

## Ableism . . . A common form of disability discrimination

There is no question we live in an ableist world. In its simplest form, ableism is the belief system that tells us it is better to be non-disabled than it is to be disabled. Ableism also examines disability discrimination on a systemic level by looking at the ways our society designs physically and socially segregated systems. Most people are unaware they are being ableist, or that it even exists. Unless you are a person with a disability, or closely connected to someone with a disability, you likely go about your business giving little thought to how your actions, language and attitudes may impact people with disabilities.

Much of society's bend toward ableism stems from the medical model of disability, where we first come to understand disability—something is “wrong” with this person and that “something” needs to be fixed. This is how we are taught to think about disability. What we need to recognize is that just because something is different, does not mean it's broken, wrong, or bad; it's just different. The media too continues to propagate a narrative that people with disabilities are to be pitied or inspirational.

The language we use around disability can either support equality or perpetuate stigma. When we start to examine the way we talk about disability, we recognize the negativity that is built into our dialog, whether outright disparaging or subliminally dismissive.

People with disabilities are often not taken seriously or treated as equals to “normal” people. While it is usually a subconscious bias, it is obvious there is a divide between disabled and non-disabled people. Imagine an organization holding an event, such as a workshop or training, with handouts and a speaker presenting. Is there something “wrong” with the person in the wheelchair who cannot navigate the stairs to enter the venue, or is there something wrong with the choice of venues? Is there something “wrong” with the person who cannot read printed material, or is there something wrong with not having offered the handouts in an alternative format? Is there something “wrong” with the person who can't hear the presenter bellowing at the front of the room, or is it wrong to not use a microphone? Ableism is the mindset that says it's acceptable to exclude

a·ble·ism  
/ 'ābəˌlɪzəm/  
noun

people with disabilities because it isn't convenient to include them. Ableism is discrimination.

In most cases individuals and organizations don't realize they are contributing to the marginalization of people with disabilities; awareness is the first step to creating positive change. As a society, we can't fix a problem until we acknowledge it exists and understand what created it. Let's get serious about fixing this problem.

Disability Network offers two levels of ableism workshops; see details inside for dates and locations of upcoming workshops being offered to the public or contact Miranda ([grunwellm@dnswm.org](mailto:grunwellm@dnswm.org) or 269-345-1516 x120) about scheduling an Ableism training for your organization.

## WORKSHOPS

# Know Your Rights

### Overview of laws protecting people with disabilities

It's important to know your rights. In this workshop we will be discussing the laws that protect people with disabilities in the areas of employment, housing, public places, voting, transportation and education. The information in this workshop is intended as an overview for the purpose of advocating for your rights; we are not providing legal advice.

**St. Joseph:**                      **Tuesday, April 28**                      **2:00 – 3:30 PM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue

**Kalamazoo:**                      **Wednesday, April 29**                      **2:00 – 3:30 PM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

Please register online at [bit.ly/KnowYourRights2020](https://bit.ly/KnowYourRights2020) or contact Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120. Let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.

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## Disability & Employment

### How, When & Why to Talk About Your Disability to an Employer

In this workshop you will learn the only reason you have to tell an employer about your disability or medical condition and the best way to ask for an accommodation at work. We will also cover your rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and employment resources available to you.

**Kalamazoo:**                      **Tuesday, May 12**                      **2:00 – 3:30 PM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

**Lawrence:**                      **Wednesday, May 13**                      **9:30 – 11:30 AM**  
Van Buren ISD Conference Center | 490 S. Paw Paw Street

**St. Joseph:**                      **Thursday, May 21**                      **2:00 – 3:30 PM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue

Please register online at [bit.ly/DisEmployment2020](https://bit.ly/DisEmployment2020) or contact Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120. Let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.

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## DO'S & DON'TS: Assistance Animals

There is a lot of confusion about what qualifies as a service animal and how they differ from emotional support animals. There are specific laws regarding what type of assistance animals are allowed in different places and whether an establishment can deny access to an assistance animal. Join us to learn more!

**Three Rivers:**                      **Thursday, May 7**                      **1:00 – 2:30 PM**  
Three Rivers Public Library | 920 W. Michigan Avenue

**Kalamazoo:**                      **Thursday, May 28**                      **9:00 – 10:30 AM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

Please register online at [bit.ly/AsstAnmls2020](https://bit.ly/AsstAnmls2020) or contact Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120. Let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.

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Disability Network Southwest Michigan has a fragrance-free policy. For the well-being of those with scent sensitivities, please do not wear scented products when visiting our office or attending events.

## WORKSHOP

# Ableism 101 & 102

In its simplest form, ableism is the belief system that tells us it is better to be non-disabled than it is to be disabled. Ableism also examines disability discrimination on a systemic level by looking at the ways our society designs physically and socially segregated systems.

We offer an introduction to the concept of ableism in Ableism 101. Ableism 102 builds on what you learned in 101 with a deeper examination of the causes and impacts of ableism and what it means to be truly inclusive. (Please note you must have attended 101 prior to attending 102.)

### Ableism 101

**Kalamazoo:**                      **Wednesday, June 3**                      **9:00 – 11:30 AM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

**St. Joseph:**                      **Tuesday, June 9**                      **9:00 – 11:30 PM**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 2900 Lakeview Avenue

### Ableism 102

**Kalamazoo:**                      **Thursday, June 4**                      **8:30 AM – 12:00 Noon**  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan | 517 E. Crosstown Parkway

Please register online at [bit.ly/AbleismJune2020](https://bit.ly/AbleismJune2020) or contact Miranda at (269) 345-1516 x120. Let us know if you need an accommodation to participate.



# Smart911™

## Have you registered with Smart 911?

Smart911 provides 9-1-1 call takers and first responders with critical information you want them to know during an emergency. Over 80% of calls made to 9-1-1 come from mobile phones. When you dial 9-1-1 from a mobile phone, the 9-1-1 call takers have very little information to help you – only your phone number and a very general sense of your location. This is a serious problem in an emergency when seconds count, particularly if you have medical conditions or are unable to safely speak.

Once you have set up your Smart911 Safety Profile, when you call 9-1-1, your profile information displays on the 9-1-1 screen and the call takers can view all the information you provided such as your addresses, medical information, home information, medications, and emergency contacts. You can provide as much or as little information as you like and you can enter information for your entire household in one account.

Smart911 is a national service which means your Smart911 Safety Profile travels with you and is visible to any participating 9-1-1 center nationwide. Visit [www.Smart911.com](https://www.Smart911.com) to learn more and to set up your account profile.

# Preparing the Next Generation of Advocates

## Advocacy Academy in its ninth year

We are excited to be offering Advocacy Academy again this summer for the ninth year in Kalamazoo. Advocacy Academy is a six-week, paid, summer program for youth and young adults. After an introduction to the Disability Rights Movement, participants work as a group to select, plan and carry out a disability rights advocacy campaign.

Advocacy Academy provides training in advanced advocacy and leadership skills while participants do meaningful work in the Disability Rights Movement. Advocacy Academy also provides valuable employment experience and training which can be applied to other life experiences. Many of our previous participants have received employment recommendations based on their performance during Advocacy Academy.

We are currently accepting applications for Advocacy Academy 2020. We are seeking individuals with disabilities who are between 16–29 years of age, able to commit to the entire six-week position, and are motivated to increase their leadership skills. For more information or to apply for this year's Advocacy Academy, go to Advocacy & Education in the Services area of our website ([www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org)) or contact Miranda at [grunwellm@dnswm.org](mailto:grunwellm@dnswm.org) or 269-345-1516 x120.

## Meet Alex . . . An Advocacy Academy Graduate

At the age of 20, after completing high school, Alex was eager to move out on her own and be more independent. Alex has PTSD and a learning disability caused by early childhood trauma. She was living at home with her mom when she initially connected with Disability Network Southwest Michigan to work on finding and preparing for her first job. Alex is very ambitious and was eager to get a job and move out on her own. Our staff worked with her to develop her resume and submit job applications. When summer rolled around and Alex had not yet found employment, she applied for Disability Network's summer internship program, Advocacy Academy in which participants learn about the disability rights movement and select a disability-related community issue to advocate. The program develops team-building skills and gives the interns experience in developing and implementing an advocacy campaign, in addition to learning general employment expectations and responsibilities. Alex was a natural working within the group dynamics; she quickly showed strong leadership skills and was very enthusiastic about the group's advocacy work.



At the completion of Advocacy Academy, staff continued to work with Alex as she applied for jobs. Alex wanted to move out of her mother's house and be more independent; staff worked with her on budgeting and financial independence. That fall, Alex got a job as a customer service representative at a local bowling alley. She enjoyed the work and quickly began assuming additional responsibilities and helped to train new employees. At the same time, a friend of hers was looking for a roommate and Alex was thrilled to move out on her own. Disability Network has continued to support Alex as she adjusts to her new independence; staff have assisted Alex in applying for food assistance, learning the public transportation system, and are working with her to obtain a drivers license.

Alex is being trained at work for a promotion to Shift Manger after just a couple of months of being hired. She is enjoying the freedom and independence of living on her own. Alex said that what she appreciates the most about Disability Network is that we have been available to her every step of the way—she knows she can go back to us whenever she needs assistance navigating something new.

## Reception for “Patient No More”

Patient No More is an exhibit curated by The Institute on Disability currently on display at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. The exhibit focuses on the 504 Sit-in of 1977, an important chapter in the Disability Rights Movement, when disability rights activists staged the longest lasting civil rights protest in history.

As part of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Kalamazoo Valley Museum and Disability Network Southwest Michigan invite you to join us at a public reception for the exhibit; light refreshments will be served.

**Thursday, May 7 | 3:00 – 5:00 PM**

**Kalamazoo Valley Museum**  
230 N. Rose Street, Kalamazoo



Parking ramps convenient to the museum are located on Rose Street at the corner of Eleanor Street and at the corner of Water Street; on-street parking is also available in the area.

## SAVE THE DATE: July 24<sup>th</sup> | ADA Anniversary Celebration

**2020|30**  
THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Mark your calendars for a celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Friday, July 24 from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. We are hosting a community-wide event at our Kalamazoo office, including a free lunch, awards, and speakers. We invite all community members and organizations to join us!

### Our Publications:

**The LINK** is our quarterly newsletter, available in print or emailed in electronic format. And is available in alternative format upon request.

**Disability Digest** is a monthly e-publication focused on Disability Rights issues and upcoming Disability Network happenings. Available in electronic format only.

You can sign up online for our publications at [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org); or contact Dale at [abbott@dnswm.org](mailto:abbott@dnswm.org) or (269) 345-1516 x123. Current and past issues of our publications are available on our website at [www.dnswm.org](http://www.dnswm.org).

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**electronic**  
publications!



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## Disability Network Southwest Michigan

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**Need help completing the Census?  
Ask our Information & Referral staff — we're here to help!**

**Support Our Work:** You can help support the work we do with a tax-deductible donation to Disability Network. Visit our website to donate online or call Kristen at (269) 345-1516 x119.