

Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) Montgomery County Public Libraries

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1. Mission Statement

To advise the Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) Director and MCPL Library Board members on increasing the value and accessibility of library services, facilities, on-line presence, and programming for individuals with disabilities.

2. AAC Background

MCPL desires and needs a long-term reliable source of support and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families/caregivers. The AAC was initiated by the MCPL Director, in cooperation with the Office of the County Executive, in response to a 2014 proposal by people who had been involved with the former Disability Resource Center (DRC) at Rockville

Memorial Library from 2006 to 2015. The AAC was formed in 2015 to provide a more sustainable way to continue the MCPL director's and staff's precedent of engagement with people with disabilities.

That history of longstanding engagement includes State and Federal collaborations. The MCPL Special Needs Library (1981-2006) was a subregional branch of what was then the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH, now the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled) and provided Talking Book service to Montgomery County residents until it moved to the Rockville Memorial Library, where it continued until 2008, when it was transferred back to the Maryland LBPH. The Special Needs Library Advisory Committee and then the Disability Resource Center LAC provided systemwide disability awareness and public programs. The DRC LAC travelled to other branches as "The DRC Comes to You."

The AAC differs from Library Advisory Committees in purpose, history, scope, membership, and relationships with the Director and Board. E.g., the AAC is an advisory group to both the Director and the Board on the entire library system; and the AAC includes members designated by various organizations that operate within the County for people with disabilities. Organizations benefit from membership on the AAC through partnerships with MCPL on AAC initiatives like programs and staff training. MCPL benefits from their experience and "best practice" ideas. Both the organizations and MCPL benefit from routine two-way communication that can reach both top levels of the library and those in the disability community.

3. AAC Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the AAC is to provide advice, proposals, and practical insights to the Director about matters of value or interest to people with disabilities such as:

- Opportunities for individuals of all ages with disabilities (and their families/caregivers) to know about, understand, and use existing library services and programs
- Opportunities for improved library services, collections, programming, and online access for individuals with disabilities, including identifying un-met needs
- Opportunities for partnerships
- Construction and refresh of facilities

The AAC may participate in advocacy on behalf of MCPL when appropriate.

4. AAC Relationship to Other MCPL Bodies

The AAC works closely with:

- An MCPL staff member appointed by the MCPL Director. This Staff Liaison may be the Assistant Director for Facilities and ADA; the Assistant Facilities and Accessibility Program Manager; or other staff as designated by the MCPL Director.
- A Library Board member appointed as Board Liaison to the AAC.

The AAC may also engage with or seek participation from organizations like:

- the County ADA Compliance Office
- the Commission on People with Disabilities
- the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled
- the National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled

5. AAC Membership

5.1. Member Eligibility and Criteria

AAC members will represent a broad range of disabilities. Total membership is 12 to 15, which includes both individuals from the general public and staff representing local disability organizations.

All AAC members:

- Keep County-wide library services for all individuals with disabilities as their individual and group focus.
- Share the MCPL mission, vision, and core values and recognize the importance and potential of library service to people with disabilities.
- Are unpaid volunteers.
- Are MCPL users who are, or quickly become, familiar with library services through the website and library visits.
- Are selected based on the need of the AAC for new or additional representation in a particular disability community.

Individual members should live, work, or attend high school or college in Montgomery County.

Organizational members represent nonprofit organizations and agencies that have a demonstrated track record of providing services to and/or representing people with disabilities in Montgomery County.

To ensure broad representation of disabilities within the AAC's total membership of 12-15:

- The AAC will review its membership needs whenever a member leaves.
- Once a year, that review will include AAC consultation with objective outside experts, such as County HHS staff to the Commission on People with Disabilities, to gain a broad perspective about County disability populations and needs.

- These AAC reviews will guide the work of the AAC Vice Chair, who has responsibility for monitoring representation and seeking additional members.

5.2.Becoming and Remaining an AAC Member

Long-term reliable AAC participation is often helpful in building the knowledge and relationships that further the AAC mission.

People who volunteer for AAC membership submit the AAC volunteer application online or call the telephone number provided on the form to have the form filled out by library staff. The Staff Liaison forwards the application to the full AAC membership. AAC members who wish to interview the applicant may do so.

The AAC Chair sends recommended applications to the Administrative Specialist in the Director's Office to be forwarded to the Director for Board approval.

New members learn about the AAC and the library system by taking the initiative to:

- Become familiar with this document.
- Use library services
- Explore and use the MCPL website
- Regularly attend and participate in AAC meetings

Members recuse themselves if they or their family members have an economic or fiduciary interest in the matter being considered. Their family includes siblings, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, a spouse, a spouse's relatives, and the spouses of these relatives.

Members serve until a change is requested by the person, their organization, the MCPL Director, or the AAC through the MCPL Director. In the future, when a robust process exists for filling vacancies, term limits may be proposed to the MCPL Director.

AAC members who miss a meeting are generally expected to let the AAC Chair know the reason as soon as possible before the meeting. Organizational members are encouraged to find a back-up from their organization. AAC members who miss more than half the meetings during a year without contacting the AAC Chair will be considered to have resigned. The AAC Chair may waive this provision for good cause.

6. Meetings

The AAC will meet at a minimum four times a year. Meetings are open to the public. Meeting dates and location or virtual access information will be on the AAC webpage (LINK) and the MCPL Events calendar (LINK).

In compliance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act, MCPL staff may not record meetings, but AAC members may record meetings. The chat feature will not be used during meetings.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, MCPL (through the County) will make available sign language interpreters and other interpreters and other effective communication measures if a person submits a timely request at MCPL.DeafAccess@montgomerycountymd.gov, or 240-777-0016. Requests are needed with as much notice as possible. A minimum lead time of 3 business days helps the County to engage the most highly qualified interpreters for the job.

To the extent feasible, the meetings may take place at different branches for the benefit of committee members and branch staffs. Meetings may also be held virtually.

The AAC uses discussion and collaboration to guide its planning and to do its work. AAC decisions will generally be made in consensus and in consultation with the Staff Liaison.

7. Leadership Roles

AAC members will elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary for one-year terms. Those elected take the lead to ensure that the responsibilities of the position are accomplished. They can and often do engage others in accomplishing the work.

7.1. Responsibilities of the AAC Chair

- Coordinate with MCPL: Serve as the principal AAC liaison with the MCPL Director. Foster collaboration in implementing the AAC mission together with the broader MCPL mission.
- Schedule and submit announcements of meetings, finalize the agenda and send it to the Administrative Specialist in the Director's Office ahead of the meeting for posting online, and facilitate AAC meetings.
- Follow up with members between meetings on action items.
- Hold AAC elections annually. Submit election results to the Director's office.
- Stay in communication with the Vice Chair so that so that back-up is smooth when needed.

7.2. Responsibilities of the AAC Vice Chair

- Serve as back-up to the Chair.
- Membership:
 - Maintain a current list of members. Provide timely updates to members; to the MCPL Director, Staff Liaison, and Administrative Specialist in the Director's Office, who will post names and affiliations on the AAC page of the MCPL website; and to other County partners (E.g., ADA Compliance Manager). Especially make sure that the Secretary has updates quickly for internal AAC communications.
 - Assess current membership for range of disabilities and organizations. As needed, seek new AAC members from the public and from organizations. Make sure they complete the AAC volunteer form. Coordinate with other AAC members to provide timely input to the Director about membership when needed or requested.

7.3. Responsibilities of the AAC Secretary

- Take notes at each AAC meeting. Circulate them to AAC members for corrections or approval within 3 weeks of the meeting. After the minutes have been approved, send them to the Administrative Specialist in the Director's Office so they can be posted on the AAC webpage within 5 days of being approved.
- Communicate meeting arrangements to AAC members, the Director, the Staff Liaison, the Board Liaison, and other County partners (e.g., the County ADA Compliance Manager).

7.4. Responsibilities of all AAC Members

- Be alert for opportunities to advance the AAC mission and bring them to the attention of members for discussion at meetings. Examples: participate in staff trainings, do accessibility reviews of facilities when requested by the Staff Liaison, publicize library events through members' organizations, develop programs and

events of interest to people with disabilities and the public in general. Support and publicize library programs sponsored by other AAC members and their organizations.

- Foster a cooperative, collaborative way of working within the AAC and with MCPL and County designees.

7.5.Subcommittees:

The AAC may form subcommittees, which may include people who are not AAC members. Subcommittees are chaired by an AAC member. Per the Maryland Open Meetings Act, if subcommittees or work groups are doing substantive work, consider posting the meetings and taking minutes.

8. AAC Mission Statement and Progress Reviews

Every 3-5 years, at the discretion of the MCPL Director or the AAC officers, the AAC members and the Director or designee may reflect together on the AAC's work in context of its mission. This review may lead to strategies and goals to pursue, changes or improvements to make, updates to this document, etc.