

Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
2020 Budget Statement to the City Council Committee
on the Budget and Government Operations

October 29, 2019

Karen Tamley, Commissioner

Good morning, Chairman Dowell 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 2020.

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.

This past year has been very productive and successful for MOPD.

2019 Initiatives, Programs & Services Accomplishments:

Employment/Financial Inclusion

MOPD is in the process of implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on Employment and Economic Development for People with Disabilities. The purpose of the Task Force was to advise the City on ways to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by: 1) encouraging economic development opportunities through entrepreneurship; 2) facilitating alignment between job training, referrals, employers and service providers; 3) facilitating greater preparation of students in higher education for careers; and 4) examining City policies that promote and/or discourage employment.⁵

To assist in the implementation of the Task Force goals, Citibank is providing MOPD \$200,000 as part of the Empowered Cities initiative. Empowered Cities will catalyze municipal efforts to

advance economic opportunities for people with disabilities. By enhancing the work of municipal leaders, connecting them with new resources, and elevating their innovations, Empowered Cities will create a platform to improve opportunities in housing, employment, and financial capability for the disability community. Other cities [in this initiative](#) include New York City, Los Angeles, Boston and San Francisco.

MOPD and the Chicago City Treasurer's Office formed a Financial Advisory Council for the Empowerment of People with Disabilities (FACED). In 2020, MOPD and the City Treasurer's Office will implement its strategic plan. The purpose of FACED is to identify and address barriers to accessing financial institutions by the disability community and make recommendations for ways the disability community can take advantage of banking services. People with disabilities are more likely to use alternative financial services than those without disabilities (38% vs. 25%). This represents the first such Financial Inclusion Council in the nation.

Unemployment among working age members in the disability community remains a serious issue in Chicago and nationwide. To combat this problem, MOPD provides comprehensive benefits counseling to Chicago's Social Security disability beneficiaries, ages 14 ½ and older, receiving SSI and/or SSDI benefits under the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) grant from the Social Security Administration (SSA). MOPD's SSA-certified Community Work Incentives Coordinators inform individuals who are working or on the brink of work how employment will impact their current SSA benefits, thereby eliminating their uncertainty and allowing them to make informed decisions regarding employment. During 2019 YTD, WIPA staff provided 114 benefits analyses, while referring 263 individuals for job training/placement assistance through our network of WIPA Program Partners. WIPA Program Partners consist of approximately 130 members who represent agencies that help support individuals with disabilities as they seek employment, further education, transportation, housing and legal assistance. Of the beneficiaries who were referred by WIPA staff, 99 gained employment and received benefits analyses. WIPA staff conducted 106 presentations (reaching 1,419 individuals) that included educators, students, parents, adults within the disability community, counselors and case workers at community-based organizations, and representatives of local, state and federal government agencies.

Emergency Preparedness

MOPD works closely with OEMC to ensure that the City's emergency plans are inclusive of people with disabilities. This past year, MOPD has been working extensively with the Department of Aviation (CDA) on their on their emergency preparedness policies at O'Hare Airport. To that end, MOPD participated in CDA tabletops, its functional exercise and the full-scale exercise that was held at O'Hare on September 14, 2019. MOPD has also been an active member of OEMC's Mass Care Exercise and Training initiative. This initiative also included a table-top exercise and drafting new Mass Care Standard Operation Guide and Field Operating Guides. MOPD also participated in several working groups led by OEMC and the Cook County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to compile this year's Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Stakeholders Preparedness Review

(SPR) which is a requirement of the FY 2019 Homeland Security Grant Program. Municipalities use the THIRA to better understand their risks and determine the level of capability needed to address those risks. The SPR is then used to estimate their current capabilities, identify capability gaps and their intended approaches for addressing them, and assess the impact of relevant funding sources on building and sustaining their capabilities

HomeMod

MOPD's HomeMod Program continues to be in high demand. Since the beginning of the program in 1999, 1,261 home accessibility modifications have been made to the homes of Chicago residents with disabilities. In 2019 YTD, 34 out of a goal of 82 homes have been modified for accessibility, which include lifts, accessible entryways, kitchens and bathrooms. We have already begun the preliminary work for more modifications that will begin in 2020.

Serving Residents with Disabilities

MOPD's Information and Referral Services remain in high demand. In 2019 YTD, MOPD provided over the phone and in-person information and referral assistance to 26,334 individuals, in-home personal assistance/homemaker services to 142 individuals and independent living services to 204 individuals. MOPD provided 41 assistive devices, i.e., raised toilet seats ~~and~~, reachers, to people with disabilities.

In 2019, Chicago Meals on Wheels collaborated with MOPD to provide home delivered meals to a total of 122 people with disabilities under the age of 60, who are unable to prepare their own meals or do not have support for meal preparation. This program fills a gap in current services and was expanded in 2018 to accommodate additional individuals.

MOPD distributes free amplified land-line phones and cell phone amplifiers to individuals who are hard-of-hearing and unable to use the telephone. In 2019 YTD, MOPD distributed 88 amplified land-line phones and cell phone amplifiers, which generated \$3,505 in revenue for the department. Outreach for the program included participation at four exhibits and fairs, including the City's Annual Senior Fest. This program has served clients in seven languages during this past year (Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Polish, Russian, Bosnian, and Spanish).

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. In 2019 YTD, ACU conducted 749 accessibility plan reviews, 297 pre-permit plan reviews (generating \$18,050 in fees); responded to 1,748 requests for technical assistance and conducted five site surveys.

In 2018, MOPD launched an Accessible Airport Advisory Committee with the Department of Aviation. The purpose of establishing an Advisory Committee is to improve accessibility at Midway and O'Hare airports. The committee has discussed wayfinding for blind and low vision travelers, increasing communication accessibility for deaf/hard of hearing travelers and advised on the installation of the nation's first changing places restroom. Additionally, the committee will continue working with American Airlines, United and Southwest on ways to improve customer service for travelers with disabilities.

MOPD, in collaboration with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, conducted a series of community listening sessions designed to give the disability community an opportunity to provide feedback on how the City can enhance ~~the~~ accessibility and inclusion at City-sponsored cultural events. Each of the four sessions focus on the concerns of a specific disability group (deaf and hard of hearing, blind and visually-impaired, mobility disabilities and intellectual disabilities), as it relates to accessing city-sponsored cultural offerings. Feedback will be compiled into an Accessibility Improvement Plan.

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MOPD has been working very closely with the Mayor's Office, BACP, DoIT and CDOT to help launch and implement the E-Scooter Pilot Program. MOPD's role has been to ensure that regulations were in place to prevent barriers or hazards to people with disabilities using the public ways. To that end, regulations included scooters being removed each night after hours of operation, not being allowed on sidewalks, and being parked upright with a minimum of 6 feet clearance between the scooter and public obstructions. MOPD also communicated with representatives of the disability community regarding their concerns.

Accessible Transportation

MOPD works with BACP to increase the number of accessible taxis and TNP vehicles. Currently, there are 417 wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs), surpassing the City's goal of 400 by the year ~~2019~~ 2020. Additionally, there are nearly 100 accessible TNPs. This past year BACP and MOPD monitored new incentives for WAV owners and drivers that subsidized the purchase, conversion and maintenance of WAVs. MOPD will continue monitoring the effects of the incentives, as well as the implementation of TNP accessibility plans. Particular attention will be focused on TNP availability and on-time performance. In 2019, MOPD also served on the Selection Committee to award five medallions to taxi drivers who provided excellent service to people with disabilities. Those medallions were presented at a press conference at Access Living in May.

Disability Awareness Training

MOPD also works to make Chicago more accessible and inclusive through its training programs. In 2019 YTD, MOPD provided disability awareness and etiquette training for interacting with people with disabilities to public and private employees (24 sessions and over 670 individuals). Of note, some of the conducted sessions included DCASE staff and volunteers, Taste of Chicago vendors, Tyson Foods, DHR staff Disability Liaisons and staff, the American Red Cross,

Immigrants and Travelers Aid, Chicago Department of Aviation and the Salvation Army. Additionally, MOPD met with DHR to discuss a review of their current training materials for Interviewing and Consensus, as well as EEO for Supervisors in order to add disability awareness content.

Youth Employment Services:

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

- Job Shadow Day: This past spring, 195 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, Museum of Science and Industry, Rush Medical Center, Lincoln Park Zoo, Solstice, Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services, Anti-Cruelty Society, Chicago Department of Aviation, Northern Trust and MOPD.
- One Summer Chicago: MOPD, ODLSS and Department of Family and Support Services worked together to implement a paid summer internship program under One Summer Chicago. A total of 100 students participated in this six-week, part-time program. Additionally, this summer MOPD partnered with City Colleges of Chicago to host seven students as part of One Summer Chicago. We are looking to expand this pilot program next year.
- Student Transition Fair: In October, to initiate the YEP activities for the 2018/19 school year, MOPD and ODLSS hosted its 5th Annual Student Transition Fair. A total of 60 students attended. Exhibitors included community-based organizations who offer support services to youth with disabilities, local, state and federal agencies, and employers with job opportunities. Workshops on resume writing and interviewing were also provided. The 2019/20 kick-off event is scheduled for December 17th at the South Shore Cultural Center. In addition to the usual activities for students, this year there will be an increase in the number of interactive mock interviewing and resume reviews conducted by business representatives volunteering their time to assist.

In August, MOPD and ODLSS hosted a "Partners Breakfast" at Northern Trust, who graciously sponsored the event again this year. Over 70 attendees learned about YEP plans for the coming school year, as well as successes from this past year.

2020 Programs, Services and Initiatives

Serving Residents with Disabilities

In 2020, MOPD will continue to provide its full array of services to Chicagoans with disabilities to reach our goal of making Chicago a world-class disability-friendly city. MOPD will:

- implement the Empowered Cities Initiative;
- work to implement the recommendations of the Employment and Economic Development Task Force. MOPD will determine timelines and staffing needs for implementing the recommendations, the results of which are expected to help the City in its efforts to increase the employment of people with disabilities; and
- implement the DCASE Accessibility Improvement Plan.

Promoting Accessibility Compliance

In 2020, MOPD will:

- 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 streamline the process for securing sign language interpreters and provide materials in alternate formats;
- work with the Chicago Department of Transportation to launch a program to install Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) in downtown Chicago. The program will install APS at approximately 100 locations, which will include between 25 and 100 intersections. These installations will be critical for creating accessible paths of travel for pedestrians who are blind or visually-impaired. MOPD will also be working toward establishing other reforms to increase funding options;
- strengthen efforts to ensure residential and commercial buildings are built in compliance with accessibility laws and codes. This will include hiring a field inspector, implementing code updates, and improving internal processes, i.e. ensure all appropriate projects are submitted for MOPD review.

Improving Access via Technology

Access to computers, mobile devices, 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 as people without disabilities to own a computer and are about one-quarter as likely to use the internet. In 2020, MOPD plans to implement new initiatives to address the lack of digital literacy and computer access of the disability community, including:

- developing an airport and large venue, e.g. Navy Pier, way-finding strategy for people who are blind or visually-impaired;
- working with DoIT and DPS to complete a strategic plan 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);

- collaborating with DoIT to adopt a benchmark tool to assess the City's level of digital inclusion for people with disabilities. DoIT and MOPD will be partnering with Microsoft and the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technologies (G3ICT) and will be the first U.S. city to pilot this assessment tool; and
- implementing the Digital Inclusion Maturity Model strategy that will optimize ICT accessibility, broad inclusion, and improve Quality of Life (QoL) for persons with disabilities. The strategy plans for City operations and services that are accessible, usable, and able to be personalized to support individuals needs and abilities, while supporting other City goals, such as economic development, resilience, and sustainability.

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 2020, MOPD will:

- work extensively with the Department of Aviation to update its emergency planning for O'Hare and Midway Airports. MOPD's role will be to ensure that people with disabilities are included in both the emergency preparedness and response planning;
- 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);
- finalize and implement emergency shelter tier system policy;
- participate in OEMC hosted tabletop exercises and on-location drills to ensure people with disabilities are included in all aspects of emergency planning;
- hold a Town Hall Meeting on emergency preparedness for people with disabilities (partners will include OEMC and FEMA); and
- participate on the Mayor's Pedestrian Advisory Committee, which solicits input from the disability community and other stakeholders on City infrastructure and issues affecting pedestrians.

Improve Taxicab and TNP Service for the Disability Community

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

In 2020, MOPD will work with BACP to:

- utilize funding strategies that will result in the increase of accessible taxis and TNPs;
- initiate strategies to improve taxicab service for passengers with disabilities, including, but not limited to, enhancing driver training;
- monitor the rideshare accessibility plans and ensure that they are delivering timely service to customers using wheelchairs;
- create a new training video, in collaboration with Olive Harvey College, for taxi drivers on how to provide service to people with disabilities; and
- identify through an RFP process a new WAV Central Dispatch Service.

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 address disparities, maximize all available resources to increase accessibility, opportunity and independence for people with disabilities who live, visit and work in Chicago.

Thank you.