



## Office of One

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559-621-8716

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ADA Online Conference

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### Shannon M. Mulhall, NIC, ADAC, CASp

- ADA Coordinator, City of Fresno, CA
- Disability Rights Advocate
- ADA Nerd (self proclaimed)
- Certified Sign Language Interpreter
- Certified Access Specialist



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### Session Learning Objectives:

- Processes, challenges, and successes possible for ADA Coordinators who are an "Office of One"
- Developing & fostering meaningful relationships with internal allies and community partners
- Tools for addressing outdated plans, updating policies, and developing internal training programs

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## It Starts with People



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*Moving beyond "I can't" and "they won't let me"*

## TOOLSET: ADDRESSING ADA COORDINATOR CHALLENGES

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## Common ADA Coordinator Challenges

- Clout/authority
- Access to information
- ADA is a low priority
  - lack of administrative support
- Strained relationships
  - With staff
  - With community
- Lack of funds
- Fear based decision-making
  - Hands tied/short leash
  - "Don't tell the community..."
  - "If we know the issues, then we will be more liable"

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## ADA Coordinator as Storyteller

- What is your story about:
  - The jurisdiction as a whole
  - The community needs
  - Staff, Administration, Elected Officials



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## Get to Inquiry

### Moving from...

“I can’t...”

“They won’t let me...”

### To...

- “What can I do?”

- “What will they let me...?”

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## Interpret “No” as “Not Yet”

No is not permanent in government

- Administration, elected officials, and directors come and go
  - Meet with new hires and leaders
  - Transitions are the best time to inspire a new way of thinking

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## Set Up Future Success

- Research
- Prepare
- Line things up to be ready for YES
- Make it THEIR priorities (ownership)

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## Know What is Going On

- Attend/watch meetings of the elected
- Follow budget planning & approval
- Be aware of the administration priorities

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## Planting the Seed

- Be at the table
- Discuss concepts at all levels
- Sprinkle in a mini pitch
  - “This is something I can help you plan for over the next few years...”



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## Define your Message



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## Story Time - Before



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## Story Time - After



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*"In organizations, real power and energy is generated through relationships. The patterns of relationships and the capacities to form them are more important than tasks, functions, roles, and positions."*  
Margaret Wheatly

## TOOLSET: RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

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## Relationship Building

With whom you need to connect to start removing barriers?



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## Shared Responsibility

When to do the heavy lifting, when to delegate?

Reminder: You can't do it all. Rely on:

- Liaisons
- Champions

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## Liaisons

### I asked for a person who:

- Has access to department services and programs
- Understands services
- Has time to work on access issues
- Could meeting periodically

### I got:

- Assistant City Manager
- Directors
- Executive Assistants
- Staff Assistants
- Mid-level Supervisors
- Fire Captain
- Department Worker's Compensation Rep

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## Champions

- Have disability
- Have a friend/loved one with disability
- Just get it - "It's the right thing to do"
- Rule followers - "It's the law"
- Supporting access supports their objectives

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## Warning – Office of One

### ADA Coordinator Agrees to:

- Not do all their work
- Support & guide steps
- Provide resources, tools, and best practices
- Keep accountability
- Be firm when necessary
- Be flexible when reasonable

### Department Agrees to:

- Take ownership of actions
- Remain in contact with you
- Report progress for tracking
- Ask for help
- Communicate when timelines are not met or become unreasonable



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## Praise and Empathy

- Praise the good
- Empathize when they are overwhelmed
- Lean in where there is support
- Be firm



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## Collaborative Approach

“People do not willingly return to a conversation that diminishes them.”

Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*

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## Celebrate

- Sing the praises!
  - Talk up the successes, no matter how small
  - Celebrating the wins and victory moments
  - Let staff know that you’re there to protect them
  - Let community know you hear their concerns and are advocating for them

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## Story time: Celebrate Champions



2020 City of Fresno

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## Community Outreach

*Nothing About Us Without Us*

- Requirement of the job
- Build relationships
- Be transparent
- Leverage voices
  - Ask for letters of support/dissent
  - Bring into meetings with you



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## Community Support

- Disability Advisory Commission
- CBO partnerships
- Vocal Advocates



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## Disability Advisory Commission



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## Story Time – Relationships Matter



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*Be effective without the hammer of authority*

## **TOOLSET: AUTHORITY & CLOUT**

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## “Let me look into that for you”

- Listen & clarify the question
- What is the end goal
- Research:
  - Regulations
  - Legal precedents
  - Other jurisdictions’ approach



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## Situational Authority

- You are the expert, BE the expert

*I'm not going to tell you how to do your job.*

*Here is the recommendation of the most protected position.*

*The risks are: (cite PCA for similar jurisdiction, litigation, community impact)*

*The benefits are: (cite the legal, civic, and community impact)*

*Is there any additional information you need for this decision?*

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## What Does DOJ Expect?

**Project Civic Access = ADA Coordinator Playbook**

*“...A recent DOJ audit of our neighboring jurisdiction, Anytown, required that they do XYZ. Which of these actions are feasible for your department/division?”*

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Collaborative Process\*

“You need to do X for compliance.”

**VS**

“The community is asking for X.  
How can we make that possible?”

*\*even when it is painful!*

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Story Time – Collaborative Approach



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*“Do the next right thing”*

**TOOLSET: POLICIES, PLANS, &  
TRACKING**

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## Be Strategic

Turning a cruise liner, not a speedboat



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## Inquiry: Outdated Plans

- What aspects are completed?
- What remains?
- What is no longer relevant?
- What new policies support accessibility?
- What are the current needs?
- Replace, divide, or create addendum?
- Consultants or in-house?

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## Inquiry: Updating Policies

- What is the mechanism?
  - Department policies? Administrative orders? Municipal code? Ordinances?
- Who needs to provide input?
  - Internal (staff, decision makers, attorney, labor representatives)
  - External (community members)
- Administrative adoption or council/board adoption?

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## Inquiry: Department Needs

- Ask Them:
  - What are your areas of concern?
  - What do you think your department needs?
  - How long do you need to do that? Is it realistic?
  - What supports would you need?
  - What programs/services are you proud of?

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## Inquiry: Community Needs

- What are advocates vocal about?
- What are their biggest concerns?



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## Funding Relationships

- Who controls:
  - Community Development & Block Grants (CDBG)
  - Grant Writing
  - Grant Planning & Prioritizing for:
    - Traffic Signal improvements
    - Roadway Reconstruction
    - Facility Projects
    - Maintenance Projects
  - Long Range Planning

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## Funding Timing

- Budget planning cycle
- Budget request forms and flow
- Grant planning cycle

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“Who pays for the accessibility part?”

**Accessibility is a integral part of the program, not an added expense**

OR

*If you can't afford to meet Federal and State codes & laws you can't afford to do the program*

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## Regular Tracking

*Keep it from becoming a “shelf document”*

- Use a tracking mechanism
  - Specific actions
  - General compliance/outreach activities
- Liaison/Responsible Employee in Department
- Periodic update meetings



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## Annual Addendum

- Smaller document
- Gives flexibility to change/add goals
- Keeps it breathing



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## Annual Report

- A reason for staff to respond
- Pre-organize audit information
- Record of:
  - Compliance
  - Good faith efforts
  - Community engagement
  - Points of Contact

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## Story Time – Community Outcomes



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*They don't know what they don't know*

## TOOLSET: TRAINING

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## Training

- ADA Training Program
  - New employees
  - ADA Basics/Overview (Mandatory All staff)
  - Public Accommodations/Modifications for Supervisors
  - Accessible Documents
  - Incidental Trainings



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## Get Personal

- In-house training benefits:
  - Familiarity with YOU
  - You can guide the emphasis
- Train-The-Trainer – pros/cons



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## Training: Defining Program Access



- “We can get a wheelchair in here”
- “We don’t have public contact, we just post things online and answer phones”

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## Inquiry: Training Development

- What kind of training is needed?
- What is the easiest way to provide it?
- What is the most effective way to provide it?
- Who needs to sign off on this?
- What platform will be used for training?
  - In person
  - Web based
  - Memo/T-T-T

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## Story Time- I.T. Training



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## Reality: You Can't Do It All

But you can:

- Promote the positive
- Work with allies
- Ask others to do their work
- Work with what you got
- Cheer for Champions (LOUDLY!)
- Be transparent

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## It's about People



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## Write It Down:

What one thing can you do this week?

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## Questions?

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Additional Sessions are scheduled for the  
ADAOnline2020 Program through July 2020

View/register on-line at: [www.adaonline2020.org](http://www.adaonline2020.org)

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