



## National Disability Employment Awareness Month



What a year 2020 has been for so many reasons! Despite the unprecedented challenges that we all have endured with the far-reaching impact of COVID-19, this is quite a commemorative year in celebrating the advancement of civil rights and inclusion efforts for Americans with disabilities. This year marks not only the 75th observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), but also the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The theme for this year in celebrating both significant milestones is "Increasing Access and Opportunity" for people with disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly changed the way we access and perform work – and some of these changes are predicted to have a long-lasting impact. Many jobs that we once believed could only be successfully accomplished in person, we are now finding that many of them can be performed virtually by employees working from home. Employers, including Emory, have had to reinvent themselves in so many ways. As a result, this pandemic has sparked innovation at a rapid pace, greatly expanding the possibilities for employment of people with disabilities. Accessible transportation is no longer a barrier to employment in a vast array of jobs and enhancements in technology have expanded access for employees who may have previously experienced challenges. Despite some of the gains, there is still significant progress to be made in inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce.

Accessibility is key to increasing opportunity. [Emory's Department of Accessibility Services \(DAS\)](#) is committed to advancing an accessible and "barrier-free" environment for students, faculty, staff, patients, guests and visitors by ensuring that the principles of access, equity, inclusion and learning are realized in and by the Emory community. DAS depends on our campus partners to work collaboratively on ways to operationalize accessibility initiatives, both on campus and virtually. Most efforts to enhance accessibility in the workplace come with the unintended consequence of creating a better quality of life for all employees and patrons. No person operates with full capability for every activity for the duration of their lifetime. Since we can all benefit from increasingly accessible workplaces, we encourage shared responsibility and accountability to embrace the spirit of the ADA, not just compliance with the ADA.

### How is Emory engaged in supporting increased access and opportunity for employment of people with disabilities?



#### Department of Accessibility Services welcomes New Associate Director

On September 16, 2019, Joelle Butler joined Emory's Department of Accessibility Services as its new Associate Director for Faculty and Staff. Ms. Butler's primary role is to facilitate and coordinate workplace accommodations for faculty and staff with disabilities across the Emory enterprise. She is also responsible for developing and presenting training modules on cultivating a disability-inclusive workplace, the ADA and employment, the process for making workplace accommodation requests, how to evaluate accommodation requests, and other topics by request. Ms. Butler is thrilled to be a part of the dynamic DAS team and looks forward to expanding her partnerships in the Emory community as we collectively embrace this year's theme of NDEAM.

#### Faculty Summer Teaching Intensive

On August 4, 2020, Emory's Center for Faculty Development and Excellence hosted the annual Faculty Summer Teaching Intensive. This two-day virtual professional development opportunity included a session, titled "[Working with a Disability: Exploring the What's, How's and Why's of, ADA Workplace Accommodations](#)", which highlighted specific considerations for enhanced inclusion of faculty members with disabilities, as well as providing a broader framework relevant for all Emory employees with disabilities.

#### Medical Education Day: Cultural Humility in Healthcare

Emory's School of Medicine has truly emerged in the forefront, as a consistent partner with DAS on expanding initiatives aimed at increasing access and opportunity for students and employees with disabilities. On September 14, 2020, the School of Medicine hosted Medical Education Day, an annual event with a full-day series of presentations and discussions celebrating and examining the future of medical education. This full day of virtual professional development incorporated the theme Cultural Humility in Healthcare. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Lisa Meeks, Assistant Professor of Family Medicine at University of Michigan, titled "[The promise of an inclusive health professions workforce: How students with disabilities positively impact patient care](#)". Dr. Meeks offered a very poignant address, highlighting that vast benefits of inclusion of people with disabilities in health professions. A recording of this keynote can be found [here](#). This keynote was supplemented by a session led by Joelle Butler of Emory's Department of Accessibility Services, titled "[Upholding Standards of Equal Access: Understanding how to support future practitioners with disclosure and career matches](#)".

Natalie Fields, Director of Faculty Advancement and Inclusion has also shared the following:

The School of Medicine's Office of Faculty Academic Advancement, Leadership and Inclusion is proud to launch a celebratory initiative to acknowledge the diversity of our community and promote sharing, awareness, and learning. While we will recognize the work of our diverse community year-round, we have organized our initial efforts through focused affinity months. Our goal is to create a welcoming environment to recognize and celebrate our faculty by hearing their stories and experiences. For National Disability Employment Awareness Month we welcome self-nominations and/or peer nominations of faculty members who are willing to share their stories. [Submit a nomination](#). [Read more](#) from National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15- Oct.15)

#### Campus Planning and Physical Access Committee

In September, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) formed a new committee in partnership with Campus Services entitled the Campus Planning and Physical Access committee (CPPA). The mission of CPPA is to support the advancement of an accessible and "barrier-free" environment by monitoring and supporting University facilities, programs, policies, plans, and activities to assure the identification, prevention, and elimination of physical and/or programmatic barriers that interfere with faculty, staff and student access to and benefit from University programs, facilities and resources. CPPA advises and assists ODEI, Campus Services, and partnering schools and units regarding their leadership role and involvement in promoting and achieving an accessible university physical environment. We are looking forward to all that will be accomplished through the efforts of CPPA.

### Looking for ideas on promoting a disability-friendly workplace?

**Eliminate assumptions.** Assume that everyone that you interact with may have a disability. Most disabilities are invisible, in that the person may show no outward signs of having any impairments. People without disabilities often assume that people with visible disabilities have more limitations than they truly do and often believe people with invisible disabilities experience fewer limitations than they actually have. Avoid interacting based on assumptions and focus on interacting with all people in a courteous and thoughtful manner. Guidance on etiquette for interactions with people with disabilities can be found [here](#).



**Reach out to the Department of Accessibility Services and request training for your staff!** At DAS, our mission is to guide our Emory community in efforts to reduce stigma and increase inclusive practices to better support our faculty and staff with disabilities. We strive to become widely recognized as a disability-friendly employer. Training provided by DAS can help your team be more proactive, rather than reactive in responding to the unique needs of employees with disabilities. DAS can customize a training for any audience, taking into consideration the roles and jobs of its employees.

Introductory Training: [Cultivating an Inclusive Workplace](#)  
Contact DAS [here](#).

#### Promote wellness and mental health awareness for all employees.

[Healthy Emory: Your Wellness](#) – The Healthy Emory initiative includes a variety of programs, resources and services aimed at improving employee health and wellness. We encourage all employees to participate in these programs and use all of the services that can enhance health and life quality.

[Emory Faculty Staff Assistance Program](#) – According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in five American adults experiences a mental health condition each year. The circumstances of this year have resulted in widespread increases in stress, anxiety, grief and depression worldwide. For Emory employees who experienced compromised mental health prior to the events of this year, the impact has been especially pronounced. FSAP has been serving Emory for more than 30 years and is here for you in this time of need. For additional resources on fostering a mental health-friendly work culture, visit [EARN's Mental Health Toolkit](#).

### Cane Awareness

In 1964, at the urging of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and approval of both houses of Congress, President Lyndon B. Johnson officially proclaimed October 15 to be White Cane Awareness Day. White canes are used by persons with a wide variety of visual impairments to navigate their world independently. While being aware of those using white canes can help improve their safety as they travel independently, Emory's Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) also encourages you to read further on how white canes and other assistive devices can empower people with visual impairments to live with dignity as they navigate both physical and virtual spaces by seeing the types of devices offered by Atlanta's own Center for the Visually Impaired's (CVI) [VisAbility Store](#).

Want more information on how Emory supports students and faculty or staff with disabling conditions, including those with visual impairments? Please visit the DAS website at [accessibility.emory.edu](#) or contact us at [accessibility@emory.edu](mailto:accessibility@emory.edu) or 404-727-9877.

### Ways to Virtually Celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month

- [ADA Live! Celebrating 100 Years of Vocational Rehabilitation - October 5 \(Recording Available\)](#)
- [Intentional Inclusion: Increasing Access & Opportunity - October 13 \(Transcripts and Recording Available\)](#)
- Neurodiversity Rising: Eliminating Bias from Hiring – October 14 ([Recording Available](#))
- CREATING A CULTURE OF DISABILITY INCLUSION AND EQUITY - October 20 ([Recording Available](#))
- NDEAM - Virtual Disability Inclusion Summit - October 21([Request Recording](#))
- NDEAM - Building A Future That Works ([Recording Available](#))
- [How to do an Accessibility Field Review - October 22](#)
- [Disability Employment: Future Images of the Face of Vocational Rehabilitation - October 28](#)

### Resources

- [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#)
- [Job Accommodation Network](#)
- [National Business & Disability Council at The Viscardi Center](#)
- [ADA National Network](#)
- [Center for the Visually Impaired](#)