

## A Plan Serving People with Disabilities

The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities will be:

- Empowered and have sufficient staff and resources to work with each department and office of the City at the early stages of the design of every new initiative, including the collaboration of MOPD with the Chicago Police Department.
- Empowered and properly resourced to conduct a systematic review of existing policies, programs, operations, and facilities through a disabilities equity lens, and make recommendations on changes that are inclusive of the needs of Chicago's diverse community of people with disabilities.
- Integrated into other agencies including the Departments of Planning and Development and of Housing to ensure ADA compliance and compliance with the Fair Housing Act. The recent lawsuit about the failure of Wrigley Field to be accessible after renovations highlights the importance of adequate compliance and oversight.

In addition, under my administration, I will roll out several initiatives in the following substantive areas:

Become a leader as a Smart City. The Smart Cities for All [PC3] playbook lists six "plays" that will be adapted to Chicago's circumstances and needs:

- Achieve inclusive innovation through people.
- Increase inclusion in innovation through economic assets.
- Increase inclusion in innovation through infrastructure.
- Increase inclusion in innovation through the enabling environment, i.e., the city's public policies, programs, initiatives, and commitments that promote innovation.
- Increase inclusion in innovation through networking assets.

Housing. I will work with philanthropic, government, and corporate partners, and make use, where possible, of Chicago infrastructure resources to help those requiring assistance continue to live comfortably in their homes. Efforts to increase housing stock will be directed at making new or rehabilitated homes both affordable and accessible.

Workforce Development and Economic Security.

- First, I will assess the status of service providers who are the link between people with disabilities to jobs and essential community resources and determine how to shore them up and help them become more resilient to future economic disruptions.
- Second, I will leverage federal broadband infrastructure money to bring all Chicago neighborhoods up to the highest performance levels. It will provide digital technology training and access to digital devices for residents in the least served areas. It will facilitate the distribution of adaptive technologies to workers with disabilities so that they may make full use of broadband and digital resources.
- Third, I will collaborate with Community-Based Organizations serving, undocumented and immigrant and justice-involved and BIPOC people living with disabilities to ensure holistic and inclusive support.
- Fourth, I will maintain and expand MOPD's new Career Center - <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mopd/provdrs/CareerCenter.html> - to help address the high unemployment rate and employment barriers that people with disabilities in Chicago face.

Community Economic Development. Chicago's west and south sides – neighborhoods that are low wealth, predominantly Black, and often majority women head of family households – are where people with disabilities are more concentrated. Our commitment to including people with disabilities in all phases of the policy and programmatic

processes will be reflected in all community-level engagements. We will employ new technologies and innovation as tools to facilitate equitable growth.

Community Mental Health. As Access Living and others have reported, people with disabilities are more concentrated in neighborhoods suffering from inadequate health care and access to public health services. One priority is to expand access to comprehensive health care including mental health services in all 24 City of Chicago health clinics. I will also work with the County Health and Public Health system and its 15 clinics to integrate and coordinate resources so that the entire City and County can ensure access to health care and mental and behavioral health services at all local clinics. I will also ensure the coordination of services between the Department of Public Health, the 590 grant programs (providing alternative response to MH calls), and the 988-call systems. The current lack of coordination among these programs undercuts efficiency and effectiveness.

Additionally, the Department of Planning and Development and the Department of Public Health should interface to ensure the delivery of mental health services.

Transportation. I will direct and mandate the city departments of Planning and Development, Housing, and Transportation to integrate their efforts with the CTA, Metra, Pace, and the RTA to ensure that communities grow, and that downtown and neighborhood businesses can thrive with workers and customers from across the city. I will help lead efforts to reform the RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace to increase service and ridership and expand funding to the regional paratransit system.

I will look to integrate CTA planning with the City Departments of Housing, Planning, and Transportation, in order to secure needed investments in conjunction with affordable housing and commercial area improvements to make Chicago the pedestrian and transit infrastructure accessible to all.

I will ensure integration between CTA and the Department of Public Health to ensure the delivery of mental health services on public transit.

I will work with the CTA so that it meets its commitment to the [All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\) - All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\) - CTA \(transitchicago.com\)](#)

Chicagoans with disabilities who are justice-system involved. In 2016, the Center for American Progress reported that: “People with disabilities are thus dramatically overrepresented in the nation’s prisons and jails today.”

There are two areas where we can take immediate action:

First, I will use the guidelines put forth in 2022 by the Illinois Alliance for Re-entry and Justice as a framework for a robust set of services for returning residents with disabilities. The exact form that these services will take and how they will be funded will be addressed through a combined interagency and intergovernmental effort coordinated by the Mayor’s Director of Re-Entry.

Second, I will pilot the use of re-entry navigators in partnership with employment pathways using proven strategies supporting returning citizens and coordinate with the statewide Access 2 Justice programs and grantees.

Third, I will ensure the City of Chicago liaises with Community-Based Organizations to ensure awareness of resources and support.

Fourth, I will ensure full compliance with and implementation of the CPD Consent Decree, as many people with disabilities have been adversely impacted by CPD’s excessive use of force, as well as CPD failing to provide effective communication and accommodations for people with disabilities.

## Special Education.

### **In my education plan, I call for the following actions:**

- CPS Leadership will state publicly that Special Education is a strategic priority.
- I will work with government leaders to ensure Special Education is funded at the recommended national level. Every school should be staffed and equipped to support students who have Individual Education Programs (IEP). This includes staff shortages related to special education teachers, nurses, aides and staff who provide transportation services. And when there are staff shortages there needs to be a better plan for identification, notice to parents, and the provision of options to those families (e.g., option to move schools, or maybe create some sort of stable of itinerant teachers) when students can't access needed services due to staffing issues.
- We must streamline the process to provide schools with an adequate number of Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECA) for our IEP students.
- When a child is enrolled in special education services, we need to support not only the child but their family. We cannot expect our families to figure out the process on their own or ask the “right” questions.
- To reach out to the parents, it is essential to hold town halls and listening tours specifically for families with children with IEPs.
- I will rely on community partners to inform us of individual needs: Often these needs are identified by the system’s community partners.
- I will improve assistance to students whose facility in English poses challenges.
- I will ensure that CPS complies with the Settlement Agreement for non-English speaking parents of students with disabilities.
- I will work with CPS to ensure that it prioritizes the use of restorative practices within the school building instead of formally or informally pushing out students with disabilities who exhibit behavioral struggles in school.
- I will work to ensure the timely provision of early intervention services and early education. There continues to be huge delays in obtaining services for children ages 0-6 during this critical juncture in their development.