



Human Resources Division

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS SECTION

115 S. Andrews Avenue, Room 427 • Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301 • 954-357-6500 • FAX 954-357-7889

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 2, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners, Board of County Commissioners

THROUGH: Monica Cepero, County Administrator, County Administration 

FROM: Advisory Board for Individuals with Disabilities (ABID)

SUBJECT: 2022-2023 Annual Report and Recommendations

Attached for your review is the Advisory Board for Individuals with Disabilities' (ABID) 2022-2023 Annual Report and Recommendations (Report) along with County Agency Responses.

The Report provides recommendations in the areas of Transportation, Emergency Management, Education and Awareness, Inclusive Communities/Accessibility Compliance, and Employment. The Report was transmitted to several county agencies affected by ABID's recommendations, including the Transportation Department (Broward County Transit Division); Regional Emergency Services & Communications; Office of Public Communications; and the Finance and Administrative Services Department (Human Resources Division), for their review and response. Each agency's response to the applicable recommendations has been incorporated into the ABID Report.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Professional Standards office at 954-357-7800.

cc: Kimm Campbell, Deputy County Administrator, County Administration Office
David Kahn, Director, Human Resources Division
Marty Cassini, Director, Intergovernmental Affairs Administration
Averill Dorsett, Manager, Professional Standards Section
Coree Cuff Lonergan, Director, Transportation Department
Tracy Jackson, Director, Regional Emergency Services & Communications
Margaret Stapleton, Director, Office of Public Communications

Broward County Board of County Commissioners

Mark D. Bogen • Lamar P. Fisher • Beam Furr • Steve Geller • Robert McKinzie • Nan H. Rich • Hazelle P. Rogers • Tim Ryan • Michael Udine
Broward.org



**Broward County Advisory Board for Individuals with Disabilities (ABID)
2022-2023 Annual Report and Recommendations**

Chair:	Toby Gordon (Former Chair)	
Advisory Board Members:	Michelle Bitter-Oakley	
	Ellyn Drotzer	Mary Hudson (Former Member)
	Elizabeth Espinoza (Former Member)	Roslyn Greenberg
	Linda Fishkin	Mona Malbranche
	Jorge Ibacache (Former Member)	John Neff
	Michelle Jones	Janine Young
	Tracy Stafford	

Summary

The Broward County Advisory Board for Individuals with Disabilities (ABID) serves in an advisory capacity to the Broward County Board of County Commissioners (Commissioners) regarding matters which pertain to the status and welfare of disabled persons in Broward County, Florida.

The ABID is committed to ensuring the Broward County disabled community is afforded equal opportunities in Broward County Government (County Government). Individuals with a disability face daunting challenges and obstacles each day. Ensuring that a person with a disability has maximum quality of life is one of the ABID’s main goals. Quality of life includes independence, self-sufficiency, and a safe community.

Through strategic planning retreats over the past several years, the ABID has identified several areas within County Government directly affecting individuals with disabilities. These areas include Transportation, Emergency Management, Inclusive Communities/Accessibility Compliance, Education and Awareness and Employment.

The ABID 2022-2023 recommendations were developed at the annual planning meeting and based on established ABID priorities. There are several new recommendations being made to the Commissioners this year. This year ABID has combined recommendations from the previous year (2022) and the current year (2023) as a compilation.

These recommendations and amendments are being provided to the Commissioners to address ABID’s concerns and with hopes that the County Administrator and the Commissioners will take these suggestions under advisement. The ABID is also requesting the responding County agencies to reply with specificity to each recommendation contained herein.

TRANSPORTATION

People with disabilities must have access to safe transportation to participate fully in the community, maintain independence, and become successfully employed. Often, due to the disability, an individual must depend on public transportation or the paratransit system.

ABID is committed to ensuring paratransit services are effective and efficient for people with disabilities, including expanding the number of vendors for the growing disability population. Feedback from the community indicates vehicle safety is compromised when the interior design does not meet the disability needs. Input is critical as Broward County (County) creates and revises contract specifications.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: ABID recommends that Broward County Transportation Department (BCT), lower the wheelchair ramp for walkers with canes in addition to people with wheelchairs.

RESPONSE: Yes, BCT lowers the wheelchair ramp for walkers with canes in addition to people with wheelchairs.

Recommendation 2: ABID recommends that BCT ensure that the automated voice system is working and can be heard throughout the bus at a volume loud enough that it reaches the back of the bus. Also, the volume of the recorder should be checked.

RESPONSE: Bus Operator reports annunciator issues to Bus Traffic Control Center. Bus Operators can determine if the annunciator is working properly while performing the pre-trip inspection. The bus interior volume has three (3) settings (Low, Medium, and High). Currently, the interior volume on our bus fleet is set to a medium level.

Recommendation 3: ABID recommends that BCT check that bell ringers for signaling when a passenger needs a stop, are properly functioning.

RESPONSE: Yes, passenger signals (bell ringers) are checked during pre-trip inspection. In addition, passenger signals (bell ringers) are checked during the required Preventative Maintenance inspection by the Maintenance staff.

ABID's RESPONSE: ABID recommends a future technology solution that would allow bus riders to report issue in real time.

Recommendation 4: ABID recommends that BCT remind passengers to be at the stop 10-15 minutes early in order to be able to make the bus.

RESPONSE: BCT standard communication on all our printed routes and our website reminds passengers to be at the stop 5 minutes early.

ABID'S RESPONSE: ABID members strongly recommend increasing the arrival time from 5 minutes to 15 minutes early on the website and all collateral documentation.

Recommendation 5: ABID recommends that BCT leave on the automated voice that announces major intersections and facilities enroute. It helps passengers keep their bearings and find their stops.

RESPONSE: Yes, Operators can control the annunciator bus volume through the use of the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT). However, the bus computer-aided dispatch/automatic vehicle location (CAD/AVL) system is configured to announce major time points, and intersections with connecting routes, while the operator is logged into the route.

ABID'S RESPONSE: ABID Strongly recommends a solution to the conflict between the two sound systems and also random quality control checks.

Recommendation 6: If a stop is not close to an intersection that has a pedestrian crosswalk light, the stop should have its own pedestrian crosswalk light so that passengers can safely cross the street to and from the stop.

RESPONSE: If a bus stop is not located at or immediately adjacent to a signalized intersection the expectation is that patrons will walk and cross safely at the signalized intersection. The County does not promote mid-block crossing.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Within the Vulnerable Population Registry (VPR), there continues to be wide inconsistencies regarding the use of data. Some cities have actively sought eligible individuals to register, followed up to determine their needs, and planned to coordinate response efforts through their volunteers. Other cities are resistant to creating a response plan.

A disabilities task force was created and addressed ADA Title II and Title III issues and developed recommendations affecting: planning, sheltering, and responding. Recommendations for effectively communicating with the disability community have been successfully addressed.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: ABID recommends the Broward County website needs accessibility options for the Vulnerable Population and Special Needs online applications as there are currently no plugins on the application web pages meaning the font size, color contrast, etc. are all fixed to one format.

RESPONSE: The Broward Website (Broward.org), has accessibility options. The Broward website code is fluid and responds to any size of screen, includes all the appropriate tags for a screen reader to properly navigate the site, and also has an accessibility widget on the website. Should additional assistance still be required by an applicant for the Vulnerable Population/Special Needs registries, the office can be contacted directly for individual assistance.

Recommendation 2: ABID recommends that Emergency Management ensures that all documents they create for emergency management as print/pdf products are created in a variety of accessible formats. Print applications, checklists, etc. should have larger font options. Informational items should also be designed for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities in mind and for those that live independently.

RESPONSE: Alternate formats of printed products are available upon request from any county citizen who request a large print/font or alternate formats. Additionally, the county publicizes most of its online and printed material in lay terms and easy to understand language.

Recommendation 3: ABID recommends people with limited hearing as a physical impairment benefit from TV stations, broadcasting all news and emergency information in open captions format. TV stations may be encouraged by County involvement to provide interpreters for on camera duty during emergencies.

RESPONSE: When press conferences are conducted to provide emergency information such as public protective action recommendations to the public, the county provides an onscreen sign language interpreter to assist in conveying the information. Additionally, all televisions manufactured in the US since 1993 have the capability to provide close captioning and citizens can turn on this feature, if desired.

Recommendation 4: ABID recommends the County create an ordinance that all hotels have services for the deaf and hard of hearing and include the use of visual alarms.

RESPONSE: Alarms installed in public / private areas, to include hotels, follow the Florida Life Safety Code. This code states that fire alarms installed in hotels must be installed per NFPA72 national standard. This standard includes specifications for audio and visual notifications.

Recommendation 5: ABID recommends that the County work with cities to place a great emphasis on those individual vulnerable people, who lack a caregiver, to assemble a supply kit. This is because the supply kit is one of the most difficult issues with regard to pre-event planning for any emergency. The County may choose to consider the Vulnerable Population Registry (VPR) to contact individuals whether they presently have a disaster/emergency supply kit available. The supply kit list should be available in multiple businesses in the community (e.g. library, drug store, grocery store).

RESPONSE: The Vulnerable Population Registry is primarily a planning tool used by municipalities to identify residents who may become vulnerable following an event that results in the loss of common services such as electricity or water. Broward County municipalities provide general resident emergency planning information on their websites, which includes the emergency supply kit list. A similar list and other suggestions are available at Broward.org/Hurricane. Many municipalities partner with local community based and non-profit organizations who may be able to provide additional assistance.

Recommendation 6: ABID recommends that the County continue working with home health care agencies and durable medical goods suppliers. These stakeholders may be able to educate people on the benefits of VPR registry participation. All HIPAA rules and regulations must be followed.

RESPONSE: 6. The importance of registering and/or updating the registration of clients within their care for the Special Needs Shelter is communicated to several Home Health Agencies on an annual basis by BEMD. It is also listed as a requirement from Agency for Health Care Administration (ACHA) for home health care agencies and documentation must be submitted annually in their CEMP for review by DOH-Broward. Additionally, residents are also advised of the availability of the VPR registry.

Recommendation 7: Data gathering is a continuous emergency management function. ABID recommends that updated policies and strategies used during emergency disaster events be quantitatively analyzed. This analysis would provide a numeric picture of its impact upon the County's communities and also be reported, to include newspapers, closed captioned TV, in an expedient and thorough manner as part of the recovery phase following disasters.

REPOSE: 7. After a major disaster event, the County evaluates its overall response to the incident, to include but not limited to, policies, procedures, system utilized etc. Reporting of emergency information before, during, and after an emergency period is an ongoing process, the County provides the available appropriate emergency information at each phase of the event through various mediums, i.e., TV, newspapers, website, etc. As the recovery progresses and there

is an opportunity to evaluate the overall impact to the county and its municipalities, the data gathered may be shared with our broadcast partners, print media, and others as necessary.

Recommendation 8: ABID recommends the County works with FPL in educating the community on medically essential services, to an even greater extent as compared to the past, that highly vulnerable individuals (e.g. people with electronic medical equipment) have access to electric power to operate their medical equipment and to promote their wellness where they reside.

RESPONSE: The service provided by FPL to residents with electric medically necessary equipment is communicated to all who inquire about what programs and/or services are available to them, in addition to the Special Needs Shelter Registry program. It is a program that has been recommended to several registered clients.

LEGISLATION

(No Recommendations at this time)

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Recommend that the Broward County website have a section under Agencies and Services that shows a category for Disability Services. (Pending Response from Agency).

RESPONSE: The County can work on it. We will also create a tab on the “Helpful References” page titled “Disability Services” that will go to a page where we can list/link all Disability Services provided by the County.

Recommendation 2: Recommend that communication of programs and resources should be done by additional means besides the website and Facebook. This communication should include agencies or groups that pertain to people with disabilities (e.g. the Lighthouse).

RESPONSE: The County can work with ABID on this. The agency suggests creating a mini communications plan to map out our strategies. These can include external communication vehicles as well as internal communication vehicles. We can create a list of activities that will enhance your visibility among your target audiences. Attached is an example of a plan we created for the newly-created HOSS division in Human Services.

Recommendation 3: Recommend that the Broward Touchline be clearly explained on the Broward County website.

RESPONSE: The County can work with ABID to put any information needed on the website. The agency itself is not sure what this service is; therefore, it makes sense that we need additional communication about it.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that the Broward County website meets criteria for ADA compliance. For example, when you zoom in the text, some of the text gets cut off and cannot be seen. Also, the website needs accessibility options for the Vulnerable Population and Special Needs registries sites. For instance, have forms available with large print.

RESPONSE: Broward.org is ADA compliant (AA rated, with some sections AAA). Certain aspects of the website, are limited on accessibility features due to restrictions of our website platform, SharePoint. If you can identify specific pages on your websites that are not as compliant as you wish, please let us know as part of this project we will be working on with you. Our goal is to make all aspects of our website compliant. Also, please note that our website has a (relatively) new accessibility widget, powered by UserWay, that contains many viewer accessibility options, including a larger font. To check it out, click on the icon highlighted below, in the upper right corner of every web page.

Recommendation 5: ABID recommends that the Office of Public Communication make it simpler to access the board meetings through the Broward County website. For instance, future meetings could be broadcast on the Broward County YouTube channel.

RESPONSE: In order to webcast meetings of the Advisory Board for Individuals with Disabilities, the Board would have to meet in a room that has webcasting equipment available (e.g. Room 302 or Room 430). Also, there would be a potential OPC staffing issue if your meetings were held after normal business hours. Since you already conduct your meetings using a collaboration tool (e.g., Zoom, Teams or WebEx), you can also go directly to YouTube with that stream. The County has a YouTube channel that could be utilized for that, but again, you would need OPC staff to hit the "Go" and "Stop" buttons. You could also record your meetings in your collaboration tool, and the County could then post it the following morning. In summary, the County should discuss options for greater dissemination of your meetings in a separate discussion with the OPC AV Team.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES/ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE

(No Recommendations at this time)

EMPLOYMENT

The ABID is aware and appreciative of the proactive changes made to the Broward County Human Resources Division. Not only has their outreach and communication with community agencies been steadily increasing, but the Broward County Human Resources Division has also been creating opportunities for students to gain unpaid work experience. This experience will be beneficial for those students looking to seek regular employment with the county upon graduation. However, the population of individuals with disabilities reaches beyond the classroom. Many individuals with disabilities, specifically the developmentally and intellectually disabled, are able, capable, and qualified to work, but have difficulty acquiring paid employment with the county due to strict requirements for certain positions.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Modify the Broward County website in a way that will attract more people with disabilities to apply for jobs with Broward County. The website should be user friendly and meet criteria for ADA accessibility. One specific item on the Broward County website employment FAQs, would be to add a question about job performance accommodations. For instance, what if I need a special accommodation to perform the job? The FAQ would provide the appropriate information to address the question.

RESPONSE: Broward County is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to inclusion. Broward County is committed to providing equal opportunity and reasonable accommodations to qualified person with Disabilities. We support the hiring of people with disabilities; therefore, if you require assistance due to a disability, please contact the Professional Standards Section in advance at 954-357-6500 or email Profstandards@broward.org to make an accommodation request.

Recommendation 2: Broward County must cultivate a culture of inclusivity in their hiring practices. In order to accomplish this, ABID recommends the County provide training for every hiring manager, interviewer, resume reviewer, and job description creator. These trainings should include how to adapt positions to be more available and accessible to all viable candidates, how to interview for a position with inclusivity in mind, and at its root train a more inclusive mindset for the gatekeepers of employment within the County.

RESPONSE: Broward County's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Section is finalizing initiatives to address these concerns and will implement them in the near future.

Recommendation 3: Within job descriptions on the website, there is the following wording: "*Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance - Broward County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The ADA requires Broward County to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified persons with disabilities. Prospective and current employees are encouraged to discuss ADA accommodations with the Professional Standards/Human Rights Section.*" This wording

appears cold, and that the County only lists it because the ADA requires it, not because they believe in inclusivity within their culture. Additionally, they recommend applicants to reach out to a specific section, but there is no direction on how to contact that section. Contact information should be included at the end of that statement. Perhaps add this wording from the FAQ in the job descriptions: *"We support the hiring of the disabled; therefore, if you require assistance due to a disability, please contact the Human Resources Division in advance at 954-357-6445 or email Staffing@Broward.org to make an accommodation request."* This kind of support should not be hidden, and actually has wording that shows true interest and commitment from the County for working with individuals with disabilities.

RESPONSE: Broward County's DEI and Staffing Sections are currently reviewing this with the intent to use more inclusive language and have clear contact information. Keeping in mind that this specific language is intended to convey the County's compliance with the law, we will confer with the County Attorney's Office to ensure we remain compliant under the law.
