

# Effective Communication Accommodations:

**Developmental, Mental Health, Cognitive,  
Hearing, Vision, and Speech Disabilities**

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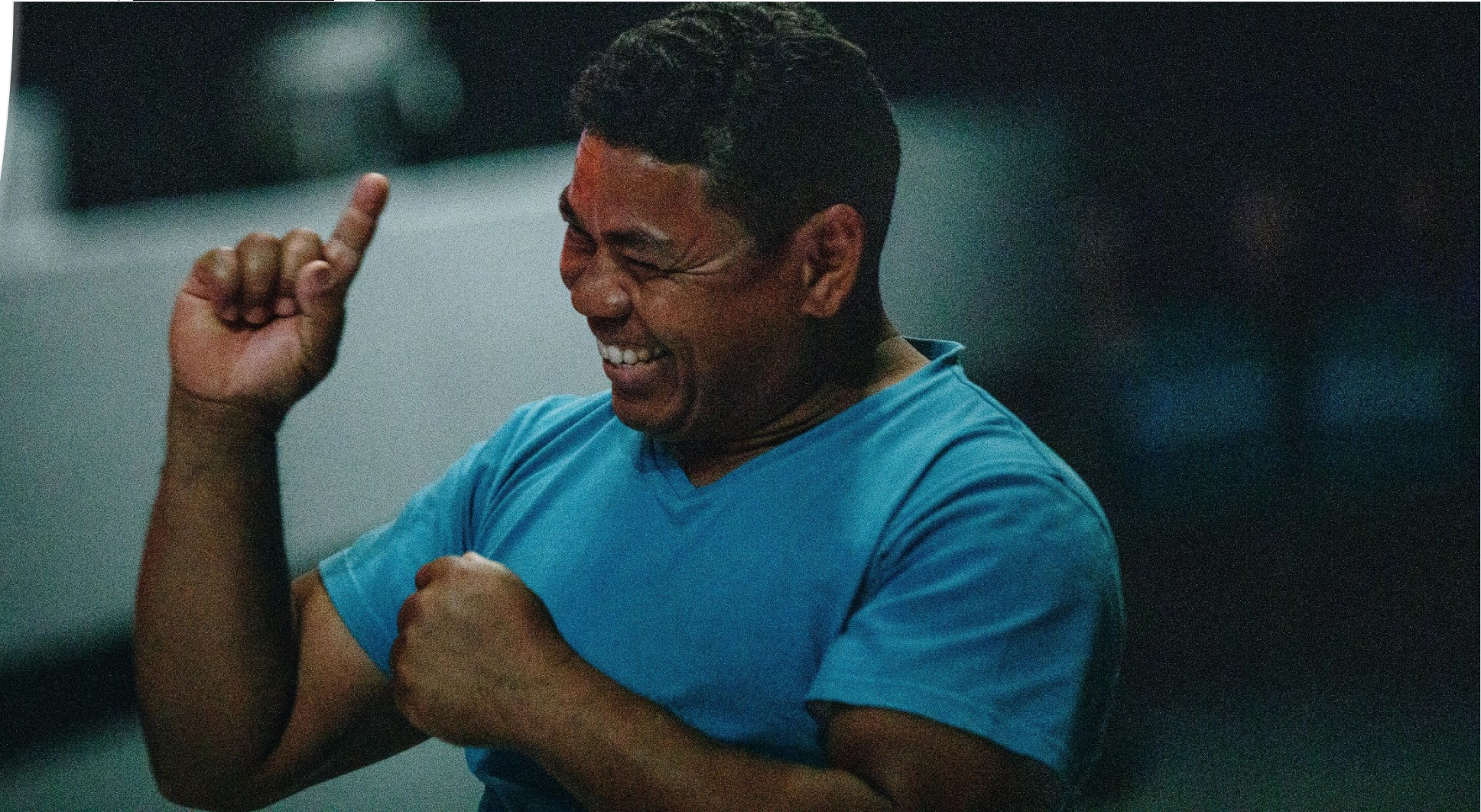


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**Talley Wells, Executive Director**  
**North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities**

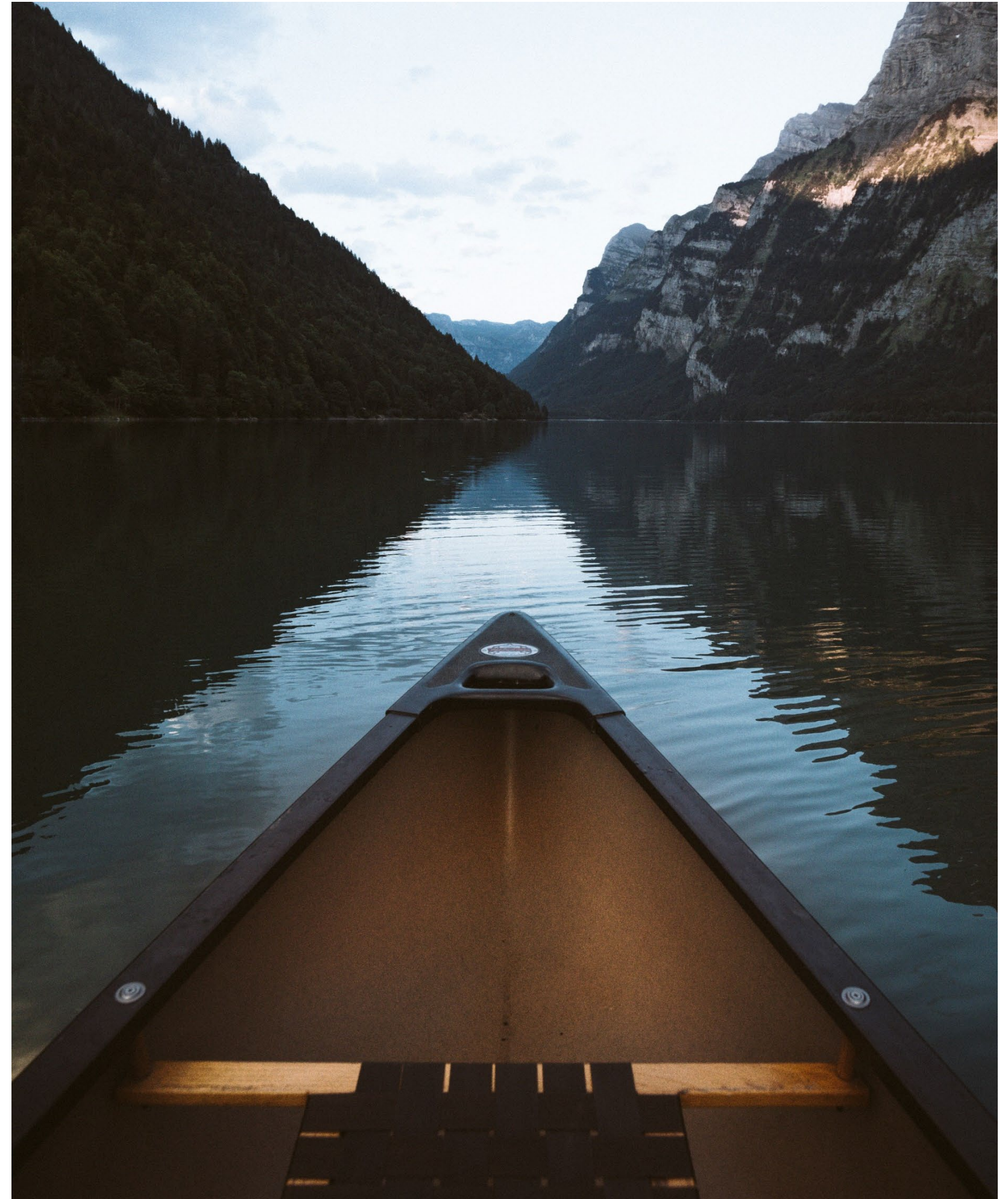
*2022 Virtual ADA Conference for State and Local Governments*

*State ADA Coordinator's Office*

*Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission*

# Session Objectives

- Provide a brief overview of the ADA
- Identify ADA requirements for Title II entities
- Discuss Predictability Assessments
- Provide Details of Auxiliary Aids and Services Requirement
- Discuss Reasonable Accommodations for Individuals who are (or who have): Blind, Low Vision, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Speech or Language Impairments, Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Diagnoses.





# Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Congress passed the ADA after years of advocacy, struggle, and work from individuals within the country's disability community.



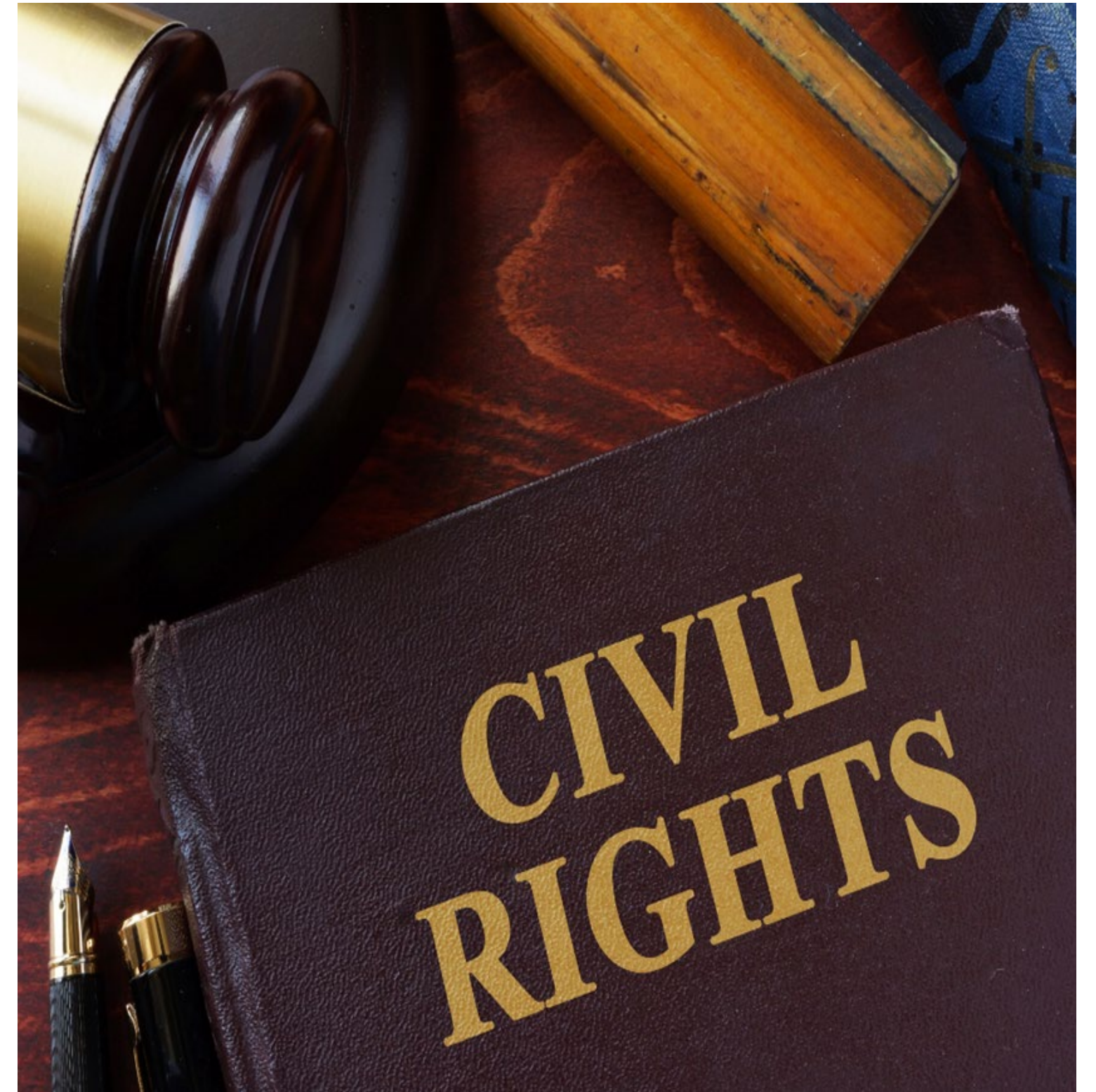
The ADA generally uses the framework of Civil Rights Act of 1964 for coverage and enforcement and the terms and concepts of Section 504 for what constitutes discrimination.

# ADA Title II

“... no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.”

42 U.S.C. 12132

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# Definition of Disability

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- A record of such an impairment;
- Is regarded as having such an impairment.





# Predictable Assessments

ADAAA of 2008

(A) Deafness substantially limits hearing;

(B) Blindness substantially limits seeing;

(C) Intellectual disability substantially limits brain function;

...

(E) Autism substantially limits brain function;

...

(G) Cerebral palsy substantially limits brain function;

...

(I) Epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, and multiple sclerosis each substantially limits neurological function;

... and

(K) Major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, obsessive compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia each substantially limits brain function.

Source: 28 CFR Part 35 Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services (2010 ADA Title II Regulations with amendments issued through Aug. 2016) by U.S. Department of Justice - published 09/15/2010

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# Qualified Individual with a Disability

**An individual is qualified if s/he meets the essential eligibility requirements of the program, benefit, or activity with or without:**

- Reasonable modifications to rules, policies or practices;
- Auxiliary aids and services; or
- Removal of architectural, communications or transportation barriers.



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## PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE?

Should we use the following:

- Disabled or a Person with a Disability?
- Autism or Neurodiverse?
- Intellectual Disability or Developmental Disability?

My personal practice is to continue to use person first language but to continue to listen to the disability community for what language is preferred. In one-on-one or small group settings, I will ask or listen to what terms individuals prefer.

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# Auxiliary Aids and Services

A public entity shall take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with applicants, participants, members of the public, and companions with disabilities are as effective as communications with others.

(2) For purposes of this section, “companion” means a family member, friend, or associate of an individual seeking access to a service, program, or activity of a public entity, who, along with such individual, is an appropriate person with whom the public entity should communicate.

(b) (1) A public entity shall furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford individuals with disabilities, including applicants, participants, companions, and members of the public, an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a service, program, or activity of a public entity.

(2) The type of auxiliary aid or service necessary to ensure effective communication will vary in accordance with the method of communication used by the individual; the nature, length, and complexity of the communication involved; and the context in which the communication is taking place. In determining what types of auxiliary aids and services are necessary, a public entity shall give primary consideration to the requests of individuals with disabilities. In order to be effective, auxiliary aids and services must be provided in accessible formats, in a timely manner, and in such a way as to protect the privacy and independence of the individual with a disability.

(c)(1) A public entity shall not require an individual with a disability to bring another individual to interpret for him or her.



# Accommodations for Individuals Who Are Blind, Have Low Vision, Or a Visual Impairment

- **Print Materials:**

- Auditory versions
- Braille
- Display document as an accessible page on the internet
- Optical character recognition (OCR)
- Qualified reader, which may be used to read text aloud for a person with a vision impairment
- Large Print

- **Computer Information:**

- Screen reading software
- Computer Braille display
- Qualified reader
- Accessible Internet Pages
- Alternate Text for Images

- **Forms:**

- Personal assistance
- Digital recorder
- Speech dictation software
- Braille stylus/slate
- Braille printer or embosser
- Scribe

- **Virtual Meetings**

- Verbalize what is Screen Shared
- Share materials ahead of time
- Personal support

Note: A qualified reader is someone who reads effectively, accurately, and impartially and uses any necessary specialized vocabulary.

Adapted from Job Accommodation Network  
<https://askjan.org/disabilities/Blind.cfm?cssearch=1475537>  
1 (while these suggestions were made for Title I, they also provide useful examples for Title II of the ADA)





# Additional accommodations for Individuals Who Are Blind, Have Low vision, Or a Visual Impairment

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- Braille/tactile labels or indicators
- Talking devices (elevators, crosswalks)
- Descriptions of videos/images
- Website Accessibility Standards (WCAG 2.0)  
<https://www.w3.org/TR/UNDERSTANDING-WCAG20/>
- Detectable warning surfaces
- Colored and/or textured edges on stair traveling/evacuation partner
- Tactile map of evacuation and common routes
- Talking landmark or global positioning system
- Providing a driver or guide

Adapted from Job Accommodation Network [https://askjan.org/disabilities/Blind.cfm?cssearch=1475537\\_1](https://askjan.org/disabilities/Blind.cfm?cssearch=1475537_1) (while these suggestions were made for Title I, they also provide useful examples for Title II of the ADA)

# Accommodations for Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Qualified Notetaker
- Qualified sign language interpreter
- Assisted Listening Systems
- Oral interpreter
- Cued-speech interpreter
- Tactile interpreter
- Real-time captioning
- Written materials
- Printed script of a stock speech such as at a museum).
- TTY or TDD
- Visual lighting cues
- Video relay service
- Emergency notification systems
- Assistive computer software
- Adjustment of services away from noisy areas
- Clear masks and/or other ways (particularly in virtual meetings) to enable individuals who read lips to see someone speaking

Qualified interpreter is someone who can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially both receptively and expressively using any specialized vocabulary

ADA.Gov <https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm#:~:text=For%20people%20who%20are%20deaf,such%20as%20given%20on%20a>

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# Accommodations for Individuals with Speech or Language Impairments

- Augmentative and alternative communication device
- Qualified speech-to-speech transliterator (a person trained to recognize unclear speech and repeat it clearly)
- Some accommodations that may be provided to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Taking time to listen and ask questions for clarification
- Providing writing materials



Adding captioning to videos on YouTube, Vimeo, and Other Online Video Services is Easy!

You can start with automatic captioning but then edit to make sure it is correct.



# Mental Health Disabilities and Signs

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Paranoia
- Psychosis

- Grief
- Stress
- Suicidal ideations
- Feelings of defeat
- Sadness from isolation
- Worry



# Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities

Intellectual Disabilities  
Traumatic Brain Injury  
Developmental Disabilities  
Autism Spectrum Disorder  
Learning Disabilities  
Alzheimer's Disease and  
Dementia  
Many others

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# Unique Challenges to Accommodations for Mental Health Diagnoses and /or Developmental Disabilities

- Mental Illness/Developmental Disabilities often less apparent than other disabilities.
- Accommodations also can be harder to identify
- Wide variety of different diagnoses, symptoms, and conditions requiring different accommodations.

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Photo from NBC News of Naomi Osaka <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-open-offering-tennis-players-access-mental-health-services-n1277727>





Photo by [Paul Green](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Accommodations

- Use Plain Language  
<https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>
- Speak slowly
- Use pictures and visual tools
- Repeat important information
- Ensure directions are understood by asking for them to be repeated back
- Ask someone with expertise in the specific type of disability
- Provide support for virtual communications

# Additional Accommodations

- Breaks
- Timing and scheduling modifications
- Provide information in alternative formats to ensure it is understood
- Allow individual to assist
- Allow use of service or comfort animal
- When appropriate, ask the individual or his/her loved ones (if appropriate) for accommodations that worked in other settings



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## Documents and Forms

- Individuals may need assistance with documents and forms or for the materials to be simplified.
- Forms should be simple and only ask for the information that is necessary.
- Large print should be used for ease of reading.

# Assistance of Others

Maintain individual's privacy and dignity as much as possible

Family members or others who assist individual can be helpful but usually the individual should be consulted if others can assist

Even when guardian exists, individual has right to respect and usually to interact with who he/she chooses.

Individual providing accompaniment should not be required to interpret.

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## Resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing <https://www.gcdhh.org/>
- Deaf Seniors of Georgia <https://www.deafseniorsgeorgia.org/>

## Resources for Blind and Low Vision

- Georgia Council of the Blind [www.georgiacounciloftheblind.org](http://www.georgiacounciloftheblind.org)
- National Federation of the Blind of Georgia, Inc. [www.nfbga.org](http://www.nfbga.org)
- Project Independence <http://gvs.georgia.gov/project-independence>

# **Georgia Mental Health & Developmental Disability Resources/Organizations**

**Georgia Crisis & Access Line -- 1-800-715-4225.**

**Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)**

**Georgia Advocacy Office.** The Georgia Advocacy Office is the state's designated and federally mandated Protection and Advocacy Organization for people with disabilities.

**Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs) and Training:** Georgia law enforcement officers can participate in a 40-hour CIT training to effectively assist individuals with mental illness and other brain disorders who are in crisis. Trainings in CIT are held throughout the year. For more information, contact Pat Strode by telephone (770 234-0855) or via email at [cit@namiga.org](mailto:cit@namiga.org) .

**National Association of Mental Illness Georgia (NAMI Georgia)**

**Mental Health America of Georgia (MHA of Georgia)**

**Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)**



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# CONTACT INFORMATION

Talley Wells, Esq.

Executive Director

North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities

[talley.wells@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:talley.wells@dhhs.nc.gov)



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