

NORTH ALABAMA™

ALABAMA MOUNTAIN LAKES
TOURIST ASSOCIATION



LET'S TALK ACCESSIBILITY

A guide to understanding accessibility and what it looks, sounds, and/or feels like.

Training Presented by





Accessibility: What will you learn?

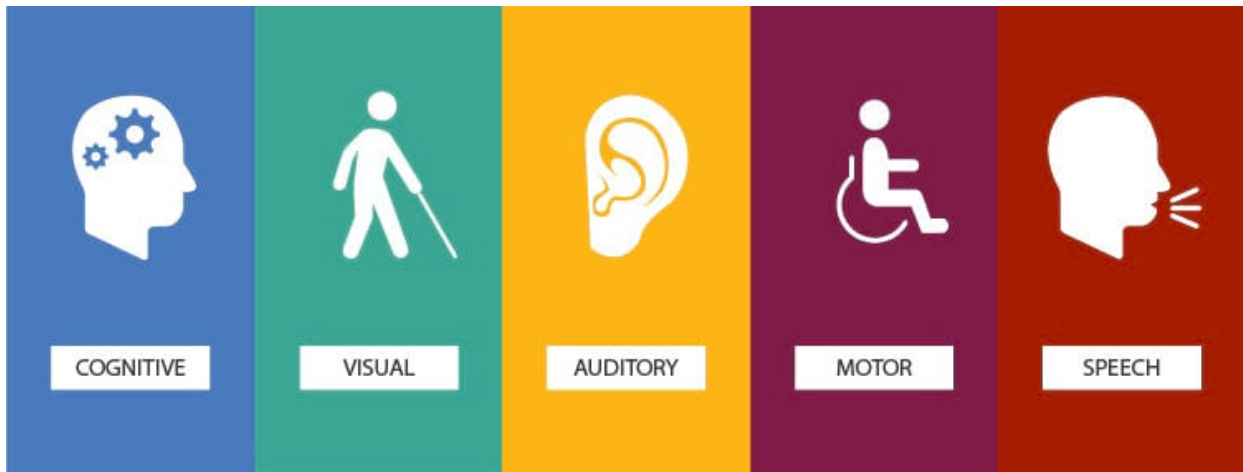
Agenda:

- What is Accessibility?
- Types of Disabilities / Impairments
- Accessibility: Why is it important? How does this affect the Hospitality & Tourism Industry?
- What Accessibility can we create in North Alabama?
- What language is most appropriate to use?
- What impact can I have personally?

What is Accessibility?

- **Accessibility** ensures that all people – regardless of ability – can interact with the information or services you provide.
- According to the [U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights](#):
 - Accessible means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability. Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.
- **Digital accessibility** ensures everyone can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with information on the internet, regardless of ability.
- Disabilities are most appropriately referred to as an **impairment**. There are many different types of **impairments** a person may have.
- It's important to recognize that disabilities are not a binary concept of either being disabled or not disabled, rather they exist on a continuum with each person experiencing their disability in their own unique way. This means that accessibilities that are necessary and helpful for one person, may not be the same for another person with the same disability or impairment.

What are the different types of disabilities or impairments?



Let's Understand More

■ Cognitive

- *A cognitive impairment is a term used when a person has certain limitations in mental functioning and in skills such as communication, self-help, and social skills.*

■ Visual

- *A visual impairment can range from poor vision to blindness.*

■ Auditory

- *A sensory impairment that affects the ability to hear, ranging from partial to total hearing loss.*

■ Motor

- *A motor impairment is a condition that encompasses a broad range of physical limitations and disabilities affecting a person's ability to move and perform everyday tasks.*

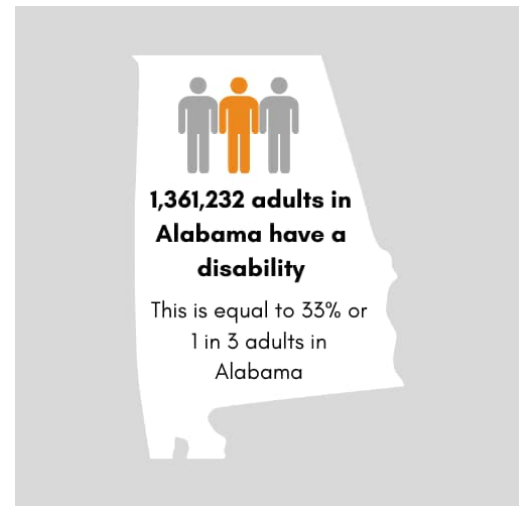
■ Speech

- *A speech impairment happens when your mouth, jaw, tongue and vocal track can't work together to produce recognizable words.*

Alabama Statistics

Disability Types

- **Mobility:** Serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs
- **Cognition:** Serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- **Independent living:** Serious difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office
- **Hearing:** Deaf or serious difficulty hearing
- **Vision:** Blind or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses
- **Self-care:** Difficulty dressing or bathing



Accessibility: Why is it important?

The CDC shows over 61 million US adults reported having a disability; 1 in 4 adults or 26% of all adults.

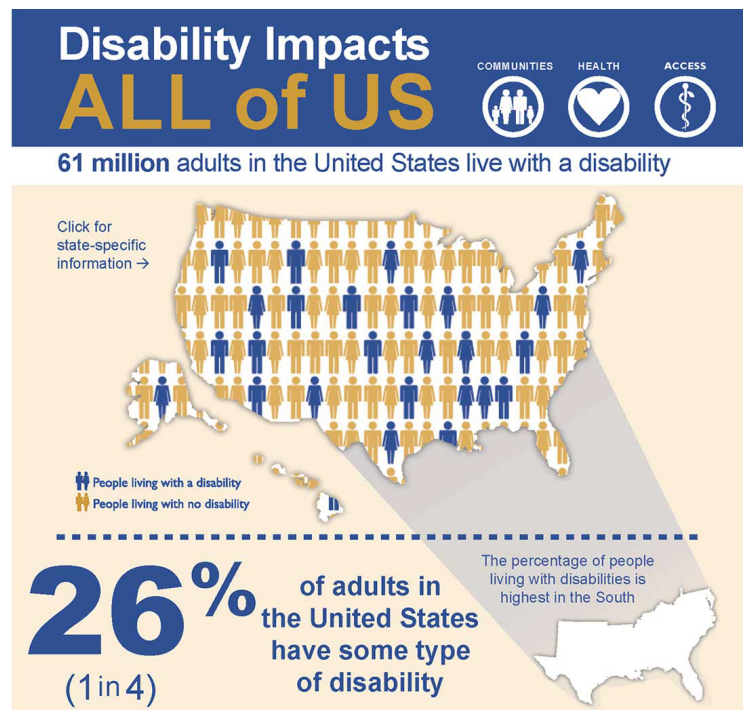
Older adults reported a higher disability prevalence (65 & older)

In a 2-year period (2020 Study), 27 million travelers with a disability took a total of 81 million trips and spent \$58.7 billion on just their own travel, up from \$34.6 billion from the prior study.

Spending on air travel increased from \$9 billion to \$11 billion over previous studies.

Link to study:

<https://abilitymagazine.com/61-million-people-with-disabilities-in-the-united-states/>



Why is it important? (cont.)

10 Key Findings

1. 70% took at least one trip (37% out of US)
2. 84% stayed in paid accommodations
3. 55% took at least one trip by air
4. Travel spend: \$57 billion on their own travel
5. 69% average party size: 2.9 persons
6. 5% traveled with organized group
7. 40% rented a car or van
8. 91% planned more active travel post Covid
9. 17% increase in wheelchair assistance requests at US Airports
10. US Regions Traveled in previous 5 years: West 45%, Midwest 20%, East 32%, - **South 57%!**



Accessibility:

Why is this important to the Hospitality & Tourism Industry?

In 2022, the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), reported that 18.6 million Americans aged 5 and older had self-reported travel-limiting disabilities.

- 10 million were aged 18-64
- 7.7 million were aged 65 and older

Case Study - Autism & Sensory Sensitivities:

- In North America (US & Canada), over 20 million people are parents to one or more children with autism.
- When parents of autistic children were asked, “Do you take family vacations?” 87% said NO.
- Then, they were asked, “if autism-friendly options were available, would your family be more inclined to travel?” 93% said YES!

What Accessibility can we create in North Alabama?

1. Mobility Accessibility

- Step-free access to transportation, accommodations, and attractions
- Elevators, ramps, and accessible restrooms
- Wheelchair-friendly sidewalks, paths, and beach access
- Adapted vehicles, including rental cars and public transport
- Mobility aid rentals and assistance services

2. Sensory Accessibility

- Audio announcements and tactile signage for blind and low-vision travelers
- Visual alerts for deaf and hard-of-hearing travelers (fire alarms, notifications)
- Captioning and sign language interpretation for tours and events
- Availability of hearing loops and assistive listening device

3. Cognitive and Neurodivergent Accessibility

- Clear signage, simple language, and predictable navigation
- Sensory-friendly environments (quiet spaces, low-stimulation areas)
- Staff trained in assisting neurodivergent travelers
- Visual itineraries and step-by-step travel guidance

4. Communication Accessibility

- Access to alternative communication methods (AAC devices, apps, text-based communication) **ACC – Augmentative and Alternative Communication**
- Multilingual and easy-to-understand travel information
- Sign language interpreters for guided tours and services
- Accessible customer service options (live chat, email, text)

5. Health and Medical Accessibility

- Availability of accessible healthcare facilities at travel destinations
- Medical supply and prescription support (access to pharmacies, refrigeration for medication)
- Travel insurance that covers accessibility-related needs
- Emergency assistance for travelers with disabilities

6. Accommodation Accessibility

- Hotels with ADA or similar compliance (step-free access, roll-in showers, grab bars) **ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act**
- Adjustable beds, visual or vibrating alarms, and accessible room controls
- Clear accessibility information when booking accommodations
- Service animal accommodations without additional fees

7. Food & Dining Accessibility

- Allergy-friendly and dietary-inclusive menus
- Restaurants with step-free access and accessible seating
- Availability of menus in Braille, large print, or digital formats
- Staff trained in assisting guests with accessibility needs

What Accessibility can we create in North Alabama? (cont.)

8. Outdoor & Adventure Accessibility

- Adaptive adventure activities (scuba diving, skiing, hiking, etc.)
- Accessible national parks, trails, and beaches
- Equipment rentals for outdoor activities (all-terrain wheelchairs, adaptive bikes)
- Trained guides for accessible outdoor experiences

9. Cultural & Entertainment Accessibility

- Museums and historical sites with ramps, lifts, and audio descriptions
- Theaters with captioning, ASL interpretation, and wheelchair seating
- ASL – American Sign Language**
- Theme parks with accessibility passes and sensory-friendly options
- Festivals and public events with inclusive accommodations
- Mobility aid rentals and assistance services

10. Air and Ground Transportation Accessibility

- Airlines providing priority boarding, aisle chairs, and trained staff
- Accessible train and bus services with designated seating and assistance
- Cruise ships with accessible cabins, pools, and excursions
- Car rental services with hand controls and accessible vehicles

11. Service Animal and Companion Travel Accessibility

- Clear policies for service animals on transportation and in accommodations
- Relief areas at airports and public spaces
- Access to pet-friendly accommodations and destinations

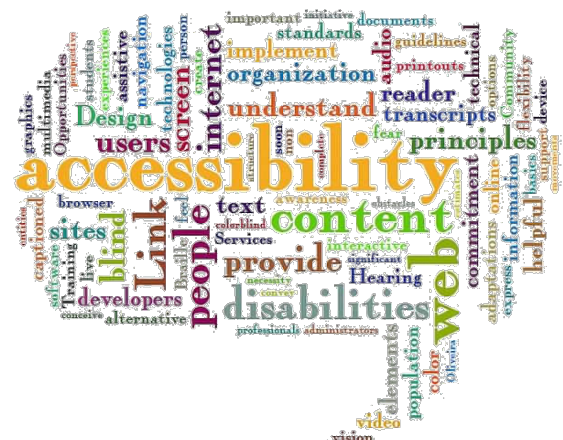


Accessibility: What Language Should I Use?

TIPS	USE	DO NOT USE
Emphasize abilities, not limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who uses a wheelchair • Person who uses a device to speak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound • Can't talk, mute
Do not use language that suggests the lack of something	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a disability • Person of short stature • Person with cerebral palsy • Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder • Person with multiple sclerosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled, handicapped • Midget • Cerebral palsy victim • Epileptic • Afflicted by multiple sclerosis
Emphasize the need for accessibility, not the disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible parking or bathroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handicapped parking or bathroom
Do not use offensive language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a physical disability • Person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability • Person with an emotional or behavioral disability, a mental health impairment, or psychiatric disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid, spastic • Slow, simple, moronic, defective, afflicted, special person • Insane, crazy, psycho, maniac, nuts
Avoid language that implies negative stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person without a disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal Person, healthy person
Do not portray people with disabilities as inspirational only because of their disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who is successful, productive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful, productive for a special person

What Impact can I have personally?

- **Be mindful:** Use the appropriate language (EI/EQ) when working with others.
- Know the resources you have available to serve all people in your location. Also, know your limitations and be honest.
- Connect to additional resources that could provide your customer with a more memorable experience suitable to their specific needs.



- Educate Yourself:
 - *Understand the various types of disabilities or impairments.*
 - *Understand what accessibility means and why it is needed.*
- Take Advantage of Free Training: Wheel the World Academy is an online training program created for professionals in the tourism industry. Participants will gain knowledge about disabilities, accessibility, and best practices in accessible tourism.

– *Wheel the World Academy Introduction.*



- **FREE Accessible Tourism Training:** Use Code: “Northalabamaacademy”
 - *WTW Academy 2.0: An Introduction to Accessible Tourism*



What You Achieve



How can I partner with AMLA?

- Become a member of ALMA to participate.
- Participate in ALL-A-Bama FREE Autism & Sensory Sensitivity Training
 - *Contact/Trainer: Leslie Walker*
 - lwalker@ucphuntsville.org
 - www.tourismallabama.org



- Contact Tami Reist at 256-350-3500 or email tami@northalabama.org
 - *Ask to join the mission of Accessibility in Alabama.*
 - *Set up a FREE Accessibility assessment for your destination/property – **Deadline: February 28, 2025***
 - *If Verified, you will be placed on our new Destination Verified, Wheel the World website for North Alabama for FREE.*



“The one argument for accessibility that doesn’t get made nearly often enough is how extraordinarily better it makes some people’s lives. How many opportunities do we have to dramatically improve people’s lives just by doing our job a little better?” — Steve Krug

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!!



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www.northalabama.org

