

**Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities**

**2017 Budget Statement to the City Council Committee  
on the Budget and Government Operations**

**October 24, 2016**

**Karen Tamley, Commissioner**

Good morning, Chairman Austin and esteemed members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities' (MOPD) budget request for fiscal year 2017.

MOPD promotes total access, full participation and equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities. Our comprehensive approach to systemic change for people with disabilities includes: the delivery of direct independent living services; public education and awareness about disability issues; policy reform; and initiatives with the goal of making Chicago the most accessible and inclusive city in the nation. Additionally, MOPD provides disability-related expertise to City departments and sister agencies, as well as to private sector companies and non-profit organizations.

Through the Mayor's leadership, we are making Chicago an even more accessible City. I have been charged with continuing our efforts to improve services in areas like transportation, education, employment, housing, and overall service delivery to people with disabilities. This past year has been very productive and successful for MOPD.

**2016 Key Accomplishments, Projects and Initiatives:**

***Increasing the Independence of Chicago Residents with Disabilities***

MOPD has been working with CTA President Carter and his staff to finalize a strategic plan to make all rail stations accessible. Increasing the accessibility of CTA's rail stations will provide more transportation options, and remove the barriers for people with mobility disabilities wanting to use public transportation to travel throughout the city.

The high rate of unemployment for people with disabilities is a problem across the country. This is a top priority for the Mayor and over the past year we have been working on a plan that will advise the City on ways to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Mayor's ADA 25 Literacy Task Force was launched in 2015 and is aimed at advancing reading proficiency of CPS students with disabilities. Proficiency is unacceptably low as evidenced by the 43 percent achievement gap between students with and without disabilities. The Task Force recognizes that strong literacy skills from birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are critical for

success in school and the workplace. As a goal, the Task Force recommends that CPS and the City aim to reduce by half the reading achievement gap for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders with disabilities by 2021. The Task Force Report will be finalized and released in the fall of 2016.

In 2015 and 2016 YTD, MOPD provided over the phone and in-person information and referral assistance to 49,611 individuals, in-home personal assistance/homemaker services to 359 individuals (26,542 hours) and independent living services to 510 individuals. MOPD provided 136 assistive devices to people with disabilities.

MOPD's HomeMod Program continues to be in high demand. Since the beginning of the program, in 1992, 997 home accessibility modifications have been made to the homes of Chicago residents with disabilities. In 2015 and 2016 YTD, 102 homes have been modified for accessibility, which include lifts, accessible entryways, kitchens and bathrooms.

To further address the need for home modifications, an IGA between the MOPD and CHA was executed to provide home modifications to participants of CHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program. We are excited about this partnership as it will result in an increase of home modifications to our residents in need.

MOPD has also worked to support Colbert class members in their efforts to relocate from nursing homes to community settings. From November 2014 to October 2015, the culmination of the program, our Engagement Specialist made 60 visits to nursing facilities in Chicago and engaged 915 individuals in small and large outreach and peer mentoring activities. From these visits, 359 referrals for transition assistance have been made.

MOPD distributes free amplified land-line phones to individuals who are hard-of-hearing and unable to use the telephone. Adapters to amplify calls on cell phones were added to the program in 2016. In 2015 and 2016 YTD, MOPD distributed 335 amplified land-line phones, 17 cell phone adapters and generated \$13,650 in revenue. Outreach for the program included 39 meetings and fairs.

In 2015 and 2016 YTD, Chicago Meals on Wheels has collaborated with MOPD to provide home delivered meals to a total of 212 people with disabilities under the age of 60, who are unable to prepare their own meals or have support for meal preparation. This initiative fills a gap in current services.

### ***Emergency Preparedness Planning & Public Safety for People with Disabilities***

MOPD has continued to partner with the Office of Emergency Management and Communication (OEMC), the Chicago Fire Department (CFD) and other departments to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the City's emergency planning. In 2016, MOPD:

- participated on various OEMC work groups to ensure that the disability community is represented in all emergency related planning;

- continued working with OEMC to develop a strategic plan to ensure that emergency shelters utilized by the City are accessible to the disability community;
- worked with OEMC, CFD, DFSS and Law to identify ways to provide alternative resources to individuals who call 911 for non-emergency and non-medical assistance; and
- increased its role in the City's emergency weather response through well-being checks and distributing information on warming shelters and other disability-specific information.

### ***Making Chicago a More Accessible City***

One of MOPD's key functions is to increase accessibility throughout the city and achieve greater compliance with federal, state and municipal laws. MOPD's Accessibility Compliance Unit (ACU) works to guarantee the ongoing accessibility of commercial and residential buildings through the provision of permitting, pre-permit reviews and technical assistance to developers and architects. From 2015 to 2016 YTD, ACU documented 2,270 plan reviews, 429 pre-permit plan reviews; generated \$54,525 in fees from preliminary plan reviews, responded to 4,493 requests for technical assistance and conducted 34 site surveys.

MOPD completed the draft amendment to Chapter 18-11 of the Chicago Building Code. The draft amendment will align current accessibility provisions with the requirements of the 2010 ADA standards, update and strengthen them based on recent experiences enforcing the code and elevate the accessibility of multi-family housing. The amendment will enhance the understanding of Chicago's accessibility requirements by developers, architects and the disability community, and result in increased compliance.

Additionally, ACU:

- conducted accessibility reviews of the City's major infrastructure projects, including Grant Park North and South Parking Garages, Shakespeare Theatre, Maggie Daley Park Concession/Restaurant Project, Loop Link Platform Project Surveys, Midway International Airport Terminal Garage Expansion, CTA Blue Line (Illinois Medical District Rehabilitation), CTA Red Line (95thStreet Improvements, O'Hare Inner Core (preliminary review), Airport Transit System (general review);
- finalized several outstanding edits to the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance Disability Regulations, and started to develop an outreach campaign with the Commission on Human Relations to educate businesses and other stakeholders;
- worked with the Department of Aviation to make additional accessibility improvements, including an animal relief area on the airside. Work will continue in 2017 on improving taxi cues for people requiring wheelchair accessible taxis.

### ***Training***

MOPD also works to make Chicago more accessible through its training programs. This past year, MOPD provided disability awareness and etiquette training to public and private

employees (44 sessions and over 3,500 individuals and in 2015 and 2016 YTD). Of note, some of conducted sessions included the Chicago Urban League, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, Taste of Chicago vendors, CDPH, Harold Washington Library, Lollapalooza volunteers and aldermanic staff. Additionally, MOPD is a member of the Disability Training Consortium, which brings together organizations who provide training on disability-related topics. The purpose of the consortium is to develop a one-stop portal for businesses seeking training in order to create a more inclusive workplace.

Initiated last year, MOPD has continued to hold training sessions for its own staff throughout 2016. These “enrichment training” were established to improve customer service by increasing awareness of all types of disabilities and their related issues. The selection of presentation topics was based on a survey of MOPD staff. The sessions are held quarterly and conducted by subject matter experts outside of the department.

### ***Promoting Employment and Economic Opportunities***

Unemployment among the disability community remains a serious issue in Chicago and nationwide. To combat this issue, MOPD provides comprehensive benefits analysis to Chicago Social Security disability beneficiaries of all ages under a federal Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) grant from the Social Security Administration (SSA). From 2015 to 2016 YTD, WIPA staff made 265 ESU/WIPA presentations to people with disabilities (4800 participants), held three youth summits (414 attending), completed 625 benefit analyses, completed 159 placements of people with disabilities and 1332 job training and placement referrals. Additionally, MOPD made 265 SSA WIPA presentations to people with disabilities (4800 attending), 195 SSA WIPA presentations to Service Providers/Employers (2751 attending) and held 231 CPS/CCC Concerned Parents workshops/meetings (231 attending).

The new WIPA grant (with same objectives) started on August 1, 2015 and is renewable annually, for up to five years.

Other employment initiatives included:

MOPD’s Youth Employment Program (YEP) is a collaboration with the Chicago Public Schools-Office of Diverse Learners Support and Services (ODLSS) to provide a series of job readiness and career exploration activities for transition-aged CPS students with disabilities. The components of YEP, which occur throughout the school year (and into the summer), include a Student Transition Fair, Job Shadow Day and One Summer Chicago.

- **Job Shadow Day**: This past spring, 193 students were placed with various types of businesses and agencies for Job Shadow Day. These students experienced a day of hands-on career exploration activities with companies such as PepsiCo, Deloitte, AT&T, Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services and Northern Trust.
- **One Summer Chicago**: MOPD, CPS-ODLSS and Department of Family and Support Services worked together to implement a paid summer internship program under One Summer Chicago. A total of 58 students participated in this seven-week program, which was more

than double the number of students who participated in the 2015 “pilot.” The 2016 internship program doubled the partnership with CPS to reach 50 schools.

- **Partners Breakfast:** MOPD and CPS-ODLSS hosted a “Partners Breakfast” at Northern Trust in August. Over 60 attendees learned about our YEP plans for the coming school year, as well as the One Summer in Chicago internship program. Testimonials were provided by employers and students regarding their experiences.
- **Student Transition Fair:** To initiate the YEP activities for the 2015/16 school year, MOPD and CPS-ODLSS hosted its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Student Transition Fair last October. (A total of 850 students attended.) Invitees also included community-based agencies who offer support services to youth with disabilities, as well as employers with job opportunities. Workshops on resume writing and interviewing were also provided. The 2016 event is scheduled for October 28<sup>th</sup> at South Shore Cultural Center.

### ***Increasing the Number of Accessible Taxi Cabs and Improving Service for the Disability Community***

In 2016, MOPD:

- worked with BACP and the Mayor’s Office to develop strategies for better utilizing the Taxi Cab Accessibility Fund which provides incentives designed to increase the number of Wheel Chair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) serving disabled residents. As a result we have increased WAVs on the road today;
- There is also an improvement in service delivery by Open Doors, which is also funded by the Accessible Fund; and
- served on the Selection Committee to award a taxi medallion to a taxi driver who provides excellent service to people with disabilities;

### **ADA25 Chicago: Legacy Projects**

Last year, MOPD worked closely with the Chicago Community Trust to launch the *ADA25 Chicago* – a new initiative in recognition of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA. ADA25 has engaged civic, business and community leaders to improve the lives of people with disabilities through widespread public awareness and legacy projects.

MOPD was very involved with the development of a pilot Leadership Institute for People with Disabilities. The Leadership Institute is designed to build leadership capacity and develop a future talent pool to expand inclusion of people with disabilities on private, public and non-profit sector boards and commissions; in appointed offices and high level professional positions. After a successful pilot program in 2015, the Leadership Institute will hold its second annual program in early 2017.

One of MOPD’s goals has been to increase the accessibility of City festivals and cultural events as a way to enhance the participation of Chicago’s citizens and visitors with disabilities. Last year, MOPD worked with DCASE to improve accessibility to wheelchair and companion seating at City events and festivals; captioned the Millennium Park Film Series for deaf/hard of hearing

patrons; and worked with the Goodman Theatre to increase accessible programming and customer service. Not only will enhance accessibility increase participation by the disability community, but will also result in additional financial support for Chicago's cultural institutions. MOPD will continue engaging Chicago's cultural institutions to increase their access for people with disabilities.

## **2017 Programs, Services and Initiatives**

### ***Serving Residents with Disabilities***

In 2017, MOPD will continue to provide its full array of services to Chicagoans with disabilities and veterans in response to the critical state of the economy and in an effort to reach our goal of making Chicago a world-class disability-friendly city.

### ***Promoting Accessibility Compliance***

In 2017, MOPD will:

- launch an outreach/educational initiative for the disability and business communities on the new Chicago Human Rights Ordinance Disability Regulation. This outreach/educational initiative will result in the disability and business communities having a better understanding of the regulation's accessibility standards and being more informed of their rights and obligations under the Human Rights Ordinance;
- convene a meeting with Chicago's water passenger vehicles (water taxis, architectural tours, Odyssey, etc.) to discuss issues and the unmet need of equal access to water transportation; and
- continue revising its materials on how City departments and agencies can ensure that their meetings are accessible to people with disabilities, i.e. how to secure sign language interpreters and provide materials in alternate formats.

### ***Improving Access via Technology***

Access to computers, the internet and other technologies have the potential to increase the independence and improve the daily lives of people with disabilities. They can provide access to shopping, news publications, and government and community services. Unfortunately, people with disabilities are less than half as likely to own a computer, and are about one-quarter as likely to use the internet. In 2017, MOPD plans to implement new initiatives to address the lack of digital literacy and computer access of the disability community, including:

- developing an airport way-finding strategy for people who are blind or visually-impaired; and

- working with DoIT and DPS to draft an ordinance or implement a policy that will ensure that all technology purchased by the City is accessible to people with disabilities and meets existing accessibility guidelines. The proposal could result in significant savings for the City. Retrofitting technology to be accessible is much more costly than purchasing technology already built to be accessible. Utilizing technology that meets existing guidelines would also limit the City's liability under Title II of the ADA.

### ***Emergency Preparedness and Public Safety***

MOPD will continue its work to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the City's emergency preparedness plans. In 2017, MOPD will:

- continue its partnership with OEMC, CFD, DFSS to provide appropriate and alternative resources to individuals who call 911 for non-emergency and non-medical assistance;
- participate in OEMC's Mass Care and Sheltering Work Group, which serves as the coordinating body of the City's Mass Care Operations Plan (emergency assistance, sheltering and human services resulting from natural and/or human caused incidents);
- participate in OEMC hosted table top exercises and on-location drills to ensure people with disabilities are included in all aspects of emergency planning;
- hold another Town Hall Meeting on emergency preparedness for people with disabilities (partners will include OEMC and FEMA); and
- continue the efforts of the Pedestrian Access Advisory Committee which MOPD co-chairs with CDOT (the Advisory Committee solicits input from the disability community on city infrastructure affecting pedestrians with disabilities).

### ***Increasing the Number of Accessible Taxi Cabs and Improving Service for the Disability Community***

MOPD will continue its work with BACP and the Accessible Taxicab Advisory Council on initiatives that will increase the number of wheelchair accessible taxis and improve services for passengers with disabilities.

In 2017, MOPD will work with BACP to:

- utilize funding strategies that will result in the increase of accessible taxis;
- initiate strategies to improve taxicab service for passengers with disabilities, including, but not limited to, enhancing driver training;
- monitor service provided to the disability community by the transportation network providers; and
- create a new training video, in collaboration with Olive Harvey College, for taxi drivers on how to provide service to people with disabilities.

In closing, MOPD will continue to provide dedicated customer service and advocacy on behalf of Chicagoans with disabilities in the upcoming year. MOPD's budget reflects the department's best efforts to sustain integral programs, services and priority initiatives in the coming year.

MOPD will remain steadfast in its commitment to maximize all available resources to increase accessibility, opportunity and independence for people with disabilities who live, visit and work in Chicago.

Thank you.