



Massachusetts Office on Disability Bulletin

One Ashburton Place, Room 1305 Boston, MA 02108



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Full & Equal Participation in All Aspects of Life for All People With Disabilities

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Save the Date: 2021 Disability Summit

The Massachusetts Office on Disability first hosted our annual Summit beginning in 2015. This event was designed to inspire leaders, advocates, and persons with disabilities to unify and focus on issues that impact the disability community. You are invited to join us on **March 4, 2021** from 9:00am-1:00pm for a robust program titled Socialization in a Virtual World. Our Summit will focus on various topics, including assistive technology resources, vocational rehabilitation resources, ADA updates & COVID-19, accessible library resources, working in the Black community-unfinished business, and promoting health and wellness during a pandemic with a focus on physical access and health equity. If you previously registered for the Summit in October of 2020 you do not need to register again, and you will be sent a link with more information as we get closer to the event. If you did not register for the October event, use the following link to sign up: www.bit.ly/3cdJDg4. There are currently 185 spots remaining.

Outdoor Dining & Seating Accessibility Fact Sheet

MOD created an Outdoor Dining & Seating Accessibility fact sheet. The primary focus is to provide dining establishments with an understanding of the rules and regulations that addresses architectural accessibility in the built environment. These requirements are outlined by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) and MA state building code (521 CMR). This sheet also references anti-discrimination obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and associated Architectural Design Standards (ADADS). As MA businesses begin to re-open in accordance with pandemic guidelines, restaurants and cafes are establishing outdoor seating areas for customers. These new outdoor spaces will inspire different accessibility considerations. Entities must consider accessibility obligations that ensure a safe, equitable, and accessible experience for all visitors. These obligations include creating accessible routes to all areas of the establishment, ensuring tables and seating are accessible and at the appropriate height, and creating accessible kiosks, counters, restrooms, and parking. Along with physical accessibility, establishments must also provide appropriate auxiliary aids including effective communication, menus in Braille and large print, read menus to customers, utilize pen and paper where needed, and speak at an appropriate speed. Read the full article at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/outdoor-diningseating-accessibility-considerations-fact-sheet-covid-19-edition/download>.

About Our Executive Director, Mary Mahon McCauley

In October 2019, Mary Mahon McCauley was appointed as the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) by Governor Charles D. Baker.

Mary was diagnosed with macular degeneration when she was 17. This is known as the leading cause of vision loss. She has been losing her vision since she was in elementary school. Mary holds a bachelor's degree and a master's in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, obtained from UMASS Boston.

Prior to her appointment as the Executive Director at MOD, Mary served at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) since 1989, most recently as the Area Director for Downtown Boston. While at MRC, Mary worked on vocational rehabilitation and job placement for individuals with disabilities.

In 2008, she was honored with the Thomas J. Carroll Award for Employment as the Blind Employee of the Year. She served as group facilitator for the MA Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and on the City of Quincy Disability Commission.



Photo Caption: Governor Charles D. Baker swearing in Mary, with Mary's right hand raised while her son watches

Finding Your Way Around Organizations Serving the Disability Community

When looking for answers or support, sometimes a major hurdle can simply be working out who does what, who to contact, and how to get a response. For this reason, the Massachusetts Office on Disability created a webpage to help people understand some basic concepts that clarify how to navigate state and federal government organizations that serve the disability community.

Throughout this webpage, you will find information based on the structure of government and other organizations that serve the disability community, problem resolution and enforcement, where to find out about organizations online, and what to consider before contacting a government agency. We also suggest steps you can take to make your interactions more effective and hopefully reduce some common frustrations.

The programs offered by different agencies each have their own application processes and eligibility criteria. The definition of disability depends on context and there is no single entity to certify someone as a person with a disability for all programs and circumstances. We hope this webpage can help you navigate organizations serving the disability community. Remember, if you have a specific communication need, express this as soon as possible with the organization you are speaking with, as you are entitled to Effective Communication under the ADA.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/finding-your-way-around-organizations-serving-the-disability-community>.

Meet Our New MOD Staff

Introducing Charlene Cashman

Charlene serves as the Executive Assistant at MOD and brings organization, time management, multitasking, and quick problem solving to the MOD team. Charlene comes from a technology background where she worked at a company that did enterprise scheduling software. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her son who was born in July 2020, going to her summer house in York Beach, Maine, and skiing in the winter.

Charlene has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Arts from UMASS Dartmouth. In her previous position she worked with National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) which peaked her interest in Disability Rights; when the opportunity arose to work with our Executive Director at MOD she could not pass up the opportunity. Charlene's main goal at MOD is to make a difference in the community, and work everyday to the best of her ability.



Photo Caption: Black and white photo of Charlene smiling

Introducing Sarah Wiles

Sarah Wiles began working with MOD in 2020 as our Client Assistance Program (CAP) Advocate, and brings a fresh and unique perspective, as well as compassion and enthusiasm to her daily work. CAP provides information and advocacy to people with disabilities who seek and receive Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services from the

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and/or the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, as well as independent living services from Independent Living (IL) Centers within the Commonwealth. Sarah is 28 and grew up in Longmeadow, MA with her family and two brothers. She lives in Downtown Boston with her boyfriend and her handsome golden retriever guide dog, Atlas. Sarah graduated Magna Cum Laude with her Bachelor's in Psychology from Western New England University in 2014, where she also minored in political science. She is currently in her final year of law school, also at Western New England.

Sarah was an avid camper growing up at Camp Inter-Actions, a camp held for kids who are blind or visually impaired, where she rose through the ranks to camp counselor. She also attended several summer training sessions at the Carroll Center for the Blind. These experiences brought her into the realm of disability rights, where she served as an Investigative Intern at the MA Commission Against Discrimination, served as a Legal Intern at the Attorney General's Office, and participated in her law school's International Human Rights Clinic. In 2017, Sarah served as the Home Mechanics teacher at the Carroll Center for the Blind, teaching woodworking skills to teenagers who are blind.

As a CAP Advocate, Sarah helps answer questions for clients, refers them to services, and provides relevant updates. She regularly interacts with various governmental agencies and statewide committees. Sarah understands that individuals are experts on their lived experiences and in evaluating their own needs; she is more than happy to assist everyone.

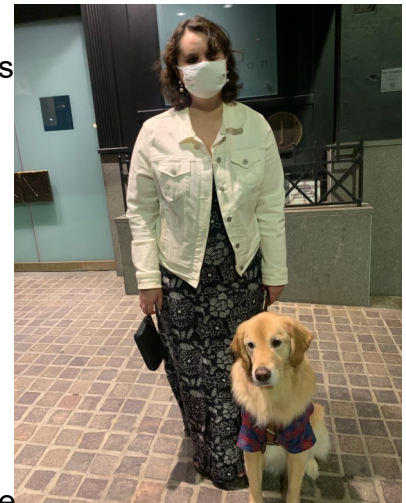


Photo Caption: Sarah Wiles smiling and holding her guide dog Atlas

MOD 2020 Highlights and Statistics

- Throughout 2020, the Massachusetts Office on Disability hosted:
 - ♦ 3 public Zoom meetings about health and safety initiatives regarding COVID-19 for the general public
 - ♦ The statewide Commission on Disability and Municipal ADA Coordinator call on July 20 for 172 attendees
 - ♦ 5 ADA Coordinator Orientation trainings for 12 Executive Branch Departments
 - ♦ The Executive Branch ADA Coordinator call on August 5 for all 68 departments
 - ♦ 32 Emergency Preparedness trainings and distributed 1,194 Go Bags which included emergency equipment supplies and workbooks
 - ♦ 3 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS) accessibility trainings
- The MOD website has been updated and features various subsections focused on:
 - ♦ MOD services for access, inclusion, and equal opportunity for people with disabilities
 - ♦ Disability rights, access, and resources
 - ♦ Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living
 - ♦ Training, events, and publications
 - ♦ Architectural Access, and Municipal ADA Grant funding for MA cities and towns
- MOD conducted 12,430 calls and emails relating to technical assistance and the ADA
- MOD attended 16 Commission on Disability Meetings attended to provide technical assistance and guidance
- MOD created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee
- MOD attended 19 MEMA Shelter Assessments
- MOD sent a letter to all Municipalities titled, COVID-19 ADA Municipal Reminder Memorandum. This was created to assist Municipal ADA Coordinators in ensuring that, even in a crisis, people with disabilities should continue to have equal access without discrimination or increased safety risks due to COVID-19. Read more at www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-ada-municipal-reminder-memo-to-ada-coordinators-and-cod-chairs/download
- MOD gave \$1,937,500 to 48 different communities across 50 grants through our ADA Improvement Grant Program
- The Reasonable Accommodation Capital Reserve Account (RACRA) guidelines and application process is being updated

LevelUP to Equality Quarterly Webinar

Please join the Massachusetts Office on Disability for our first Quarterly LevelUp to Equality Webinar on April 14, 2021 from 11:30am-12:30pm. The webinar topics will include MOD updates and initiatives, outdoor dining access responsibilities, and a question and answer session. For more information about this event, and how you can register, please click the link below which will bring you to the Eventbrite registration page.

LevelUP to Equality Webinar Registration Link: www.eventbrite.com/e/mod-levelup-to-equality-quarterly-webinar-tickets-137812142829

Please note, registration is required to attend. We hope to see you there!

Accessibility for Virtual Trainings

The Massachusetts Office on Disability created a memorandum focused on ensuring virtual trainings are both accessible and inclusive. This memorandum offers guidance to state agencies in their effort to provide accessible virtual meetings and presentations considering many people are working remotely and are conducting their meetings, calls, and events virtually. Providing reasonable accommodations and upholding effective communication standards are critical components of achieving equal access. Some key features of this memorandum discuss the necessity for reasonable accommodations and effective communication. The first step is to select an appropriate technology platform that provides the highest level of accessibility. Once selected, all presentation materials must be made physically accessible (such as Braille copies and large print materials) as well as electronically accessible for individuals using screen readers and other assistive technologies. This includes but is not limited to proper headings, alternative text, and video captions.

After the platform and documents are fully accessible and all reasonable accommodations such as American Sign Language Interpreters and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) Interpreters are booked, be sure to continue using best practices mentioned in this memorandum throughout your presentation. When the presentation is complete, please be sure all follow-up materials are accessible before sending to attendees.

Contact MOD

Phone: 617-727-7440

Toll Free: 800-322-2020

Fax: 617-727-0965

Web: www.Mass.gov/MOD



[@MassDisability](https://twitter.com/MassDisability)



blog.mass.gov/mod



[MOD YouTube Channel](#)

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HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE ON DISABILITY!

Have a Safe and Happy 2021!