

Update from MSCOD 2015



Your Policy, Training and Technical Resource

Knowledge and ADVOCACY

The Minnesota State Council on Disability (MSCOD) is a state agency providing leadership to empower and strengthen the rights of Minnesotans with disabilities. We collaborate with the public and private sectors as a policy, training and technical resource advisor.

Inside you will find information and highlights from the past year covering 2014 and other issues MSCOD is currently working on.



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2014

Emergency Preparedness Conference

In recognition of Emergency Preparedness Month, MSCOD, in partnership with DPS Homeland Security & Emergency Management, organized a Brown Bag lunch session on September 25th. Jessica Mitchell, Region V FEMA Disability Integration Specialist keynoted the event and covered the emergency preparedness issues of the day. David Rosenthal, Director, DHS Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services addressed texting to 911 issues. The session concluded with short presentations from members of the Access & Functional Needs Committee. Approximately 60 individuals from state government, business, and the disability community attended the event.

24th ADA Anniversary at DHS

On July 25, 2014, the Minnesota State Council on Disability co-hosted a celebration of the 24th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, along with the University of Minnesota Disability Services, ADA Minnesota, VSA Minnesota, Access Press, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service, Department of Human Services, State Services for the Blind, Minnesota State Council on Disability, Disability Viewpoints, and the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living. Participants enjoyed presentations by artists, athletes and policy experts with disabilities sharing the impact that the landmark law had on their lives. It was a great foretaste of the celebration to come, next July, when we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the law.

State Fair

We had hundreds of visitors to our State Fair booth, this year. Visitors had the opportunity to learn about emergency preparedness and state and non-profit services. Additionally, as part of our celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we surveyed visitors about what their priorities are for the future of the accessibility and disability rights movement.

Additionally, we had visitors fill out a survey about their experience with the Minnesota State Council on Disability's emergency preparedness program. Respondents were asked if they had visited the booth in previous years and, if so, how they had used the emergency preparedness information they received.

Light Rail Access Standards Bill

MSCOD successfully shepherded SF2270 through the 2014 legislative session, the new language directed the Metropolitan Council to adopt access standards for light rail transit vehicles procured on or after January 1, 2015. It requires those light rail transit vehicles in service that do not meet the minimum access standard to be modified to be compliant.

The standards require:

- o Two dedicated spaces for wheel chair users in each car;
- o Seating for a companion adjacent to each wheelchair-dedicated space
- o Further specifications that meet or exceed the standards established in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

International Visitors

On Thursday, October 2, 2014, a Vietnamese delegation of leaders from their disability community visited the MSCOD office in St. Paul, Minnesota. This was one stop on their trip across the United States to meet with different organizations, build relationships, and share information about policies, practices, and laws concerning disability communities in both countries. The Vietnamese delegation was most interested in accessibility issues and what sorts of legal recourse the disability community has to enforce, protect, and progress the civil rights of people with disabilities. The delegation heard from MSCOD staff on how the agency interacts with lawmakers and other State agencies. This was a great opportunity to work with other members of the disability community around the world to progress the rights every person with a disability.

2015 and Beyond

ADA 25th Preparations

In an effort to raise awareness and celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA), MSCOD is working on the following: a Day of Celebration at the Minnesota History Center on July 26th, 2015; a state-wide Policy Conference/Disability Expo/Job Fair on October 28th, 2015 where the noon-hour program will be broadcast live state-wide by Twin Cities Public Television; the production, with Twin Cities Public Television of a 30 minute documentary on the history of the ADA, an employment survey that seeks to uncover and address the reasons behind unnaturally high unemployment rates within the disability community, and much more. For information please contact Andrew Mosca at Andrew.mosca@state.mn.us or at 651-361-7803.

Executive Orders

In recognition of a lack of diversity in the State of Minnesota's workforce, Governor Mark Dayton signed Executive Order 14-14. The order lays out goals for hiring of applicants with disabilities to raise the proportion of employees who identify as disabled to 7 percent, up from its current levels of 4 percent. The order acknowledges that the percentage of state employees who self-identify as disabled has fallen dramatically in recent years, and that the State of Minnesota has an obligation to serve as a model for other employers in the state. We applaud those efforts and will advocate diligently, holding the State accountable for reaching those goals. In time, the State can show other Minnesota employers that employees with disabilities are an asset and not a liability. This order was a collaboration of the Disability Forum.



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