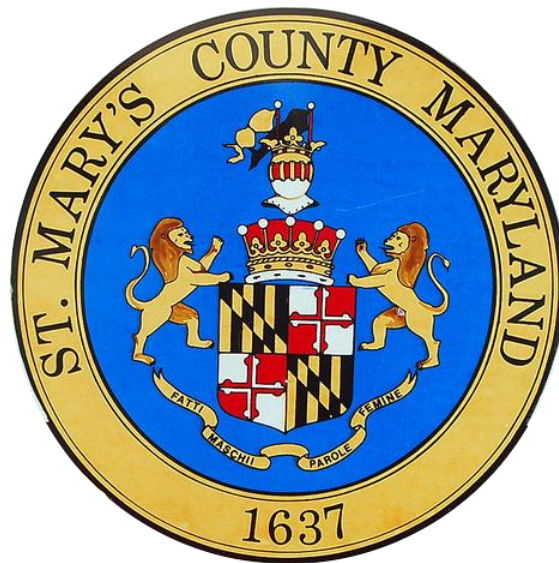


St. Mary's County
Commission for People with Disabilities
2022 Annual Report



Commissioners of St. Mary's County

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History

The St. Mary's County Commission for the Disabled was established on April 16, 1991, by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, Maryland through the adoption of resolution 91-11 and codified as chapter 156 of the code of St. Mary's County, Maryland.

On January 29, 2002, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, Maryland renamed the commission to the Commission on People with Disabilities and revised the membership.

On January 26, 2010, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, Maryland adopted by-laws for the commission and increased its membership.

On June 21, 2011, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, Maryland restated the establishment of the Commission on People with Disabilities and increased citizen membership.

On May 10, 2022, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, Maryland renamed the Commission *on* People with Disabilities to the Commission *for* People with Disabilities and revised the meeting schedule.

Currently the Commission meets the third Thursday of every other month at 4 p.m. in room 14 of the Potomac Building. The Department of Human Resources provides staff support.

ADA Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including employment, education, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the public.

The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA is divided into five titles or sections that relate to different areas of public life.

Title I-Employment

- Designed to help people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits as people without disabilities.

- Applies to employers with 15 or more employees.
- Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants or employees. A “reasonable accommodation” is a change made that accommodates employees with disabilities without causing the employer any “undue hardship”.
- Defines disability, establishes guidelines for the reasonable accommodation process, addresses medical examination requirements and inquiries, and defines “direct threat” when there is a risk of substantial harm to the health and safety of the employee with a disability or others.

Title II-Public Services: State and Local Government

- Prohibits discrimination based on disability by “public entities” such as programs, services, and activities operated by state and local governments.
- Requires public entities to make their programs, services, and activities accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Outlines requirements for self-evaluation and planning: making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures, where necessary to avoid discrimination; identifying architectural barriers; and communicating effectively with people with hearing, vision, and speech disabilities.

Title III-Public accommodations and services provided by public entities

- Prohibits places of public accommodation from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. Public accommodations include privately-owned, leased, or operated facilities, such as hotels, restaurants, retail merchants, golf courses, doctor’s offices, schools, day cares, health clubs, sports stadiums, movie theaters, etc.
- Sets minimum standards for accessibility for alterations and new construction. It also requires public accommodations to remove barriers in existing buildings where it is easy to do so without difficulty or much expense.
- Directs businesses to make “reasonable modifications” to their usual ways of doing business when serving people with disabilities.
- Requires that business to take the necessary steps to communicate effectively with customers with hearing, vision, and speech disabilities.

Title IV-Telecommunications

- Requires telephone and internet companies to provide a nationwide system of interstate and intrastate telecommunication relay services that allows individuals with hearing and speech disabilities to communicate over the telephone.
- Requires closed captioning of federally funded public service announcements.

Title V-Miscellaneous provisions

- Contains a variety of provisions relating to the ADA, including its relationship to other laws, state immunity, its impact on insurance providers and benefits, prohibition against retaliation and coercion, illegal use of drugs, and attorney's fees.
- Provides a list of certain conditions that are not to be considered as disabilities.

Introduction

Formed by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County in response to the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the St. Mary's County Commission for People with Disabilities (CFPD) exists to increase acceptance, awareness, and full participation in all aspects of county life, including the quality of life for persons with disabilities. Additionally, the CFPD has the responsibility of providing advice to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County and to improve awareness and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Public Events and Accomplishments 2022

In year 2022, the Commission members were able to meet hybrid (in-person and on Zoom). When in-person, social distancing guidelines and room capacity limits were followed because of COVID-19 pandemic. Besides these challenges, the Commission for People with Disabilities was able to work on some key projects continuing their mission.

- **Officers**
 - In January 2022, officers' election was held. Phil Horne was elected the Chairperson; Ian Fairclough remained the Vice Chairperson and Keegan Zimmerman remained the Secretary.

- **Meetings**

- In April 2022, the CFPD requested a change to the By-Laws to allow the Commission to meet every other month (July, September, November, January, March, and May). The reason for this request is the County has an outstanding record of implementing and acting on matters relating to the Americans with Disability Act (ADA.) The County should be very proud of the departments working together to achieve a successful ADA effort. This request was approved by the County Commissioners in May 2022 revised By-Laws Article VII, Section 1. Regular meetings “*Regular meetings of the members shall be held every other month (July, September, November, January, March, and May).*” Also included in this request was a name change from the Commission *on* People with Disabilities to the Commission *for* People with disabilities. These changes went into effect on July 01, 2022.

- **Public Awareness**

- In July 2022, the CFPD started a Guest Speaker Series on various topics regarding issues relating to the disability community during our meetings. Speakers were allotted 15 minutes for presentations followed by a question-and-answer session with CFPD Members and the public.
 - July’s meeting – Information on Services Animals.
 - September’s meeting - St. Mary’s County Health Department
 - November’s meeting - St. Mary’s County Emergency Services

- **ADA Support**

- Provide support to the ADA coordinator for St. Mary’s County.
- Each meeting the County’s ADA Coordinator provides status or action items of issues concerning individuals with disabilities.

- **Appreciation**

- Each year the Commission on People with Disabilities and community partners host an Awards Ceremony to celebrate those in our community that have demonstrated excellence in supporting individuals with disabilities. The Commission was able to plan and

present the 2022 Award Ceremony on October 18, 2022. Several exceptional county residents were honored:

➤ **Care Partner Award - Sheryl Montgomery**

In Recognition of exceptional caregiving and support to the people served.

➤ **Volunteer Award - Kristen Paul**

In Recognition of ongoing support to children and to families.

➤ **Vicki Brown Award – Adult - Rachel Moraca**

In recognition of advocacy on behalf of students.

➤ **Vicki Brown Award – Student - Samantha Blottenberger**

In recognition of the commitment to serve and to help others.

*An American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter was also present at the ceremony to accommodate any residents with hearing impairments.

Goals for 2023

- Participate in Public Awareness activities
- Provide support to the ADA coordinator for St. Mary’s County
- Appreciation/ Annual Award Ceremony

Conclusion

- A very special thank you to our county support staff especially to Jennifer Earhart, Catherine Pratson and Cynthia Slattery for your efforts and support to the Commission for People with Disabilities.
- A thank you to each member of the Commission for People with Disabilities for your efforts and service to our community.
- Thank you to all the organizations and people who have dedicated their lives and careers to helping others especially those individuals with disabilities.

- Thank you to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County for your continued support to the Commission for People with Disabilities.

- Our hope is that in 2023 our activities will flourish, and the Commission will increase awareness, inclusion and increase the quality of life for people with disabilities.