

## A Yearlong Plan for Disability Inclusion

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark law ensuring the equal rights of individuals with disabilities, celebrates its anniversary each July 26th. Focusing on the ADA is a great starting point for businesses who want to build more disability inclusion into their company culture. What better way to recognize the ADA than by celebrating it each month?

There are simple steps you can take to make your workplace more inclusive of people with disabilities on a monthly basis. Here are some suggestions for a year of inclusion created by [Tangram](#).

**July:** Take this month to share information about the ADA with employees, including information about the rights of people with disabilities and what is considered a disability under the ADA.

Helpful link: [https://www.ada.gov/topics\\_of\\_interest.htm](https://www.ada.gov/topics_of_interest.htm)

**August:** How disability-friendly is your workplace? Are your employees comfortable with disability etiquette? Conduct a survey this month to measure disability awareness among your employees. You can use this same survey at the end of the year to show how your inclusion efforts have paid off. After administering the survey, offer disability awareness and etiquette training to your employees to get them thinking about inclusion in positive ways.

Helpful link: <https://www.thetangramway.org/business-services>

**September:** Does your company have a diversity committee? If not, start one this month. If you already have such a committee, make sure that disability is included in your company's diversity plans.

Helpful link: <https://www.ithaca.edu/accessibleic/diversity/>

**October:** October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, which makes it the perfect month to focus on hiring, retaining and advancing people with disabilities in your workforce. Take time to review your company policies and procedures, as well as your recruitment, interviewing, hiring and onboarding practices to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.

Helpful link: <https://www.thetangramway.org/trainings-and-events>

**November 2019:** Let's talk about accommodations! This month, focus on your internal accommodation process (Do you have one? Do your employees know what it is?), and share information about different types of accommodations.

Helpful link: <https://askjan.org/>

**December:** Some employees may need service animals to help them live and work independently. Partner with a service animal organization this month to learn more about service animal etiquette.

Helpful link: <https://www.icandog.org/>

**January:** Communication is key! Help your employees become confident and effective communicators by sharing best practices for communicating with people with all types of disabilities.

Helpful link: [http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable\\_version/CIL-LEAD-JAN-Effective-Communication-Guide-WIOA.pdf](http://www.leadcenter.org/system/files/resource/downloadable_version/CIL-LEAD-JAN-Effective-Communication-Guide-WIOA.pdf)

**February:** Preparing for emergencies and natural disasters is an important part of any workplace. Have you given thought to what measures may need to be in place for people with disabilities? Take time to review your disaster preparedness plan this month and incorporate preparedness measures for those with disabilities. Example: If there is a fire and you have an employee who uses a wheelchair on the third floor, how will they evacuate?

Helpful links: <http://www.disasterstrategies.org/> and <https://portlight.org/>

**March:** In Indiana, March is Disability Awareness Month. Celebrate by establishing an employee resource group (ERG) for your employees with disabilities. ERGs are considered a diversity best practice.

Helpful link: <https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/employee-resource-groups>

**April:** Inclusion and your customers—use April to evaluate your marketing and your services to make sure they are inclusive. Businesses who intentionally market to people with disabilities and their families have been able to tap into a new, brand-loyal market. It's a win-win situation!

Helpful link: <https://www.skyword.com/contentstandard/creativity/how-top-brands-are-including-disabled-representation-in-their-marketing-campaigns/>

**May:** Accessibility is a key component of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, accessibility goes beyond ramps and automatic doors—it extends to things like your company's website. Furthermore, it should not just be a "check the box" item. Accessibility benefits more than just those with disabilities. Universal design makes spaces more functional and enjoyable for everyone.

Helpful links: <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>;  
<https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility>

**June:** Set your company up for another year of successful disability inclusion. Build a catalog of community resources that can help you and your employees as you continue your disability inclusion initiative. A good place to start is by identifying disability service providers in your area, government resources, advocacy groups and more.

Helpful links: <https://www.thetangramway.org/community-resources>

**July:** Party! Conduct another survey, the same one or a similar one to the survey you offered in August to measure the growth in disability inclusion knowledge and practices among your employees. Then hold a celebration to highlight the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA and your company's continued commitment to disability inclusion.