a year's overview

OUR COMMITMENT

About Us

The Disabled Rights Action Committee (DRAC) works to establish equal rights for people with disabilities through enforcement of federal and state laws. DRAC advocates for legislative action and other measures to improve these rights, with an emphasis on fair housing, accessible transportation, and community-based care. DRAC is a case management provider for the New Choices Waiver (NCW) program sponsored by the Utah Department of Health.

Mission Statement

The Disabled Rights Action Committee is committed to assuring and enhancing the rights of people with disabilities to go where everyone else has gone before.

Our Story

“The Disabled Rights Action Committee (DRAC) was founded in 1991 by a small group of people with disabilities to confront public and private organizations and leaders that are not responding appropriately to the needs of people with disabilities. Specifically, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has provided impetus for DRAC’s work as the group has dealt with a variety of access issues in Salt Lake City and surrounding areas.” – Barbara Toomer, 1991

DRAC was founded in 1991 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1993. DRAC first organized around the issue of accessible transportation. In the 1990s, DRAC worked to persuade local transit authorities to provide lifts on buses. Transit officials were initially so opposed to this idea that they locked the lifts included on new buses so that riders with disabilities couldn't access them.
Our Story, Continued

With the help of ADAPT, a national grassroots disability group, we were able to help change the hearts and minds of UTA officials by having people with mobility impairments crawl on to buses at every stop, thereby disrupting their schedules and demonstrating the need for accessible public transportation.

In more recent years, we have focused on helping people with disabilities avoid unnecessary institutionalization. We have fought for the rights of Utahns to access affordable and accessible integrated housing, often by helping to enforce the Federal Fair Housing Act. In keeping with a commitment to full community integration, we have ensured that businesses, government entities and services, entertainment venues, and restaurants are fully accessible and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
a year’s overview

OUR TEAM

BOARD MEMBERS

LOPETI PENIMA’ANI
SECRETARY

ADAM GUYMON
BOARD MEMBER

RON FAERBER
TREASURER

PSARAH JOHNSON
BOARD CHAIR

DONNA MCCORMICK
VICE CHAIR

STAFF MEMBERS

WENDY LUND
CASE MANAGER

MICHELLE GLOVER
CASE MANAGER

TRINA MEERSMAN
REGISTERED NURSE

KAROLYN CAMPBELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER
2020

**NUMBERS & STATISTICS**

We've made a lot of progress this year! Much of our growth comes from the success of our COVID-19 relief work and other grants. We've also grown our case management program and increased individual donations.

- **600%**
  - Grant increase

- **253%**
  - Finance growth

In 2020, we received grants from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Peace Development Fund, Islamic Relief USA, Peace First, Rocky Mountain Power, L3Harris Foundation, Utah Department of Heritage and the Arts, and Salt Lake Community Partners. We also secured 2021 grants from Salt Lake Zoos, Arts, and Parks (ZAP) and Utah Humanities.

Of the 10 grants we were awarded this year, six were related to COVID-19 relief programs we are providing to our community. This year, we distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to 5,348 high-risk Utahns who otherwise could not have afforded them. We also distributed information about COVID-19 prevention to an additional 52,424 high-risk individuals in Utah.
a year's overview

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

• Provided personal protective equipment (hand sanitizer, face masks, gloves, soap, etc.) to 5,348 high-risk Utahns, including individuals in local homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters

• Distributed COVID-19 safety information and resources to 52,424 Utahns

• Tested businesses and apartment complexes for compliance with the Fair Housing Act and Americans with Disabilities Act

• Helped seven individuals with disabilities transition to community-based care

• Provided donated adaptive equipment to five individuals with accessibility needs

• Hosted a successful ADA 30th Anniversary Celebration virtual event that featured nationally-recognized disability advocates and reached 3,887 individuals

• Worked with U.S. Senators Romney and Lee to encourage support for the Disability Integration Act

• Partnered with local organizations to improve the accessibility of public transit, local events, and community spaces

• Provided internships to six college and university students

• Rented our ADA Kit to more than 15 community organizations to make local events accessible

• Moved into a new, larger office in downtown Salt Lake City

• Created a new website and set up social media accounts
2020

COVID-19 RELIEF PROGRAM

In 2020, we provided personal protective equipment (hand sanitizer, disinfectant products, face masks, gloves, soap, etc.) to 5,348 high-risk Utahns. We also distributed COVID-19 safety information and resources to 52,424 high-risk Utahns, including seniors over 60.

As a part of our COVID-19 relief program, we provided PPE supplies to Utah homeless and domestic violence shelters, assisted living facilities and nursing homes experiencing equipment shortages, residents in long-term care facilities, high-risk individuals facing poverty and food insecurity, and individuals with disabilities across the State of Utah.

As a second part of our COVID-19 relief program, we provided information about COVID-19 prevention to thousands of high-risk individuals across the State of Utah, including information about available resources and services. To get this information out, we sent out a trifold mailer and two postcards to seniors over 60 in the Salt Lake City area.
2020

ACCESSIBILITY ADVOCACY

Based on our feedback, a number of different public and private transportation providers in Utah are making improvements to the accessibility of the services that they offer. We are proud to see the city moving in a more accessible and inclusive direction.

Based on our feedback, the e-scooter company SPIN recently added accessibility notifications to their in-app messaging and added “do not ride on the sidewalk” signage throughout the city. We will continue to provide feedback and monitor the situation going forward. Based on feedback provided in the Committee on Accessible Transportation, UTA is in the process of adding braille to bus stops with high ridership in Utah. UTA is also in the process of adding metal inserts to TRAX handrails to prevent individuals from placing their bicycle tires inside of the handrail in the priority seating area of low floor TRAX vehicles. Going forward, UTA will be looking into ways to make audio and visual announcements more accessible.
In 2020, we continued our Fair Housing Testing Program in a virtual setting to keep our testers safe from COVID-19. Rather than testing businesses and apartment complexes in person, we transitioned to online forms and phone calls to gather the information necessary to evaluate a location for compliance with applicable federal law.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge for our fair housing testing program, which is normally conducted by testers who arrive in-person to apartment complexes to evaluate their compliance with the Fair Housing Act. This year, we modified our program to allow our testers to complete tests over the phone, over video calls, or through other accessible means. We revamped our Fair Housing Testing form, released new training materials for our testers, created new virtual resources, and monitored the program so that we could make changes along the way. Going into 2021, we plan to continue completing tests virtually until we feel confident that all of our testers are vaccinated.
2020

COMMUNITY TRANSITION

In 2020, we continued to provide case management services through the Utah New Choices Waiver. Through this program, we helped seven new individuals transition from nursing homes and other long-term care facilities into community-based care.

The COVID-19 pandemic also presented a significant challenge for our case management program. Our case managers and nurse could no longer visit clients in person, and needed to work with clients and their representatives over phone and video calls. Despite the difficulties associated with this, our team rose to the challenge and took on several new clients in 2020. Each client that we were able to move from a nursing home into community-based care is now safer and less likely to contract COVID-19. These individuals are all receiving the services and supports that they need to live safely and independently in a non-institutional setting. Going forward, we hope to continue to grow our case management program in 2021.
In 2020, we collected and provided donated mobility equipment (wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc.) to five individuals who needed accessibility upgrades to improve their quality of life. Though a used wheelchair or a cane may not mean much to someone who has it sitting unused in their garage, it can make all the difference for someone who wants to live more independently.

In 2020, we received a donated wheelchair, two donated walkers, and two canes. We were able to find appropriate homes for each of these items, providing increased mobility to individuals who could not afford to purchase mobility equipment themselves. Going forward into 2021, we are looking for ways to expand this program, beginning by finding a space that we can store donated equipment for longer periods of time. We are so excited about the extra space that we have in our new downtown office, but we know that we need significantly more space to scale up this program for the future. At the very end of the year, we received several additional donated pieces of equipment that we will find homes for in 2021.
2020

ADA 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

In 2020, we hosted a successful ADA 30th Anniversary Celebration virtual event that featured nationally-recognized disability advocates and reached 3,887 individuals on Facebook Live. Our national speakers included Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Najma Johnson, Lydia X.Z. Brown, and more!

Our ADA 30th Anniversary Celebration featured an opening musical number by disabled musician Kris Halpin and a presentation on "Denormalizing Phonocentric-Vidist Ableism" by Najma Johnson. Melissa Malcom King spoke on "My Intersectional Identity," followed by Lydia X.Z Brown on "Living Racialized Autism" and a live music performance by Jennifer Kumiyama.

2020

"WORK TOGETHER" COMMUNITY HELPLINE

In 2020, we took phone calls from an average of 15 community members per month and connected those individuals with a variety of community resources and social services. While we are working to offer more services internally, we frequently refer callers to other local nonprofits and provide insight into local disability services and programs.

While we refer most callers to outside supports and services, we are willing to listen for as long as it takes. If we don’t know the answer to a question, we’re happy to help research the problem and provide a call back at a later time. We will help community members troubleshoot a problem, identify relevant community services and supports, and follow up to make sure that the referrals actually help to resolve the caller's problem. We are grateful for the Disability Law Center, Utah Health Policy Project, and Crossroads Urban Center for providing services that so frequently help disabled community members who need assistance. We are looking forward to expanding our range of services and providing support to callers in 2021.
2020

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In 2020, we provided internships to six college and university students living in the Salt Lake City area. Most of our interns were students at the University of Utah, though we also served one student at Utah State University and one student at Bowdoin College in Maine.

From top left to bottom right: Sam Warchol, Alyssa Stringham, Roberto Sandoval, Sierra Stevens, Leo Doctorman, and Abigail Slade

Through our internship program, students were able to earn course credit, complete senior capstone projects, and develop experience in an area of their choosing. Our interns helped us digitize our archives and preserve our records for the future, prepare grant applications and grant reports, and process case management paperwork in a timely and efficient way.

We are so proud of the work that our interns have done, and we would like to congratulate Abigail and Sam on their recent graduations! Heading into 2021, we plan to continue offering internships in grant writing and digital humanities. We are excited to work with a new cohort of students in the Spring of 2021.
Over the course of this year, we rented out our ADA Kit to more than 15 community organizations to make local events accessible. The kit is available for a small sliding scale fee, and was used by a wide variety of organizations, with most use occurring between June and September of this year.

Our ADA Rental Kit is available to local organizations that would like to improve the accessibility of their events. The kit currently includes 20 ADA-marked blue folding chairs, a canopy, a set of reflective volunteer vests, a cot, megaphone, and other seasonal materials (hand warmers, water bottles, face shields, etc.).

Heading into 2021, we hope to expand our kit by adding a transportable ramp, a folding electric wheelchair, and other in-demand items. We also hope to increase the use of the kit by doing outreach to ensure that everyone who is interested knows that it is available. All items are easily transportable in a folding dolly.
In February, we moved from our old office in Millcreek into a larger office in downtown Salt Lake City, just across from the public library. Our new space has two main rooms, with plenty of space for our case management program and ADA rental kit. We are so glad that we were able to move safely and acquire the furniture we needed for our new space before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Our old office was a small single room in an office complex at 339 East 3900 South in Millcreek, about 15 minutes from downtown Salt Lake City. Our new office is larger and has two rooms, in close proximity to the downtown public library, social security offices, and other public amenities. The new office has plenty of space for our case managers and interns with two large L-shaped work stations in the center of the room and plenty of room for filing, office supplies, and other necessities. We are also very pleased that we were able to reduce our occupancy-associated expenses to accommodate the small rent increase, resulting in a cost-neutral move overall. We love our new space and its proximity to public transit.
In 2020, we launched our new website, revamped our Facebook page, and created new Instagram and Twitter accounts. On our new website, people can read about our history, view information about our staff and board members, read about our case management program, learn about Utah ADAPT, find information about our events, and pursue a variety of resources.

Our new website includes a community calendar that we are beginning to populate with our own events, as well as events hosted by other disability organizations and local nonprofits that our members would share an interest in. We update our blog regularly with information about our programs and services, action items for engaged volunteer community members, and more. In 2020, we also launched an e-newsletter that goes out to our email list at the beginning of each month. We are enthusiastic that our revamped online presence and new systems for engaging with our community will help to grow our organization in 2021. We currently have 730 people following us on Facebook, and we think we can double that number in 2021.
2021

LOOKING AHEAD

We’ve come such a long way in 2020, and we’re looking forward to continuing to serve our community in 2021. In the coming months, we will continue to focus on our COVID-19 relief projects until a sufficient number of community members are vaccinated.

Accessibility Advocacy

In 2021, we will continue to work with private and public transit providers to improve the accessibility of their services. We are currently looking into ways to improve the accessibility of on-demand and taxi services in our area. We will continue to support the Disability Integration Act on a federal level.

Fair Housing Testing

We will continue our Fair Housing Testing program in a virtual setting until our testers are vaccinated. We hope to test hundreds of complexes for compliance with the FHA and ADA before the end of the year.

Community Transition

We are growing our case management program and hope to help more individuals transition out of institutions and into community-based care in 2021. COVID-19 has been a nightmare for individuals living in these facilities, and we are working hard to get individuals to safety.

Internship Program

We will continue to offer two internships per semester in 2021. Interested students should email a resume to Karolyn Campbell at karolyn@disabledrightsutah.org.

ADA Rental Kit

We will continue renting out our ADA Kit to community organizations in 2021. We hope to expand the kit by adding a transportable ramp and other in-demand items in the near future.

Thank you for supporting our hard work in 2020! We’re looking forward to what 2021 has in store.