



*Special Report:*

5 Easy Disability Tips  
to Immediately Increase  
Organization Accessibility

By Lisa Jordan

CEO, Human Solutions LLC

[www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net)

## *A Note from Lisa*

Hello and welcome to ***5 Easy Disability Tips to Immediately Increase Organization Accessibility***.



I created this special report as a quick and easy way for you to confidently address some of the basic accessibility needs of your customers. You'll see that most of the suggestions in this report are either low or no cost solutions! I've also included a resource section at the end of the report so you can peruse additional material on creating an accessible environment.

**In order to get the most out of this report, here is what I suggest:**

- 1. Print this report and use it as a reference.** If you don't have a binder with disability-related materials already, start one. It's an easy way to keep things in one place and begin a reference manual.
- 2. Develop a plan** to implement at least one strategy each week. At the end of the month, you'll have all five implemented!
- 3. Don't be discouraged** if it takes you longer than expected to implement a strategy. By being aware of what needs to be done, you're already one step ahead of the game. Keep the momentum going and celebrate your success – no matter how small.

You can get started on implementing the strategies from this report right away. Good luck, and check out our [Continuing Education](#) section for additional accessibility and disability-related tools.

To Your Continued Success,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Jordan".

Lisa Jordan, CEO  
Human Solutions LLC

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

## Special Report: 5 Easy Disability Tips to Immediately Increase Organization Accessibility

I'm often asked the question by One-Stops and other public agencies providing community-based employment services: **Where does program and physical accessibility of our agency begin?** My response:

***Accessibility begins at the first point of contact for your customer.***

That first point of contact could occur at a variety of places, each being equally important. It could be over the phone, at the bus stop located in front of your center, at your front desk or even through your outreach materials. As public service providers receiving state or federal funding, your responsibility is to ensure that all points of entry are welcoming, safe, and accessible.

Wherever customers first access your services, the following are five overall strategies to help increase your agency's overall accessibility:

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

## **Strategy #1: Give Us a Call!**



The first point of contact with many customers is over the telephone. **Is your staff prepared to provide general information and answer basic questions over the phone?** If inquiries about services are made, staff should clearly explain what is involved with orientation so customers are prepared and clear on what to expect before they arrive. **Be sure to mention that availability of auxiliary aids and services (e.g. screen reading software, materials in large print) for customers with disabilities.** Customers will have no way of knowing what is available over the phone unless you inform them. Knowing you are an agency that serves people with disabilities is an excellent first step in opening the lines of communication with your customers.

## **Strategy #2: Come on Over!**

**As a courtesy to your customers, also be sure that staff can provide basic directions to customers over the phone.** This means directions by street and by public transportation. You might be thinking this

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

is obvious and that ALL of your staff can provide directions. But, my experience tells me otherwise. We recently did a survey of 18 local providers and found that only 25% of staff could actually provide directions. In a follow up discussion with staff, many stated that they don't use public transportation, and therefore, didn't know what bus/train lines ran in the area. Other lived outside of the local area, and weren't familiar with local landmarks and streets.

Whatever the reason, for those using public transportation, staff should know the bus/train lines (the number is best) that run closest to your center and where they drop off. This includes how to get to the center from the bus/train stop and whether or not there are any obstacles or safety hazards a customer may encounter on the way. Perhaps there is a steep incline or the sidewalk is in need of repair. This is often referred to as the "path of travel." As a public service provider, how a customer gets to your agency is just as important as what happens when they get inside.



For those customers traveling to your agency via personal transportation, staff should know the freeways or highways that are located

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

near your center and how to get to your center driving from each direction.

**An easy solution would be to create a “cheat sheet” that includes the bus lines and driving directions.** The sheet should then be distributed to all staff having direct contact with your customers.

### **Strategy #3: *Welcome! Please Come in.***

When a customer enters your center, generally the first place a customer will go is to the front desk or counter. If your service counter sits



up high, be sure that a portion of it is no more than 34 inches high. An acceptable alternative would be an available space to pass items to a customer that may have difficulty reaching over a high counter, such as a person utilizing a wheelchair. This can often be easily done by lowering a section of the counter or rearranging the furniture or counter to include a pass space.

If staffing doesn't permit someone to be at your front desk all of the time, be sure that there is signage to clearly mark where and how a

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

customer should access services. For instance, if you are conducting an orientation, be sure there are signs indicating where a customer should go. If your wall space is limited, and you can't post a permanent sign, an easy solution would be to make temporary signs and either laminate them or use a plastic page protector if laminating isn't in the budget. This way, you can put up the signs when needed and store them when they're not.

#### **Strategy #4: *Now That You Are Here...***

If you are providing printed materials to customers once they begin accessing your services, be sure that your common forms and materials are available in alternate formats.

Alternate formats could include things such as: large print, Braille, or materials offered in other



languages, if requested (e.g. Spanish). If you are unable to convert all of your materials to Braille due to frequent changes to the content, be

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

sure you know of a resources that can quickly convert your materials to Braille should you receive a request.

All materials should be created using accessibility guidelines. For example, use a san serif font (e.g. arial) versus a serif font (e.g. century



schoolbook) for ease in reading. Use font colors such as black, **medium/dark blue** or a **medium/dark green** against a white background for good contrast. Use **red font** sparingly, especially if it's not on a contrasting background. Red often appears to *glow* and may be difficult to read, especially if a customer has a visual impairment or color blindness.

If your agency has auxiliary aids and services available to customers, be sure to let them know. You should provide a list of these services in your printed orientation materials, including guidelines on how to request a reasonable accommodation from your agency. An additional strategy is to post this list and instructions at your front desk and in the primary areas that customers access services. This way, it's clear to customers what is available and how auxiliary aids and services can be accessed.

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).



## Strategy #5: *Let's Keep in Touch!*

Last, but not least, don't forget to include disability-related information in your outreach materials. This includes print, radio, web-based and any other way you get information out to your target market about your services and programs. **If**

**you are a federally funded agency, in addition to your Equal Opportunity taglines,**

**you also need to include a TTY or Telecommunication Relay Service number any time you include your agency phone number.**

This is for your customers that may need an alternate way to get in touch with you.



If you recently reprinted your business cards or brochures, adding a sticker with this information will work great until you're ready to reprint. Often, people with disabilities won't know your services are accessible unless you include disability-friendly language or visuals, such as pictures, in your outreach materials. Whenever possible, in addition to including what's required, include additional information in your materials that will reinforce your efforts in creating an accessible environment for customers with disabilities.

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

## Resources

Navigating through public services is often challenging enough. Creating an accessible welcoming environment at the first point of contact is the first step toward achieving overall accessibility of your agency and services. The following are additional resources to assist you in this process.

### ***National Resources***

#### **Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board**

Office of Technical Information Services

1331 F Street, NW

Suite 1000

Washington, DC 20004-1111

(202) 272-0080 (Voice), (202) 272-0082 (TTY)

(800) 872-2253 (Voice), (800) 993-2822 (TTY)

Provides information and guidance on technical aspects of architectural, communication and transportation accessibility in buildings.

[www.access-board.gov/](http://www.access-board.gov/)

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

## **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

Federal Sector Programs

1801 L Street, NW 8th Floor

Washington, DC 20507

(800) 669-4000 (Voice), (800) 669-6820 (TTY)

Provides Guidance to Federal agencies on developing and implementing-affirmative action programs for hiring, placement, and advancement of individuals with handicaps. [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

## **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**

Job Accommodation Network

PO Box 6080

Morgantown, WV 26506-6080

(800)526-7234 (Voice), (877)781-9403 (TTY)

(304)293-7186 (Voice) locally and outside the United States

JAN is a service provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). JAN's mission is to facilitate the employment and retention of workers with disabilities by providing employers, employment providers, people with disabilities, their family members and other interested parties with information on job accommodations, entrepreneurship, and related subjects.

[www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)

For more information about our services or for a FREE consultation, please visit: [www.human-solutions.net](http://www.human-solutions.net).

## **National Council on Disability**

1331 F Street, NW

Suite 850

Washington, DC 20004

(202) 272-2004 (Voice), (202) 272-2074 (TTY)

Addresses, analyzes, and makes recommendations on issue of public policy which affect people with disabilities.

[www.ncd.gov](http://www.ncd.gov)

## **U.S. Department of Justice**

Disability Rights Section

Civil Rights Division

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Disability Rights Section, NYA

Washington, DC 20530

(202) 307-0663 (Voice & TTY)

The Disability Rights Section protects the rights of persons with disabilities under Titles I, II, and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”).

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/crt-home.html>