial, transportation, entertainment and retail industries.
  - o [usbln.org](http://usbln.org)

### A.9.2. Resources for Employers

- **RespectAbility:** A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, RespectAbility understands we are a stronger community when we live up to our values – when we are welcoming, diverse, moral and respect one another. With a mission of fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for people with disabilities, RespectAbility is a resource for employers looking to hire and retain employees with disabilities. RespectAbility offers best practices, free webinars and factual resources so people with disabilities can achieve the education, training, jobs, security and good health that everyone needs and deserves.
  - o [respectability.org](http://respectability.org)
- **The Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace. JAN is the leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues
  - o [askjan.org](http://askjan.org)
- **ADA National Network:** The network provides information, guidance and training on how to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in order to support the mission of the ADA to “assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.” Funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), the network consists of 10 Regional ADA Centers located throughout the United States and an ADA Knowledge Translation Center (ADAKTC). Each Regional ADA Center focuses on its region’s unique needs.
  - o [adata.org](http://adata.org)

- **Disability Employment Tracker:** The Disability Employment Tracker™ is a free, confidential company assessment that measures disability and employment policies and practices and includes a confidential section on veteran employment practice.
  - [nod.org/services/tracker.html](http://nod.org/services/tracker.html)
- **Disability Equality Index (DEI):** The DEI is a national, transparent, annual benchmarking tool that offers businesses an opportunity to receive an objective score, on a scale of zero (0) to 100, on their disability inclusion policies and practices.
  - [disabilityequalityindex.org](http://disabilityequalityindex.org)
- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion:** EARN is a free resource that helps employers tap the benefits of disability diversity. They educate public- and private-sector organizations on ways to build inclusive workplace cultures and empower them to become leaders in the employment and advancement of people with disabilities.
  - [askearn.org](http://askearn.org)
- **Getting Hired:** An Allegis Group Company, GettingHired is a recruitment solution dedicated to helping inclusive employers hire professional individuals and veterans with disabilities.
  - [gettinghired.com](http://gettinghired.com)
- With the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, Congress created the **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)** to assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance.
  - [osha.gov/employers](http://osha.gov/employers)
- **The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)** is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities. ODEP promotes the adoption and implementation of policy strategies that will impact the employment of people with disabilities.
  - [dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep)
- **The Workplace Initiative:** The Workplace Initiative helps companies recruit, hire and retain the largest untapped labor pool in the country – people with disabilities. This site showcases facts and case studies to show how disability inclusion drives business value. The Disability Employment and Inclusion Guide includes information needed to start or enhance your disability employment and inclusion program.
  - [workplaceinitiative.org](http://workplaceinitiative.org)

### A.9.3. Consortium for Citizens With Disabilities

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), headquartered in Washington D.C., is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. Since 1973, CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities and their families. CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the 54 million children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into the mainstream of society. There are more than 100 CCD member organizations.

Organization Name	Website	Contact Phone #
ACCSES	<a href="http://www.accses.org">www.accses.org</a>	(202) 349-4259
Advance CLASS/Allies for Independence	<a href="http://www.alliesforindependence.org">www.alliesforindependence.org</a>	(202) 434-7385
American Association of Pediatrics	<a href="http://www.aap.org">www.aap.org</a>	(202) 347-8600
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	<a href="http://www.aapmr.org">www.aapmr.org</a>	(202) 466-6550
American Association of People with Disabilities	<a href="http://www.aapd-dc.org">www.aapd-dc.org</a>	(202) 457-0046
American Association on Health and Disability	<a href="http://www.aahd.us">www.aahd.us</a>	(301) 545-6140
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	<a href="http://www.aaid.org">www.aaid.org</a>	(202) 387-1968
American Bar Association Commission on Disability Rights	<a href="http://www.americanbar.org/disability">www.americanbar.org/disability</a>	(202) 662-1570
American Civil Liberties Union Foundation	<a href="http://www.aclu.org">www.aclu.org</a>	(202) 715-0806
American Council of the Blind	<a href="http://www.acb.org">www.acb.org</a>	(202) 467-5081
American Counseling Association	N/A	(703) 823-9800
American Dance Therapy Association	<a href="http://www.adta.org">www.adta.org</a>	(202) 686-1637
American Diabetes Association	<a href="http://www.diabetes.org">www.diabetes.org</a>	(703) 549-1500
American Foundation for the Blind	<a href="http://www.afb.org">www.afb.org</a>	(202) 469-6831
American Music Therapy Association	<a href="http://www.musictherapy.org">www.musictherapy.org</a>	(301) 589-3300
American Network of Community Options and Resources	<a href="http://www.ancor.org">www.ancor.org</a>	(703) 535-7850
American Occupational Therapy Association	<a href="http://www.aota.org">www.aota.org</a>	(301) 652-2682
American Physical Therapy Association	<a href="http://www.apta.org">www.apta.org</a>	(703) 684-2782
American Psychological Association	<a href="http://www.apa.org/ppo">www.apa.org/ppo</a>	(202) 336-5500
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association	<a href="http://www.asha.org">www.asha.org</a>	(202) 624-7750
American Therapeutic Recreation Association	<a href="http://www.atra-tr.org">www.atra-tr.org</a>	(202) 466-6550
APSE: The Network on Employment	<a href="http://www.apse.org">www.apse.org</a>	(414) 581-3032
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs	<a href="http://www.ataporg.org">www.ataporg.org</a>	(202) 344-5674
Association of University Centers on Disabilities	<a href="http://www.aucd.org">www.aucd.org</a>	(301) 588-8252

Organization Name	Website	Contact Phone #
Autism Society of America	<a href="http://www.autism-society.org">www.autism-society.org</a>	(301) 657-0881
Autistic Self-Advocacy Network	<a href="http://www.autisticadvocacy.org">www.autisticadvocacy.org</a>	(202) 596-1056
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law	<a href="http://www.bazelon.org">www.bazelon.org</a>	(202) 467-5730
Brain Injury Association of America	<a href="http://www.biausa.org">www.biausa.org</a>	(703) 761-0750
Center for Public Representation	<a href="http://www.cpr-ma.org">www.cpr-ma.org</a>	(202) 854-1270
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	<a href="http://www.cbpp.org">www.cbpp.org</a>	(202) 408-1080
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation	<a href="http://www.christopherreeve.org">www.christopherreeve.org</a>	(800) 225-0292
Community Legal Services	<a href="http://www.clsphila.org">www.clsphila.org</a>	(215) 227-2417
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf	<a href="http://www.ceasd.org">www.ceasd.org</a>	(301) 990-2847
Council for Exceptional Children	<a href="http://www.cec.sped.org">www.cec.sped.org</a>	(703) 264-9406
Council for Learning Disabilities	<a href="http://www.cldinternational.org">www.cldinternational.org</a>	(301) 549-1779
Council of Administrators of Special Education	<a href="http://www.casecec.org">www.casecec.org</a>	(478) 333-6892
Council of Parent Attorney and Advocates	<a href="http://www.copaa.org">www.copaa.org</a>	(844) 426-7224
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation		(301) 519-8023
Dialysis Patient Citizens	<a href="http://www.dialysispatients.org">www.dialysispatients.org</a>	(202) 789-6931
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Inc.	<a href="http://www.dredf.org">www.dredf.org</a>	
Division for Early Childhood of the CEC	<a href="http://www.dec-sped.org">www.dec-sped.org</a>	(703) 850-1187
Division for Learning Disabilities of CEC	<a href="http://www.teachingld.org">www.teachingld.org</a>	(434) 924-0759
Easter Seals	<a href="http://www.easter-seals.org">www.easter-seals.org</a>	(202) 347-3066
Epilepsy Foundation	<a href="http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org">www.epilepsyfoundation.org</a>	(301) 459-3700
Family Voices	<a href="http://www.familyvoices.org">www.familyvoices.org</a>	(202) 546-0558
Goodwill Industries International	<a href="http://www.goodwill.org">www.goodwill.org</a>	(202) 508-7494
Helen Keller National Center	<a href="http://www.hknc.org">www.hknc.org</a>	(516) 944-8900
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education	<a href="http://www.hecse.org">www.hecse.org</a>	(202) 812-9096
IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association	<a href="http://www.ideainfanttoddler.org">www.ideainfanttoddler.org</a>	(703) 850-1187
Institute for Educational Leadership/Center for Workforce Development	<a href="http://www.iel.org">www.iel.org</a>	(202) 822-8405
Justice in Aging	<a href="http://www.justiceinaging.org">www.justiceinaging.org</a>	(202) 289-6976
Learning Disabilities Association of America	<a href="http://www.lidaamerica.org">www.lidaamerica.org</a>	(202) 686-1637
Lutheran Services in America	<a href="http://www.lutheranservices.org">www.lutheranservices.org</a>	(202) 499-5836
Madison House Autism Foundation	<a href="http://www.madisonhouseautism.org">www.madisonhouseautism.org</a>	(240) 467-8979
Mental Health America	<a href="http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net">www.mentalhealthamerica.net</a>	(703) 684-7722
Michael J Fox Foundation	<a href="http://www.michaeljfox.org">www.michaeljfox.org</a>	(202) 638-4104
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys	<a href="http://www.naela.org">www.naela.org</a>	(703) 942-5711
National Alliance for Caregiving	<a href="http://www.caregiving.org">www.caregiving.org</a>	(301) 718-8444
National Alliance on Mental Illness	<a href="http://www.nami.org">www.nami.org</a>	(703) 524-7600
National Alliance to End Homelessness	<a href="http://www.endhomelessness.org">www.endhomelessness.org</a>	(202) 638-1526

Organization Name	Website	Contact Phone #
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics	<a href="http://www.naaop.org">www.naaop.org</a>	(202) 466-6550
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities	<a href="http://www.nacdd.org">www.nacdd.org</a>	(202) 506-5813
National Association of Disability Representatives	<a href="http://www.nadr.org">www.nadr.org</a>	(202) 824-1725
National Association of School Psychologists	<a href="http://www.nasponline.org">www.nasponline.org</a>	(301) 657-0270
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services	<a href="http://www.nasddd.org">www.nasddd.org</a>	(703) 683-4202
National Association of State Directors of Special Education	<a href="http://www.nasdse.org">www.nasdse.org</a>	(703) 519-1506
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators	<a href="http://www.nashia.org">www.nashia.org</a>	(802) 498-3349
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities	<a href="http://www.nasuad.org">www.nasuad.org</a>	(202) 898-2578
National Center for Learning Disabilities	<a href="http://www.nclد.org">www.nclد.org</a>	(202) 637-8408
National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools	<a href="http://www.ncsecs.org">www.ncsecs.org</a>	(301) 655-1992
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare	<a href="http://www.ncpssm.org">www.ncpssm.org</a>	(202) 216-0420
National Council for Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.thenationalcouncil.org">www.thenationalcouncil.org</a>	(202) 684-7457
National Council on Aging	<a href="http://www.ncoa.org">www.ncoa.org</a>	(571) 527-3900
National Council on Independent Living	<a href="http://www.ncil.org">www.ncil.org</a>	(202) 207-0340
National Disability Institute	<a href="http://www.ndi-inc.org">www.ndi-inc.org</a>	(202) 296-2043
National Disability Rights Network	<a href="http://www.nddrn.org">www.nddrn.org</a>	(202) 408-9514
National Down Syndrome Congress	<a href="http://www.ndscenter.org">www.ndscenter.org</a>	(301) 237-7011
National Down Syndrome Society	<a href="http://www.ndss.org">www.ndss.org</a>	(202) 465-3221
National Health Law Program	<a href="http://www.healthlaw.org">www.healthlaw.org</a>	(202) 289-7661
National Industries for the Blind	<a href="http://www.nib.org">www.nib.org</a>	(703) 310-0520
National Multiple Sclerosis Society	<a href="http://www.nationalmssociety.org">www.nationalmssociety.org</a>	(202) 408-1500
National Organization on Disability	<a href="http://www.nod.org">www.nod.org</a>	(646) 505-1191
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives	<a href="http://www.nosscr.org">www.nosscr.org</a>	(202) 457-7775
National Place	<a href="http://www.parentsatthetable.org">www.parentsatthetable.org</a>	(973) 642-8100
National PTA	<a href="http://www.pta.org">www.pta.org</a>	(703) 518-1200
National Respite Coalition	<a href="http://www.archrespite.org/national-respite-coalition">www.archrespite.org/national-respite-coalition</a>	(703) 256-2084
Paralyzed Veterans of America	<a href="http://www.pva.org">www.pva.org</a>	(202) 872-1300
Parent to Parent USA		(717) 503-8992
Perkins School for the Blind	<a href="http://www.ppsv.com">www.ppsv.com</a>	(202) 349-4243
Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America	<a href="http://www.resna.org">www.resna.org</a>	(703) 524-6686
RespectAbility	<a href="http://www.respectability.org">www.respectability.org</a>	(202) 365-0787
School Social Work Association of America	<a href="http://www.sswaa.org">www.sswaa.org</a>	(202) 686-1637

Organization Name	Website	Contact Phone #
Source America	<a href="http://www.sourceamerica.org">www.sourceamerica.org</a>	(571) 226-4660
Special Needs Alliance		(520) 546-1005
TASH	<a href="http://www.tash.org">www.tash.org</a>	(202) 429-2080
Teacher Education Division/CEC	<a href="http://www.tedced.org">www.tedced.org</a>	(202) 812-9096
The Advocacy Institute	<a href="http://www.advocacyinstitute.org">www.advocacyinstitute.org</a>	(540) 364-0051
The Arc	<a href="http://www.thearc.org">www.thearc.org</a>	(202) 783-2229
The Jewish Federations of North America	<a href="http://www.jewishfederations.org">www.jewishfederations.org</a>	(202) 736-5871
Tourette Association of America	<a href="http://www.tsa-usa.org">www.tsa-usa.org</a>	(202) 408-7009
United Cerebral Palsy	<a href="http://www.ucp.org">www.ucp.org</a>	(202) 776-0406
United Spinal Association	<a href="http://www.unitedspinal.org">www.unitedspinal.org</a>	(202) 556-2076
Vietnam Veterans of America	<a href="http://www.vva.org">www.vva.org</a>	(301) 585-4000

## Appendix B: Related News Articles

# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

## Hollywood Calls for Inclusion Should Not Overlook People With Disabilities

By Delbert Whetter, Mar. 15, 2018

*Advocate and film executive Delbert Whetter, who has profound hearing loss, argues that people with disabilities are an "underrepresented group that remains largely undiscussed and unchampioned."*

If the past year has taught us anything, it is that movie audiences want to see an onscreen world that better reflects our diverse society.

We've seen the slogans — #OscarsSoWhite, #TimesUp, #MeToo — and we've seen the results of the activism powering them. It's no accident that some of the past year's most notable hits have been stereotype-challenging, genre-busting films like *Wonder Woman*, *Black Panther* and *Get Out*.

And yet there is one underrepresented group that remains largely undiscussed and unchampioned: people with disabilities.

That may seem an odd thing to say when a movie featuring a mute lead character (*The Shape of Water*) won the Oscar for best picture and another movie featuring a 6-year-old deaf protagonist (*The Silent Child*) won an Academy Award for best live-action short.

But consider the facts. People with disabilities make up 20 percent of the population — that's 54 million people — but appear onscreen only 2.7 percent of the time. An overwhelming number of the roles, upwards of 95 percent on television, are played by actors without disabilities. Hollywood does not lack for brilliant, talented actors with disabilities (think of R.J. Mitte who played Walt Jr. in *Breaking Bad*, or the deaf actor and model Nyle DiMarco, with his stigma-busting triumph in *Dancing With the Stars*), but since they are rarely if ever cast in nondisabled roles, they are effectively chasing just one-tenth of 1 percent of the available work.

The data tells us that 63 percent of the population is in some way connected to people with disabilities, yet onscreen we are just about invisible. That's not good for us or for audiences. For our industry, it's flat-out unacceptable.

It's not just about one side of the camera either. As a motion picture executive with profound hearing loss, I'm disconcerted by how few of my peers make it into the industry. To still be described as a "disability pioneer" after two decades in Hollywood feels almost like a rebuke.

Now it's time for us to push back — to have our #UsToo moment. Next week, the disability rights group RespectAbility will be launching a toolkit to educate industry professionals, and the reporters who cover them, on some of the myths that need puncturing and the cultural shift that needs to take place to give actors and executives with disabilities their due.

The group also will be announcing a new partnership with Hollywood, Health & Society, a project of the Norman Lear Center at USC Annenberg.

We have plenty of other ideas besides: We too want to take up Frances McDormand's call to arms for inclusion riders so stars can use their leverage with executives, producers, directors, agents and casting directors to advance the cause of all underrepresented groups.

We are fortunate, as we launch this effort, to have several remarkable films to build on featuring performances by actors with disabilities. Among them are *The Silent Child*, showcasing the talents of 6-year-old Maisie Sly, who uses British sign language; *Baby Driver*, with a moving performance by the African-American deaf actor C.J. Jones; and *Wonderstruck* in which deaf newcomer Millicent Simmonds astonished critics and audiences with a magnificent, visually expressive performance.

As a producer, I am frequently reminded of how many amazing stories there are yet to be told, performances to be seen and perspectives to be gained from people with disabilities, and how few opportunities exist for them.

The industry also needs to do better at getting the details right. The makers of both *Wonderstruck* and *The Shape of Water* chose to cast non-signing actors to perform ASL dialogue. That meant weeks if not months of preparation with paid ASL consults, with results that, to those of us in the know, came across as two-dimensional and flat.

And that's a great pity because sign language has tremendous cinematic properties, with unique and complex forms of inflection, intonation and pitch that can take years to master but can amplify and deepen performances in ways accessible to all audiences.

Why not simply hire experienced deaf actors fluent in ASL and the art of nonverbal communication, perhaps from the renowned Deaf West Theatre, which has produced countless award-winning performances? Why take on the expense, manpower, preparation and time when a superior outcome can be accomplished with an authentic performance from a single actor?

In other words, we don't just need diversity in casting; we need diversity in creative ideas too. It's in nobody's interest to produce a painful caricature like Mickey Rooney's notorious turn as the Japanese neighbor in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. On the contrary, an industry that produces extraordinary and authentic stories about characters with disabilities can only become richer, in all senses of the word.

*Delbert Whetter is an executive with Exodus Film Group and a board member of RespectAbility, a nonprofit organization fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for people with disabilities. His latest project is a feature film about champion athletes at the Oregon School for the Deaf.*

# The MIGHTY

## Media Access Awards Honor Filmmakers, Changing Hearts and Minds About Disability

By Lauren Appelbaum, Dec. 28, 2017



RespectAbility's Lauren Appelbaum with Norman Lear, co-founder of the Media Access Awards.

Los Angeles, Calif. – Recently, Harvey Weinstein and the #MeToo movement have put a lot of attention on abuse in Hollywood. Long overdue conversations are taking place on how Hollywood can not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk about vital issues. At the same time, Hollywood has an opportunity to walk the walk on a broad range of issues that can make the world a better place.

Last month's Media Access Awards, which honors individuals both behind and in front of the camera who are advancing the disability narrative, changed hearts and minds for influential entertainment professionals in attendance, leading to pledges of increasing inclusion efforts for people with disabilities in Hollywood.

The Media Access Awards is unlike a traditional Hollywood award ceremony – though honoree Nic Novicki said, “it feels like an Oscar to me,” explaining the awards as “like the Oscars, but with more wheelchairs and sign language.”

Novicki is a little person and understands first hand how difficult it is for actors and actresses like him to find work in Hollywood. He needed little introduction, as presenter Jamie Brewer said, “his name is a known name in this industry.”

Novicki was just one of nine individuals honored at the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills. He received the 2017 SAG-AFTRA Harold Russell Award in recognition of his talent and his work as an advocate for the disability community.

“We’re the largest minority group in the country,” Novicki said while accepting his award. “But yet we do not see ourselves represented. We’re in less than one percent of TV shows and movies.”

According to the 2017 Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) report *Where We Are on TV*, the number of regular primetime broadcast characters who have a disability is at 1.8 percent, representing only a fraction of the one-in-five individuals who has a disability in the world today.

Actor Mickey Rowe, who was the first actor with autism to perform in “The Curious Incident of the Dog in The Night-Time,” received the Christopher Reeve Acting Scholarship. Introduced by actress and Paralympic Katy Sullivan, Rowe said he was hopeful for continued progress in the next decade of inclusion of people with disabilities.

“When we cast actors with disabilities in roles with disabilities, it not only affects our own industry, but we get to show all the other business leaders across the country in all sorts of fields that you can hire people with disabilities, we can do the work at the highest level and we get the job done,” Rowe said at the awards ceremony. “Employers have no reason to discriminate against developmental disabilities or any other kind of disability. What power and responsibility that we all have that we get to make that much change for so many other people in our industry and hundreds of other industries around the country.”

Norman Lear co-founded the Media Access Awards to recognize and encourage the accurate portrayal of people with disabilities in 1979. This year, he had the honor of awarding fellow co-founder Fern Field with the 2017 Norman Lear – Geri Jewell Lifetime Achievement Award at this year’s Media Access Awards.

Lear, who received a standing ovation during the morning awards ceremony, said 2017 is the “most successful year for actors with disabilities on TV.”

### **Participants Pledge to Increase Inclusion Efforts**

Last month’s awards ceremony changed hearts and minds for influential entertainment professionals in attendance, leading to pledges of increasing inclusion efforts for people with disabilities in Hollywood.

“I promise you,” “Wonder” producer David Hoberman said while receiving the 2017 Producers Guild of America George Svinga Award with co-producer Todd Lieberman, “from now on, we will look for more stories with disabilities and to cast people with disabilities in our films.”

They received the award for producing “Stronger,” which was about an amputee and Boston Marathon Bombing survivor Jeff Bauman, and “Wonder,” which tells the story of Auggie Pullman, a young boy with craniofacial disfigurement trying to navigate school, friends and life.

“We search for stories and we have ability to make stories that entertain but also mean something,” Lieberman said while accepting the award.

“We have the responsibility to do so.”

“It is important to tell stories that have something to do with real life, show struggle, triumph, empathy and compassion,” added Hoberman, who was emotional during the awards. “We hope the world that [“Stronger” and “Wonder”] touches changes a little bit.”

Meanwhile “Wonder” director Stephen Chbosky said the event has influenced him to want more inclusive casting of people with disabilities.

“I want to say to all my fellow directors and producers out there... to think all the time when you are casting, including background casting, to always include somebody with a disability or to think about characters out of the box,” he said in an interview with RespectAbility following the awards. “And let’s broaden our minds and really bring our stories and their stories to everyone.”

Called “champions of casting people with disabilities in Broadway shows and television programs” by presenter Michael Patrick King (creator of “Sex and the City” and the new disability-inclusive “Love You More”), Telsey & Company received an award for their inclusive casting.

“It’s important to include stories of inclusion for all people,” the team accepting the award said. “When we open up a script and see a story includes people with disabilities, we get really excited... because we love to explore new pools of talent and learn about new opportunities we may not have experienced.”

They cast “Atypical,” whose creator also was honored at the Media Access Awards, and “Love You More,” a show featuring nine actors with Down syndrome.

Robia Rashid, the creator of “Atypical” called for more stories of inclusion and diversity while accepting her award for writing.

“It’s an amazing time for stories of inclusion and diversity,” she said. “I think we need stories like this more than ever and I feel so honored to be receiving this award for telling a story.”

Actress Amy Okuda presented Rashid with the award. “You learn to accept and appreciate Sam for the singular person that he is and you will start to see everyone with a disability in a new light, a human light. I know I did; it really changed my life,” said Okuda of her role as Julia, a passionate therapist that pushes Sam to try new things.

## Importance of Standing Up for All

Jason George, who currently serves as the diversity chair of the Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA), a union of television and radio artists, spoke about the importance of standing up for all minorities.

“If you say you are standing up and fighting for equal rights, you can’t just fight for the people that look like you,” said George while presenting the Ruderman Family Foundation with the SAG-AFTRA Disability Awareness Award. “You have to show up for yourself, of course, and get everyone invited to the party.”

Likewise, Treshelle Marie Edmond presented an award to Aziz Ansari and Alan Yang for pushing the envelope on diversity and inclusion in Hollywood at the Media Access Awards.

“People see me and see black, then they see a woman, and then they see deaf,” Edmond said in an earlier interview. “This means I have to work three times as hard to get the same opportunities. I get it from all angles.”

Deborah Calla and Allen Rucker chaired the awards ceremony. Co-chairs included Pam Dixon, Jenni Gold, Sam Maddox, Paul Miller, Adam Moore and Tery Lopez.

Inclusion leader Haben Girma and actor/humanitarian Oliver Trevena hosted the awards. Lawyer and disability advocate Haben Girma was the first deaf and blind graduate of Harvard Law School.

“The Media Access Awards are shining the spotlight on the importance for people with disabilities to be seen in Hollywood both in front of and behind the camera,” said Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, president of RespectAbility, a nonprofit working to end stigmas and advance opportunities for people with disabilities. “Hollywood is at a turning point – with the opportunity to choose to take the high ground and end abuse and prejudice all at once. It won’t be easy, but we stand (or roll) ready to do our part to advance equality, safety and opportunity for all.”

*Lauren Appelbaum is the Communications Director of RespectAbility, a nonprofit organization fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for people with disabilities.*

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## #RepresentationMatters for People With Disabilities on TV

By Lauren Appelbaum, Nov. 11, 2017



Rockville, Md. – RespectAbility congratulates GLAAD on releasing the 2017-2018 [Where We Are on TV Report](#), which includes the only analysis of primetime scripted series regulars on broadcast networks of characters with disabilities. Largely known for tracking the number of LGBTQ characters on broadcast and cable networks, as well as streaming services, the *Where We Are on TV Report* also tracks racial, gender and disability inclusion on television.

The amount of regular primetime broadcast characters counted who have a disability has slightly increased to 1.8 percent, but that number still vastly underrepresents the actualities of Americans with disabilities. There are only two characters across all three platforms that are depicted as HIV-positive, a decrease of one from last year.

RespectAbility agrees with GLAAD that #RepresentationMatters. Just as GLAAD will continue to work alongside the industry to tell LGBTQ stories on screen and further the conversation through their year-round work, RespectAbility will continue to do so for full representation of people with disabilities – including those with disabilities who are LGBTQ.

The entire report may be [downloaded from GLAAD's website](#). Below, please find the section about the depiction of people with disabilities on television:

### **#RepresentationMatters: Representation of Characters With Disabilities**

This is GLAAD's eighth year of tracking number of series regular characters on primetime broadcast scripted series who are depicted as people with disabilities. According to the 2016 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census, 12.8 percent (40.7 million) of U.S. noninstitutionalized citizens are living with an apparent disability. In its count, GLAAD included characters who would be covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which includes people living with non-apparent disabilities such as cancer or HIV and AIDS. Inclusion of those disabilities would greatly increase the figures found by the U.S. Census Bureau.

While the percentage of series regular characters living with disabilities on broadcast has increased this year, primetime programming continues to fall short in reflecting the reality of this demographic. This year, the percentage and number of series regulars with disabilities has risen slightly to 1.8 percent (16 characters) from the previous year's 1.7 percent (15 characters). This is the highest percentage of inclusion since GLAAD began gathering disability statistics in the 2010-11 season.

"While these numbers are the best ever, they are still shameful overall. The percentage of characters with disabilities is literally less than one-sixth of what they are in real life. Moreover, what does exist is misleading. Almost all portrayals of people with disabilities in media are white and most are male, despite the fact that disability affects all. Anyone can join the disability community at any point in their lives and people with disabilities come from all communities – including the African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and LGBTQ communities," said RespectAbility President Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi. "What people see and hear impacts what they think and feel about themselves and others. Like *Will and Grace* and *Modern Family* helped to change perceptions of the LGBTQ community, an increase in positive, diverse and authentic portrayals of people with disabilities on television and film can help to end stigmas and advance opportunities for people with disabilities."

This year, ABC leads the five broadcast networks in representations of regular characters with disabilities with five (2.3 percent) characters. ABC includes the lead character of Dr. Shaun Murphy on the new series *The Good Doctor*, who is living with Asperger's and has savant syndrome, JJ DiMeo on *Speechless* who has cerebral palsy, and new character Jocelyn Turner on *Quantico*, who is deaf. ABC also counts two LGBTQ characters with disabilities with Dr. Arizona Robbins (*Grey's Anatomy*) who is an amputee, and Oliver Hampton on *How to Get Away with Murder* who is HIV-positive.

On CBS, Patton on *NCIS: New Orleans* and Adam on *Mom* use wheelchairs, Matty (Meredith Eaton) from *MacGyver* has dwarfism, and a character on *Scorpion* has been diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder and anxiety.

FOX's *Empire* includes a character with Myasthenia Gravis and a character with bipolar disorder, and FOX's *Gotham* includes bisexual character Tabitha who is an amputee. Garrett on NBC's *Superstore* uses a wheelchair, while *Taken* includes a character diagnosed with cancer.

The CW has a character living with mobility issues on *The 100*, and a character with post-traumatic stress disorder on the network's new military show *Valor*.

On cable series, LGBTQ characters with disabilities are severely lacking. There is one recurring or regular LGBTQ character on a cable series that GLAAD counted this year as having a disability: Ian Gallagher on Showtime's *Shameless* who lives with bipolar disorder. On streaming series, there are five LGBTQ characters with disabilities. Two LGBTQ characters are cancer survivors that have opted for double mastectomy (Maxine on Netflix's *Wentworth*, Tig on Amazon's *One Mississippi*), and Gobber (Netflix's DreamWork's *Dragons: Race to the Edge*) is a double amputee. Maura on *Transparent* has heart problems, while Davina on the same show is HIV-positive.

### Representation of Characters Living with HIV and AIDS

There are still many stigmas and misconceptions about people living with HIV and AIDS. Two years ago, GLAAD partnered with AIDS United and The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation to release a media guide for best practices on talking about HIV and AIDS without reinforcing negative stereotypes and helping to end stigma. Television is a powerful tool to help educate and inform the public about those living with HIV and AIDS. Unfortunately, across all of the platforms tracked (broadcast, cable, and streaming services Amazon, Netflix, and Hulu), there were only two HIV-positive characters.

*How to Get Away with Murder* on ABC continues to break new ground with Oliver's story and normalizing him living with HIV. It is presented as just another facet of his life, as opposed to an obstacle to overcome. Oliver is also the only regular character on all the platforms tracked to be HIV-positive. On the most recent season of Amazon's *Transparent*, audiences learned that recurring character Davina is HIV-positive. The story did not change the way any characters viewed Davina, which is a step in the right direction. There were no HIV-positive LGBTQ characters on cable.

GLAAD hopes to see more creators fairly and accurately sharing the stories of people living with HIV going forward.

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The GLAAD report is based on self-reporting by the networks and content providers. Counts are based on original scripted series premiering or which are expected to premiere a new season in primetime between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018 for which casting has been announced and confirmed by networks. However, there may be an instance where a character, such as NBC's *This is Us*' Jack Pearson, who has an alcohol use disorder, Randall Pearson, who has anxiety, and Kevin Pearson, who becomes addicted to opioid pills; as well as Rebecca Bunch, who has anxiety and depression on The CW's *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, that may not be reported and included. Even so, characters with disabilities still are woefully underrepresented in comparison to the number of people with disabilities in the U.S.

### Increasing Disability Inclusion in Television

The issue is prevalent in film as well. According to a recent report by The Media, Diversity, & Social Change (MDSC) Initiative at USC's Annenberg School for Communication and

Journalism, only 2.7 percent of all speaking or named characters in film were shown to have a disability in 2016 (up from 2.4 percent in 2015). None of the leading characters were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group or the LGBT community.

“The results of this analysis on characters with disabilities reveal clear discrepancies between the real world and the ‘reel world,’” the report says. “Stories that reflect the full lives of characters with disabilities and the demographic diversity of this community remain elusive in film.”

Furthermore, the Ruderman White Paper on Disability in Television shows that disability often is absent from mainstream film and television — both the depiction of it, and even when a character has a disability, the actor often does not. According to the report, an actor pretending to have a disability plays more than 95 percent of characters with disabilities.

In reality TV, A&E Network’s critically acclaimed and award-winning original docuseries *Born This Way*’s showed that disability is a winning theme. This series starring a cast with disabilities, which received six Emmy nominations this year, won two Emmy’s at the Creative Arts Emmy Awards for Casting for a Reality Program and Cinematography for a Reality Program – after bringing home the Emmy for Outstanding Unstructured Reality Series in 2016.

“Programs like *Born This Way* that feature people with disabilities, or that tackle disability issues in a positive light, can be successful both critically and financially.” RespectAbility President Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi said. “Audiences want to see strong, capable role models with disabilities. By focusing on showing these young individuals’ everyday life choices regarding employment, living independently and dating, *Born This Way* breaks down stigmas surrounding disability.”

Executive Producer Jonathan Murray says that shows like *Born This Way* and more diversity in Hollywood are good business.

“Hollywood has been really, really slow to recognize the diversity of this country,” he said. “I think it is catching up fast now. And I think it’s realizing that diversity is good business. I don’t think it’s necessarily because it is altruistic. I think they are recognizing that TV shows will do better if they reflect what the country is.”

According to the U.S. Census, one in five Americans has a disability. Currently 70 percent of working-age people with disabilities are not working — even though most of them want jobs and independence. Many studies show people with disabilities can work successfully and live relatively independently. The individuals on *Born This Way* prove this since several are productive employees and one is a business owner herself.

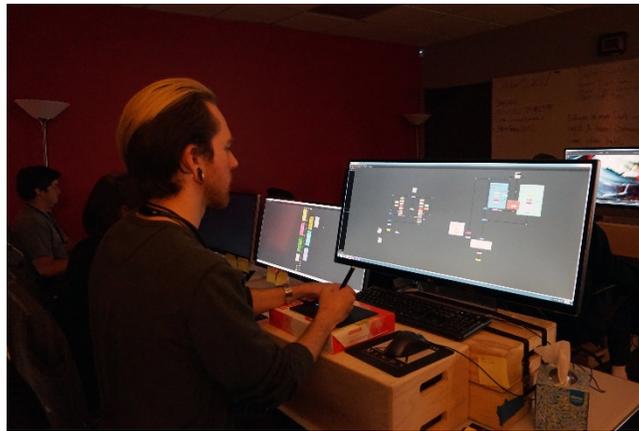
“We have a long way to go in how television shows people with disabilities,” Mizrahi said. “For almost five decades, the Jerry Lewis telethon stigmatized people with disabilities by showing what people with disabilities can’t do. Now is the time to show what people with disabilities can do.”

“What I would like to see is that more shows have a diversity to them where the diversity is not the point of the show,” Murray added. “I’d like to get beyond the labels to accurately reflect what is going on in our country today.”

# The MIGHTY

## The Autistic Visual Effects Artists Bringing The Good Doctor's Thoughts to Life

By Lauren Appelbaum, Oct. 10, 2017



Andrew Dugan

Los Angeles, Calif. – “The Good Doctor,” which ABC just awarded a full season, features a young surgeon on the autism spectrum who thinks in terms of visual images. What viewers may not realize is one of the show’s visual effects artist thinks in the same way.

Twenty-seven-year-old Andrew Dugan, who is on the autism spectrum, works in the visual effects studio at Exceptional Minds (EM), a nonprofit vocational school and working studio that prepares young adults on the autism spectrum for careers in digital animation and visual effects.

After completing EM’s vocational program, beginning part time and then full time for the last two years of the three-year program, Dugan was hired by EM to join its in-house studio in June 2016. A photographer and visual effects artist, Dugan is a very visual thinker. What viewers see when they watch “The Good Doctor,” Dugan sees in his life.

Dugan is one of five EM employees who completed split-screen shots for the first two episodes for ABC’s new series. Dugan, as well as Patrick Brady, Eli Katz, Tiana Fazio and Mason Taylor worked on split-screen composition, which involved creating a single, seamless shot from multiple takes. They combined two different takes of a scene using the performance of one actor

from one take and another actor from a second take. Instead of reshooting, visual effects artists blend them together so it looks like it was the same take.

Exceptional Minds Executive Director Ernie Merlán said Dugan is a “star in our studio.” A quick worker, Dugan is making more money than anyone else in the studio because he is able to complete multiple shots. “His obsessiveness with detail has served him well in the job he is doing now,” Merlán said.

Dugan said his autism, as well as his ADHD, is an advantage for his career.

“I feel like it helps me in what I do. I get hyper-focused on whatever I’m working on. My ADHD sometimes makes me struggle to sit down and pay attention. With this work, because I’m interested in it, I can focus better than a lot of people.”

In “The Good Doctor,” the lead actor does not have autism himself, though he plays a doctor who does. While Dugan said he does not think it should be a requirement for the actor to have the disability he is playing, he said it is important that consultants make sure the actor is doing so properly and not just based on stereotypes.

Dugan also talked of the importance of people with disabilities having the option to be employed both in front of and behind the camera.

“It’s better if someone has a disability to be more independent,” he said. “Then they don’t have to rely on the government or their parents taking care of them. They’ll also be a lot happier.”

“Being in a career helps a lot with my symptoms,” Dugan added. “It gets me a lot more focused, wanting to wake up and do everything I need to do during the day.”

Co-Founder and Vice Chairperson Yudi Bennett said all people deserve the same opportunities.

“People who are neurotypical, without a disability, are allowed to follow their dreams, so why shouldn’t people who have disabilities also be allowed to follow their dreams?” Bennett said.

“Work is a paycheck but it is more than that – life, passion,” Exceptional Minds spokesperson Dee McVicker added. “At Exceptional Minds, we want the same thing for our young adults.”

EM currently has 34 full-time students, with an additional 50 studying part-time or virtually. Last summer 135 students participated in summer workshops. Students learn both animation and visual effects before choosing to specialize in one. Thus far, 35 students have graduated, 15 of whom are working in the in-house visual effects studio and four at the in-house animation studio. An additional seven people were placed at external studios. All of these students and graduates are on the autism spectrum.

EM classes teach not only the technical aspects, but as Dugan says, “also cover the behavioral side, preparing me in how to deal with that aspect of a career and how to act.”

Growing up in Manhattan Beach, California, Dugan was “not a huge fan” of the K-12 system’s special education program. After graduating, he went to a couple of colleges for a semester and

tried a vocational school to learn Adobe programs while he was deciding what he wanted to do. Then, his father, a television producer, told him about EM, which Dugan said “definitely changed my life for the better.”

In the past year and a half, Dugan has worked on several movies and television series including: “Doctor Strange” (removing a boom mic in the shot); “War for the Planet of the Apes” (removed tracking markers); “The Mummy” (removed light spillage) and “Atypical” (replaced license plates on cars to change the location).

For those graduates who find external jobs, Merlán explained that EM not only provides training for the employee but also coaching for employers as well as support for both the employer and employee once the individual begins the job.

“Our whole goal is to get these guys work and let them accomplish their dreams just like everybody else,” Merlán said.

“We are looking to change hearts and minds,” Bennett added. “We need people in the film industry who are not all the same; diversity is a blessing.”

*Lauren Appelbaum is the Communications Director of RespectAbility, a nonprofit organization fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for people with disabilities.*

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## Appendix C: RespectAbility National Leadership Program

### Fellowship in Communications and Stigma

#### Location: Rockville, Maryland

RespectAbility's stigma-busting Communications Fellowship is on the frontline of fighting prejudice, misinformation and low expectations. Fellows work on a team to create and deliver positive images, stories and best practices. We identify, test, shape and deliver materials that are leveraged in our proactive outreach to employers, the media, thought leaders, Hollywood, elite schools, policy makers and political candidates. We are nonpartisan in our approach, do not lobby and follow guidelines for nonprofit organizations. We focus in particular on the promotion of best practices and will assign fellows who are hoping to enter public relations, new media, communications or media relations to work in this area. Much of our stigma reduction work is associated with outreach to Hollywood and employers.

Our program is fully accessible for people with disabilities and offers full-time in-house job coaching, skills development and networking opportunities. Assistive technology and personal care support are available as needed. Communications Fellows are assigned to one or two areas of outreach based on interest and skills. All Fellows have real work assignments – no learning coffee preferences! We have a fully accessible and warm office and are located on the metro line just outside of Washington, D.C. Paid (\$15/hour) and stipend opportunities available.

#### Journalism: Hollywood and Employer Outreach/Stigma

While one-in five-people have a disability, fewer than two percent of scripted television characters (15 people) have disabilities. Furthermore, most people with disabilities in film and TV are played by actors without disabilities and are shown in a negative, inaccurate light. Fellows also will contribute to our #RespectTheAbility campaign, which highlights the benefits of inclusive employment, including the better bottom line that results from recognizing the talent of people with a variety of abilities. Journalism/Stigma Fellows will leave the Fellowship with a minimum of five published clips. They will:

- Write blogs, press releases and news articles to promote positive, accurate, diverse and inclusive media portrayals on TV and in film.
- Research and publish profiles on companies committing to hiring and retaining people with disabilities at all levels and individuals with disabilities who are extremely successful in their chosen career.
- Help create a community of practice in Los Angeles coordinating with multiple partners to reduce the stigma against people with disabilities in Hollywood. Duties include materials development, database development and maintenance, online research and event planning.

#### Advocacy: Social Media and Website Management

This Fellowship is good for students who are interested in learning how social media influences society or who are interested in website management, photo editing or graphic design. Our social

media campaigns highlight the benefits of inclusive employment and the role Hollywood plays in influencing that. Social Media Fellows also have the same opportunity for writing assignments that Stigma Fellows have. Prospective Fellows should be proficient or have the desire to increase their skills in one or more of these areas:

- Social media outreach for business (mainly Facebook and Twitter) including analytics.
- Website management using WordPress.
- Photo editing and graphic design using Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign (potential for video editing opportunities as well).

### **Political Outreach**

Voters with disabilities are systematically ignored and only 27 percent of polling locations are fully accessible. Our blog, [TheRespectAbilityReport.org](http://TheRespectAbilityReport.org), covers candidates' and politicians' progress in addressing disability employment issues. Fellows create news stories and are a part of the team for nonpartisan and educational candidate and grassroots outreach. Fellows interested in political outreach should have good writing and editing skills and an interest in politics. This fellowship is available leading up to the elections in 2018. They will:

- Encourage candidates to complete the #PwDsVote Candidate Questionnaire and promote their responses to the media and other interested parties in the candidate's state.
- Coordinate outreach with volunteers from all 50 states and assist with event planning.
- Write blogs, press releases and news articles covering candidates' positions on disability employment from a nonpartisan point of view.

### **Learn More and Apply**

Learn more: <https://www.respectability.org/about-us/fellowship/communications-and-stigma-fellowship/>. Send your resume and cover letter to Ben Spangenberg at [bens@respectability.org](mailto:bens@respectability.org) to apply.

RespectAbility provides equal employment opportunities (EEO) to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, veteran status or genetics. In addition to federal law requirements, RespectAbility complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training.

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