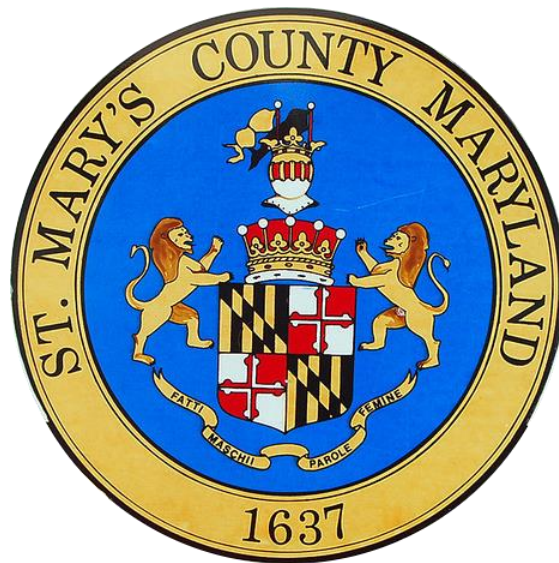


St. Mary's County
Commission on People with Disabilities
2019 Annual Report



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History

The St. Mary's County Commission for the Disabled was established on April 16, 1991 by the Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County, Maryland through the adoption of resolution 91-11 and codified as chapter 156 of the code of St. Mary's County, Maryland.

On January 29, 2002, the Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County, Maryland renamed the commission to the Commission on People with Disabilities and revised the membership.

On January 26, 2010, The Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County, Maryland adopted by-laws for the commission and increased its membership.

On June 21, 2011 the Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County, Maryland restated the establishment of the Commission on People with Disabilities and increased citizen membership.

Currently the Commission meets the third Thursday of every month at 4 p.m. in room 14 of the Potomac Building. The Department of Human Resources provides staff support.

ADA Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including employment, education, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA is divided into five titles or sections that relate to different areas of public life.

Title I-Employment

- Designed to help people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits as people without disabilities.
- Applies to employers with 15 or more employees
- Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants or employees. A “reasonable accommodation” is a change made that accommodates employees with disabilities without causing the employer any “undue hardship”.
- Defines disability, establishes guidelines for the reasonable accommodation process, addresses medical examination requirements and inquiries, and defines “direct threat” when there is a risk of substantial harm to the health and safety of the employee with a disability or others.

Title II-Public Services: State and Local Government

- Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by “public entities” such as programs, services, and activities operated by state and local governments.
- Requires public entities to make their programs, services, and activities accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Outlines requirements for self-evaluation and planning: making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures, where necessary to avoid discrimination; identifying architectural barriers; and communicating effectively with people with hearing, vision, and speech disabilities.

Title III-Public accommodations and services provided by public entities

- Prohibits places of public accommodation from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. Public accommodations include privately-owned, leased or operated facilities, such as hotels, restaurants, retail merchants, golf courses, doctor's offices, schools, day cares, health clubs, sports stadiums, movie theaters, etc.
- Sets minimum standards for accessibility for alterations and new construction. It also requires public accommodations to remove barriers in existing buildings where it is easy to do so without difficulty or much expense.
- Directs businesses to make "reasonable modifications" to their usual ways of doing business when serving people with disabilities.
- Requires that business to take the necessary steps to communicate effectively with customers with hearing, vision, and speech disabilities.

Title IV-Telecommunications

- Requires telephone and internet companies to provide a nationwide system of interstate and intrastate telecommunication relay services that allows individuals with hearing and speech disabilities to communicate over the telephone.
- Requires closed captioning of federally funded public service announcements.

Title V-Miscellaneous provisions

- Contains a variety of provisions relating to the ADA as a whole, including its relationship to other laws, state immunity, it's impact on insurance providers and benefits, prohibition against retaliation and coercion, illegal use of drugs, and attorney's fees.
- Provides a list of certain conditions that are not to be considered as disabilities.

Introduction

Formed by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County in response to the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the St. Mary's County Commission on People with Disabilities (COPD) exists to increase acceptance, awareness, and full participation in all aspects of county life, including the quality of life for persons with disabilities. Additionally, the COPD has the responsibility of providing advice to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County and to improve awareness and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Public Events and Accomplishments 2019

The 2019 Goals for the Commission on People with Disabilities were

- Increase membership
 - The COPD gained four new members in 2019, Monthly meeting attendance increased by over 50%, and increases in participation and education were realized.
- Public Awareness
 - In 2019 the commission became a member of the Chamber of Commerce for St. Mary's County. Commission members regularly attend after hours events hosted by the Chamber of Commerce to develop public awareness for the commission and for people with disabilities. With gratitude to our Chamber of Commerce sub-committee and all volunteers who assisted, we have become more recognized and have made lasting connections that will continue to provide strength to our purpose.
 - Members of the commission attended and participated in the 5K run at Sotterly Plantation as an effort to increase public awareness. Please see appendix A.
 - Annual Holiday Party-2019 concluded with our annual holiday party.
- Provide support to the ADA coordinator for St. Mary's County.
 - The commission has assisted the ADA coordinator and Recreation and Parks in helping a family with concerns regarding the structure, accessibility, and parking at Lancaster Park in Lexington Park, MD.
- Appreciation
 - Each year the Commission on People with Disabilities and community partners conduct an awards ceremony to celebrate those in our community that have demonstrated excellence in community. Those nominated and selected receive an award given by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County.

Conclusion

2019 saw increases in membership, productivity, and awareness for the Commission. We look forward to a solid foundation for our purpose, increased awareness, fair treatment, and inclusion for people with disabilities over the coming years. Thank you to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County for your continued support of the Commission on People with Disabilities. Thank you to the Department of Human Resources for your support in staffing and training. A very special thank you to each and every member of the Commission on People with Disabilities for your efforts as a member of the Commission and your efforts in our community and thank you to all the organizations and people who have dedicated their lives and careers to helping others. 2020 will be a great year.

Appendix A



2019 ADA Proclamation



2019 5k Run at Sotterly



2019 Holiday Party