

Dear Up-and-Coming Youth Disability Community Activist:

As we all know, in the spirit of self-determination, the fundamental force behind positive societal change at its very core was driven by our own community of people with disabilities ourselves. We were the ones who stood up against old and outdated stereotypes about disability. We were the ones who battled against prevailing misperceptions about what we truly could do, and we were the ones who expanded our own possibilities by showing the world through our words and actions that we are indeed deserving of equal opportunity just like everyone else. The progress that our community has made is not an accident by any means. To the contrary, our achievements as a community stem quite directly from our own voices being heard and acted upon, and it is that vibrance that ultimately resulted in the passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the farthest-reaching piece of civil rights legislation to impact the lives of persons with disabilities.

It is THIS spirit of leadership, THIS spirit of activism and vitality that now draws us all together to celebrate how far we have come over the past quarter century since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became the law of the land. This is why I am reaching out to you here. YOU are the future of the disability rights movement. YOU are the ones who are someday to take the places of those who have gone before, building upon that timeless legacy and leaving your own unique and indelible mark in a way that only YOUR generation can do!

On **Friday, July 24, 2015, from 9:00am to 12:00pm at 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, in Washington, DC**, the U.S. Department of Education, led by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is hosting a large-scale ADA celebration that is to attract fellow persons with disabilities of all ages, along with their families, friends, advocates, and supporters. We are coming together in common purpose to discuss the specific policy and programmatic advancements we have seen over the past 25 years, network with one another as we continue to build alliances to make further progress, look ahead to the new frontiers that lie ahead, obtain practical resources and information that will further arm advocates in fostering the kind of ongoing change we all seek, and show practical examples of how old beliefs have been transformed into new paradigms that embrace innovative thinking that leads to greater integration and participation in various aspects of societal life than ever before. Coming together in one place will be government officials, disability policy advocates, parents of children with disabilities, disability rights attorneys and other advocates, and other leaders and members of the broad community of individuals who believe in the true potential of persons with disabilities. (Additional details attached.) Join us!

Here are key event highlights:

- 9:00am to 9:45am: Presentations by Assistant Secretary for Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services **Michael Yudin**, Association for University

Centers on Disabilities Executive Director **Andrew “Andy” J. Imparato**, and Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights **Catherine E. Lhamon**.

- 9:45am to 10:20am: Youth panel moderated by Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner **Janet LaBreck** and including youth with different types of disabilities who have grown up in the era of the ADA’s implementation. Panelists will be:

- + Accomplished athlete and six-time national champion in wheelchair racing and archery, **Casey Followay** of Ohio.
- + National Council on Independent Living activist, **Jaggar DeMarco** of New Jersey.
- + Founder of Social Justice Media Services and Disability Rights Blogger, **Emily Ladau** of New York
- + National Association of the Deaf (NAD) activist, **Nia Lazarus** of California
- + Autistic Self Advocacy Network Leadership Programs Coordinator, **Natalia M. Rivera Morales** of Maryland.

- 10:25am to 10:55 am: Outdoor ceremony, keynoted by **U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan** and featuring Active Policy Solutions Chief Executive Officer **Terri Lakowski**.

- 10:00am to 10:25am; 10:55am to 12:00pm: Information tables hosted by Federal Government agencies and other organizations wanting to network with disability community members and their families to provide internship and employment opportunities, render services and support, and share information of use to civil rights advocates and their organizations. Also featured are activity stations of interest to persons with disabilities interested and athletics and sports.

There will be something here for everyone; so, come and be a part of history! Spread the word now to all those you know about our #ADA25 celebration. Opening with Google Chrome, **RSVP today** at one of the following links:

- [Non-Profit Organizations \(including consumer-driven organizations\)](#)
- [Educational Institutions \(junior high schools, high schools, colleges, and universities\)](#)
- [Local Government Agencies](#)
- [State Government Agencies](#)
- [Federal Government Agencies](#)

- [For-Profit Businesses](#)
- [Faith-Based Organizations](#)

Alternatively, to receive the RSVP via email, please write to Isabella Espiritu at atlsabella.Espiritu@ed.gov or call her at [\(202\) 453-6369](tel:(202)453-6369) [Voice/Relay/VRS].

Do your part to make sure that your generation is well represented! See you all here, [follow us on Twitter](#) to stay connected, and remember to keep spreading the word far and wide! The event just can't and won't be the same without you!

Sincerely,

Olegario D. Cantos VII, Esq.
Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education