

Disability Inclusion Commitments 2.0

12 Disability Inclusion Commitments for Law Firms and Legal Departments

Disability inclusivity is often overlooked or overshadowed in broad inclusion efforts. To address this gap, the Diversity Lab Disability Inclusion Advisory Group—highlighted on page 10—shared its insights, perspectives, and experiences to create a list of 12 actions law firms and legal departments can take to build and sustain a culture of inclusion for people with disabilities.

Since launching in December 2023, the Disability Inclusion Commitments have gained significant traction, with over 125 firms participating across the US, Canada, and the UK. Based on evolving needs, we've expanded to 12 commitments, adding a focus on leveraging legal expertise through disability-focused pro bono work—particularly crucial as protections for people with disabilities face new challenges in various jurisdictions.

The initiative now includes:

- Educational webinars featuring expert speakers on topics ranging from digital accessibility to neurodiversity
- InfoXchange sessions where law firm inclusion leaders share best practices and challenges
- Expanded visibility opportunities for disabled lawyers and disability inclusion advocates
- Data-driven insights on disability inclusion trends across the international legal profession

The actions below are not presented in any particular order. Each organization should individually determine which actions to prioritize based on its unique circumstances, resources, and goals.





01

Establish a disability employee resource group.

Just as firms and organizations have created employee resource groups for various underrepresented populations, they should do so for individuals with disabilities and their allies.

Employee resource groups are important in increasing awareness and enhancing policies and practices that affect disabled employees. They are also an important signal to employees that the firm or organization values employees with disabilities. Ask for and incorporate their advice on the commitments on this list.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [Bloomberg Law: Attorneys with Disabilities in BigLaw](#)
- [Disability:IN: Employee Resource Group/Business Resource Group Resources](#)

02

Conduct an annual survey for lawyers and business professionals to identify as having a disability.

On an annual basis, invite people to self-identify as individuals with disabilities and explain why you are asking (e.g., assessing the sufficiency of centralized accommodations programs, determining whether to create a disability employee resource group). This can help signal to employees that your organization wants to help those with disabilities thrive. Noting why the organization is asking employees to self-identify may mitigate concerns about the potential risks of disclosure. Invite the disability employee resource group to review and provide feedback on the survey and corresponding communications, if desired.

A low self-identification rate does not necessarily mean that your organization does not have many people with disabilities; rather, those with disabilities may choose not to self-identify for various reasons. Asking for self-identification on a regular cadence (i.e., annually) ensures that people with disabilities have the opportunity to self-identify once they are comfortable doing so. This approach also recognizes that people's identities may change. Taking steps towards disability inclusion between surveys and using the self-identification data you have to inform those steps further will help build trust and encourage even more lawyers with disabilities to self-identify and participate in other inclusion efforts.



Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [DCI Consulting: Tips to Increase Employee Response on Disability Forms](#)
- [Northeast ADA Center: Communication Tools to Support Disability Inclusion](#)
- [Law 360: There Are More Disabled Lawyers At Work Than You Think](#)
- [Law.com International: 'But We Exist': The Stigma Around Disability and Neurodivergence in Law Firms Persists](#)

03

Create opportunities for everyone in the firm to discuss their ideas and perspectives on inclusive actions and language related to disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities are not a monolith. Some have apparent disabilities, and others have non-apparent disabilities. Some individuals prefer people-first language, believing that we should place the person rather than their disability first as an identifier. Others suggest tackling any perceived stigmas straight away by leading with their identity. We have intentionally used both language approaches — individual with a disability and disabled individual — throughout this list to recognize these varied preferences and experiences.

Ask disabled individuals for their perspectives. Create space and opportunities for everyone in the organization to engage in regular conversations about inclusive language and other actions that we can all take as individuals and organizations to create a more open and welcoming environment for everyone, with a particular focus on individuals with disabilities.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [American Bar Association Commission on Disability Rights](#)
- [Deloitte: Creating a Better Work Environment for All By Embracing Neurodiversity](#)
- [Accenture: Disability Inclusion Research Report](#)
- [Association on Higher Education and Disability: Statement on Language](#)
- [Canadian Government: Competing views on person-first language](#)
- [The Law Society: D&Ictionary](#)



In addition to inviting discussions about inclusivity, change compliance language to inclusive language. Employee handbooks and documentation for job applicants often use needlessly cold compliance language that discourages many people from requesting the adjustments or accommodations they need. Review and update documentation to incorporate welcoming and inclusive language.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [National Center on Disability and Journalism: Disability Language Style Guide](#)
- [HR Drive: Don't forget people with disabilities in inclusive language efforts](#)
- [Association for Talent Development: The Language of Disability in the Workplace](#)

04

Remove physical barriers for employees, clients, and other constituents to perform their jobs.

Many offices, whether older or newer, were not designed with accessibility in mind. Examples include entryways with stairs, narrow aisles that block wheelchair access, a lack of accessible restrooms, and elevator keypads without braille. Identifying and removing physical barriers is important to make the workplace accessible for employees with disabilities.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [Work Design Magazine: Inclusive Design Principles](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Common Barriers to Participation Experienced by People with Disabilities](#)



05

Remove digital barriers.

Inaccessible digital tools become barriers to disabled employees and clients: e.g., videos without captions exclude people with hearing disabilities, and apps not programmed for screen reader compatibility exclude people with visual disabilities. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is a set of technical standards for making websites accessible for various disability experiences. The WCAG is a good starting point, but accessibility is an ongoing process necessitating the creation of an internal digital accessibility expert role or partnership with an external accessibility consultant. Websites and apps should be coded for accessibility, inaccessible third-party tools should be replaced with accessible ones, and policies should be in place to ensure newsletters, social media posts, and other communications are accessible.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [Web Accessibility Initiative: Accessibility Fundamentals Overview](#)
- [New York Times: The Hidden Image Descriptions Making the Internet Accessible](#)
- [UC Berkeley: Digital Accessibility Manual Testing Checklist](#)

06

Ensure firm and client events don't exclude colleagues with disabilities.

Create and implement a plan to ensure firm and client events are accessible to disabled colleagues and guests. The events coordinator should be trained to review venues for wheelchair accessibility, schedule sign language interpreters, arrange for print materials to be provided in accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, screen reader-accessible files, webpages, and apps), and draft event invitations that clearly state who to contact to ask about disability accommodations. Prohibit outings that would prevent individuals with disabilities from participating fully, and if clients suggest such an outing, educate them on why such events are not inclusive and prohibited by the firm. When holding firm and recruitment events, support restaurants, vendors, and locations that are accessible.



Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [American Bar Association Commission on Disability Rights: Planning Accessible Meetings and Events Toolkit](#)
- [Inklusiv: Making Your Event Truly Accessible to All – A Guide to Disability Inclusion – Part 2](#)

07

Infuse the culture with inclusivity for people with disabilities and reward individuals who do the work.

Ableism is the set of practices and beliefs designating disabled people as inferior to nondisabled people. While many people never mean to create barriers for disabled employees and clients, unintentional ableism is still ableism.

Develop a more inclusive culture through regular anti-ableism training, bringing in disability justice speakers, and amplifying the voices of disabled employees and clients in internal and external communications. Recognize that people with disabilities are not a monolith, and do not assume that disabilities are always apparent.

Addressing barriers takes time and energy; unfortunately, many organizations fail to recognize this work during performance reviews and other milestones. Disabled employees frequently find themselves being asked to shoulder more than their fair share of anti-ableist work. Create a program of incentives, encouraging and celebrating employees who help make the organization more inclusive. Make sure to involve both attorneys and staff in disability inclusion training.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [MIT Sloan Management Review: How a Values-Based Approach Advances DEI](#)
- [Harvard Business Review: How to Make Workplaces More Inclusive For People with Invisible Disabilities](#)



08

Increase opportunities to hire disabled people.

With over 1.3 billion disabled people around the world, this is one of the largest untapped talent pools. Look for and expand talent pipelines by sourcing from organizations focused on people with disabilities. Create and implement a plan that amplifies recruiting practices for disabled attorneys and staff.

Commit to supporting disabled law student organizations. Supporting these groups is a great way to identify disabled students for consideration and create those connections during law school.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [American Bar Association: Why Hire Lawyers with Disabilities?](#)
- [Deque: Tips for Accessible and Inclusive Hiring and Recruiting](#)
- [Employer Assistance and Research Network on Disability](#)
- [TAD Foundation Fellowship Program](#)

09

Start a disability mentorship program.

Most professional workplaces have unwritten rules, and navigating those rules can be difficult for neuro-divergent folks and those struggling with anxiety and/or depression.

Create an opportunity for mentors to volunteer to help clarify the unwritten rules in the office, provide advice on career advancement, and advocate for accessibility. Be sure to consider how this mission fits into firm mentorship generally and consult legal counsel for strategic implementation.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [Association of Corporate Counsel: Mentoring and Disability](#)
- [Forbes: Hiring And Coaching The Neurodiverse: How To Provide Support In Your Organization](#)



10

Add disability inclusion to the board's and/or management committee's agenda.

Culture change happens at the top. Firms and organizations should commit to providing the necessary resources for management to consider disability inclusion when making management decisions.

Equally important, leaders should demonstrate disability-inclusive behaviors in their daily work. This means fostering respect for individuality, encouraging collaboration and open dialogue, and remaining curious and open to learning from employees with different experiences. Inclusive leaders also model compassion, empathy, and the willingness to challenge assumptions that may exclude or undervalue people with disabilities. Embedding these behaviors not only creates a stronger workplace culture but also supports visibility, acceptance, and advancement opportunities for people with disabilities at all levels of leadership.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [Forbes: Six Key Character Traits of a Disability Inclusion Leader](#)
- [Heidrick & Struggles: Disability and leadership: Engendering visibility, acceptance, and support](#)

11

Create a centralized disability accommodations program.

Take steps to build a centralized disability accommodations process. Provide specialized training to the HR team and lawyers on managing accommodation requests and effectively engaging in an interactive process with employees.

This will help to destigmatize and standardize the disability accommodations process, while removing barriers to ensure that accommodations are provided consistently across the firm.



Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability: Centralized Accommodation Programs \(CAP\) in Practice](#)
- [Job Accommodations Network: Best Practices in Establishing a Centralized Accommodation Fund](#)
- [Disability:IN: Centralized Accommodations Funds](#)



Leverage legal expertise through disability-focused pro bono work.

Attorneys and other legal professionals have unique skills to advance disability rights and justice through pro bono service. Create opportunities for lawyers to take on disability-related pro bono matters, such as representing individuals in disability benefits appeals, drafting advance directives and estate planning documents for families with disabled members, providing legal guidance on accessible housing and workplace accommodations, supporting disability-inclusive education advocacy, assisting disability-focused nonprofits with governance and compliance matters, advising on disability rights in healthcare decision-making, and helping entrepreneurs with disabilities navigate business formation and intellectual property protection.

Establish relationships with disability rights organizations to identify high-impact cases and advocacy projects. Consider developing a dedicated disability pro bono initiative with allocated resources, recognition for participating attorneys, and training on disability law fundamentals and disability-inclusive client communications.

This work serves the community, strengthens attorneys' disability competence, enhances the firm's disability inclusion efforts, and creates meaningful connections with disability advocacy networks.

Helpful Resources on This Topic:

- [New York Lawyers for the Public Interest \(NYLPI\) – Disability Justice Program](#)
- [Disability Rights Advocates \(DRA\)](#)
- [Public Justice Center](#)
- [Disability Rights Legal Center \(DRLC\)](#)



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The resources, links, and articles cited in this document are publicly available resources. They do not reflect the research, judgment, or views of Diversity Lab or the Advisory Group. References are provided for informational purposes only, and organizations should consult legal counsel before taking action.

THANK YOU

Our sincere gratitude goes to the law firms and legal departments that partnered with us to cultivate a culture of inclusion for all.

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