



## **ADA Live! Episode 131: Making State Government Programs and Services Accessible**

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**Guest:** Stacey Peace, State ADA Coordinator's Office – Georgia State Financing & Investment Commission

**Moderator & Host:** Pamela Williamson, Assistant Project Director at the Southeast ADA Center

**Recording:** [adalive.org/episodes/episode-130](https://adalive.org/episodes/episode-130)

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### **Stacey Peace**

Hi. This is Stacey peace, and you're listening to ADA live.

### **Music4 Wheel City**

Music

### **Pamela Williamson**

Hello everyone. On behalf of the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University and the ADA National Network. Welcome to ADA live. I am Pam Williamson, Assistant Director of the Southeast ADA Center, listening audience. If you have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, also known as Ada, you can use the online form anytime at [Ada live.org](https://adalive.org) or call the southeast ADA Center at 404-541-9001, all calls are free and confidential. Each July we celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The United States has come a long

way in fulfilling the promise of the ADA since President George HW Bush signed the ADA into law on July 26 1990 and said, Let the shameful wall of exclusion come tumbling down. Today, our communities are more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities, but there are still many barriers that people with disabilities face in communities, work, transportation, school and civic participation. Some people think only new construction and alterations need to be accessible, that older facilities are grandfathered in and do not have to comply with the ADA. But that's not true, because the ADA is a civil rights law and not a building code. Older facilities are often required to be accessible to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate. The ADA also requires that state and local governments that fall under ADA title two must ensure program accessibility and make reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures so that all citizens can equally participate in the programs and services of their state and local government. Our guest for this episode is Stacy peace, the state of Georgia's ADA coordinator. Welcome to the show, Stacy

**Stacey Peace**

Hello and thank you.

**Pamela Williamson**

In this episode, we're going to talk about the role of the state ADA coordinators in promoting compliance with Title two of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title two of the ADA applies to all programs, activities and services provided or operated by state and local governments such as courthouses, elections and voting and libraries. ADA also applies to state and local agencies like the state tax office or the Department of Motor Vehicles where you get your driver's license. Stacy, please tell us what the Office of the State of Georgia, ADA coordinator does.

**Stacey Peace**

The primary mission of our office is to provide educational and technical support for state agencies so that programs, services and activities operated by the state of Georgia, are accessible and usable by everyone. This is done through the provision of

technical guidance, training, helpful resources, our virtual ADA Conference, which is held each year, our quarterly e newsletter, the ADA informer, our statewide ADA facility improvements program, helpful resource guides created by our office, the participation on advisory committees and coalitions like Tools for Life and the Georgia emergency preparedness Coalition for individuals with disabilities and older adults, and our access Georgia project, which is a collaborative project with the Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation, or CIDI for short, at Georgia Tech and the Georgia Technology Authority, or GTA, this project focuses on Accessible Information and Communication Technology. Our office consists of myself, Steve Jones, who serves as the Assistant State ADA coordinator and senior ADA architect, Donna Hall McDowell, who serves as a senior ADA architect, and Barbara Tucker, who serves as the ADA Administrative Services Coordinator.

**Pamela Williamson**

Well Stacey, it's obvious that your office does quite a bit of work. So now, do you also do ADA training? And if so, what are some of your ADA training projects and programs?

**Stacey Peace**

Yes, we do do training. Our trainings primarily consist of ADA Title One, or Employment Training title two. Trainings, which is geared for state and local government, facility access and trainings on information and communication technology. A popular training is our ADA Title One, basic training that we provide for human resource professionals and managers and supervisors. We also have a training that's pretty popular on common errors and admissions as it relates to the built environment. And then last month, Governor Brian Kemp signed game or Georgia as model employer legislation, which was passed by the Georgia House and Senate, and our office will be the administrators for gain, and we are currently engaged in strategic planning regarding what the training program for grain will look like and consist of.

**Pamela Williamson**

Well, that's exciting news about the new program. I'm glad to hear that.

**Stacey Peace**

Yes, we're very excited.

**Pamela Williamson**

So what are some examples of improvements to ADA accessibility at the state level, where the state of Georgia ADA coordinators office has been involved.

**Stacey Peace**

Well, as I mentioned before, our office operates the statewide ADA facility improvements program in which our office works with the state works with state of Georgia agencies to develop budget requests and undertake ADA construction projects. These projects concern accessible entrances, primary function areas, restroom alterations, site modifications, automatic doors, curb cuts, ramps, pathway renovation, door modifications and other accessible elements and features to meet the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Each year, in September, we submit requests to the Office of Planning and Budget for funding to carry out the statewide ADA facility improvements program.

**Pamela Williamson**

So do you have any specific examples of things that have happened and maybe in a local government or state government agency?

**Stacey Peace**

Well, the statewide ADA facility improvements program is specific to state of Georgia agencies, and we've helped a host of different agencies provide accessible features and adhere to the letter of the law through construction projects that can include our local colleges and universities buildings on Capitol Hill. So it doesn't not really matter

where the state agency is located. We've helped Department of Corrections and other agencies with different projects, so it really varies, and it's really based on the needs of the state agency.

**Pamela Williamson**

I'm so glad you've got a program in place that can address these types of important accessibility issues. Now, voting is an important part of our duties and responsibilities as citizens. So how does your office offer guidance so that polling places in Georgia's election policies and procedures meet ADA requirements to be accessible for voters with disabilities?

**Stacey Peace**

Well, most recently, our office participated in the Secretary of State's voter accessibility roundtable by assisting, excuse me, the Secretary of State was gathering disability community service providers, advocates and individuals with disabilities to discuss and provide guidance on a host of matters, from the accessibility of the Secretary of State's website To the accessibility of voting machines and ADA related training for poll workers, and then back in the 2000 and from 2002 when Mike Alison atkis was the state ADA coordinator our office and collaborative effort with the Secretary of State's office created a database for facility access Review of over 2900 polling locations across Georgia, the 159 counties. During this program, our office provided training and technical assistance, and we maintain the database of the polling locations that were reviewed for accessibility by the facility managers. Once the database was complete, through the Hava or the help American Vote Act, funding was distributed to various polling locations for improvement based on the review and recommendations from our office.

**Pamela Williamson**

Are you still assisting election and polling places in making sure that their facilities are ADA accessible for individuals with disabilities?

**Stacey Peace**

Yes, we will always continue to provide this type of assistance and technical guidance. We're not currently in the same type of project that we were previously with the Hava act, but our senior ADA architects within our office are always willing and able to assist any state or local government agency that has questions about how to make their locations more accessible, including polling locations.

**Pamela Williamson**

Well, that's great, especially since this year is an election year, I know that we will be looking forward to folks being able to get out and vote and do it in an accessible manner. Now, the ADA has been a federal law for almost 34 years. So regarding ADA title. Clients in Georgia. How does the work of the state of Georgia ADA coordinators office change during your time there?

**Stacey Peace**

I've been with the state and with the state ADA coordinators office for 18 and a half years now, and I have noticed that there is, fortunately, an increased awareness for the need of civil rights laws like the ADA and there's been a cultural shift in a lot of spaces regarding inclusiveness. I've seen this flourishing, which is really good to see, not only because it's a mandated federally, but because it's the right thing to do. And I see that agencies and local government are starting to really understand that this is a pathway to a more customer oriented culture. Our offices work has also increasingly involved accessibility and inclusion around information and communication technology, which reflects our society's increased reliance on the web. So that's another area we've seen a huge expansion and a need for additional assistance and guidance.

**Pamela Williamson**

I am so glad to hear that the office and the and the state agencies are moving towards that will customer oriented focus. I think that that helps people to understand the ADA better and and not only is it just a law, it is a way to serve so many of our customers

who have disabilities exactly well regarding ADA compliance, what are some of the tricky or difficult issues that state and local governments tend to overlook?

**Stacey Peace**

I would say for facility access, issues around path of travel and bathrooms are often kind of common issues that may occur, sometimes with path of travel situations. You may have a clear path of travel, but then someone may place an obstacle that makes that once clear path of travel no longer accessible. And then there's some fairly technical guidance regarding bathrooms. And I think sometimes those things get overlooked or misinterpreted regarding Title One of the ADA, I would probably say, not realizing when a request of an accommodation for an accommodation has been made by an employee, because it's an employee does not have to use specific words, like I'm requesting a reasonable accommodation to make that request, and so sometimes those requests can be overlooked by managers and supervisors, they're not trained properly, and then also maybe not responding as quickly as needed, and engaging in the interactive process. We get a lot of questions about the interactive process and what's required. And then I would also say for website accessibility, I think that what's absolutely needed to make it a website accessible has been sometimes a difficult thing. I know that there's a new final rule out, and so that's going to help clarify a lot of things. And then I would say, for title two, I would say barring undue burden or direct defense, I would say that probably not understanding that a change to a policy or procedure may be required as a reasonable modification so that an individual with a disability can participate in programs, services and activities. I think those are probably the main areas of things that we see some questions around.

**Pamela Williamson**

Well, it's great then that you have the training and technical assistance piece in place so that folks can get answers to their questions, and so that we can continue to see them improve in these areas.

**Stacey Peace**

Yeah, very important that we continue to spread the word and do what we can to train and educate those so do the work you know of providing customer service and services to all of our citizens in Georgia,

**Pamela Williamson**

exactly. I think you're right on point there so well, Stacy, we thank you for this great information so far. And ADA live listening audience. If you have questions about this topic or any other ADA live topics, you may submit your questions online at [Ada.live.org](http://Ada.live.org) or call the southeast ADA Center at 404.541.9191 and now a word from this episode. Sponsor, the state of Georgia. ADA coordinator office,

**Voice Over**

The state of Georgia. ADA coordinators office serves as a technical resource to state agencies for the ADA title to general non discrimination requirements, program, accessibility, communications and employment, including the reasonable accommodation process. It operates the statewide ADA facility Improvement Program, and also assists state agencies in updating, strengthening and enhancing the scope of self evaluation and transition plans to ensure ADA compliance. The Office also conducts general and customized training on ADA topics for state agencies. It provides informal technical assistance about the ADA to the general public and collaborates with the local ADA support system. Office. It also increases the visibility of the ADA to help more citizens understand the law the Georgia State ADA coordinators office is a section of the Georgia state financing and Investment Commission. To learn more, visit their website at [ada.georgia.gov](http://ada.georgia.gov)

**Pamela Williamson**

Welcome back everyone. I am Pam Williamson with the southeast ADA Center. Our guest is Stacy peace, the ADA Coordinator for the state of Georgia. Stacy, we appreciate the information you shared with our listeners about the state of Georgia's



ADA coordinators office, the ADA title two training that you do for state and local governments and other services you provide. Now, another project your office is involved in is the Georgia emergency preparedness Coalition for people with disabilities and older adults. Please tell us a little bit more about this organization and the work that they do.

**Stacey Peace**

Well, the coalition consists of stakeholder agencies throughout Georgia and this includes state and local government entities, advocacy groups and community service organizations. We work on emergency planning, preparedness and response projects as they relate to individuals with disabilities and older adults. The coalition was started after Hurricane Katrina in response to the failures that were documented as it relates to these populations.

**Pamela Williamson**

Well, the southeast ADA Center is thrilled to be a part of this group, and actually has been able to help with some of the publications that have been developed. So we appreciate all of the work that the state of Georgia's ADA coordinators office does to coordinate this as group and organization.

**Stacey Peace**

Yes, it's been great collaborating with the southeast ADA Center and all the other agencies and entities that are part of the coalition. And we do have a host of different publications that we have produced through the coalition. Many of them are available on our office's website. And then we do have hard copies as well in our office that we can provide and limited quantities to those who request them.

**Pamela Williamson**

And your website is [ada.georgia.gov](http://ada.georgia.gov) is that correct?

**Stacey Peace**

Okay, that is correct. You can get to us by [ada.ga.gov](http://ada.ga.gov) or ADA dot Georgia spelled out.gov Correct.

**Pamela Williamson**

Fantastic. So folks, make sure you go check out their website for this excellent information from the Georgia emergency preparedness coalition. Now, Stacy, your office, recently conducted a 2024, virtual ADA conference for state and local governments. It was a three day training for state and local government entities who want to learn more about ADA compliance and improve their expertise. So tell our audience a bit more about this conference.

**Stacey Peace**

The Virtual ADA conference is a free conference that we provide, and this year, like last year, was provided in collaborative partnership with the National Association of ADA coordinators, or NAADAC for short, this year, the topics that were covered are the ADA and criminal justice. ADA legal updates from 2023 building an ADA team and plan understanding the new pedestrian right of way Accessibility Guidelines, or pro rag for short, Title One of the ADA and the reasonable accommodations and interactive process. The importance of hiring and valuing individuals with lived disability experience. The intersection of ADA, Section 504, Title Six. and Title Nine, obligation artificial intelligence at individuals with disabilities and ensuring effective communication, we had a host of speakers and experts that were provided the training and content that was provided to our state and local government partners.

**Pamela Williamson**

Well, it sounds like you had a wealth of information and expertise that were shared with your attendees. Now, is this an annual event?

**Stacey Peace**

It is an annual event. We've been providing this event. This was our 10th conference, and when we first started out, it was an in person conference. And then in 2020 during

covid, we moved it to the virtual space, and this year we had over 1100 people registered for the conference. Again, it is free, and because it's virtual, we are able to provide it to not only those living within the state of Georgia or working within the state of Georgia, but also to anybody across our nation.

**Pamela Williamson**

That is fantastic. So I am so glad that people are able to get this information. Now. Will the conference materials be archived online?

**Stacey Peace**

Yes, we post all of our past conference materials on our website again, which is [ada.ga.gov](http://ada.ga.gov) we are currently working to upload the PowerPoint presentation transcripts and recordings for all of this most recent conferences sessions on our website, and they will be able to be located there in probably another week or two under the training heading on our website.

**Pamela Williamson**

Fantastic. Well, you know, we've talked about the way that people interact with state and local government and how it's changed over the years. We've talked about how it's become common for this information, such as voting, public utilities, taxes, court hearings and more, to be available online through websites and mobile apps, but sometimes, as we've discussed, these online interactions are not necessarily accessible, and they create barriers for people with disabilities. The Department of Justice published a final rule in april 2024 with outdated regulations for ADA title to web and mobile accessibility that applies to state and local governments, and this is going to affect every state agency in Georgia and around the country. So how will your office continue to provide technical guidance and support in this arena?

**Stacey Peace**

Well, ever since the notice the proposed rulemaking was announced by the federal government last summer, we have been sharing any information we receive with our

individual listserv, most recently, our office, in conjunction with our access Georgia project and the Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation, participated in a training for institutions of higher learning or colleges and universities regarding the new final rule and how will affect what they do and how to prepare. We plan to do a similar training in the near future for state and state of Georgia agencies. Additionally, John Iodash, who I mentioned earlier as one of our presenters at our 2024 virtual ADA conference, also included guidance on the new Final Rule during his session on effective communication. And we plan to continue to provide technical guidance, support and training regarding a new Final Rule, VR access Georgia project.

**Pamela Williamson**

Well, this will actually linked us into my next question. Then, as part of the final rule on title, ADA title to web and mobile accessibility, Department of Justice also published a small Entity Compliance guide, and this guide is there to help people who work for or with state or local governments understand the final rule requirements for the accessibility of web content and mobile applications. Now, according to the final rule requirements, Georgia has until April 27 2026 to make their web content and mobile apps, with a few exceptions, accessible to people with disabilities. So the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, also known as WCAG or WCAG version 2.1, level double A is the technical standard for state and local government content and mobile apps. Are there some areas where the web accessibility issues that title two entities tend to overlook or find confusing, and in addition to some of the things you've already described, are there other ways that you help with these issues?

**Stacey Peace**

Well, as I mentioned before, our office been working towards the now publicized goals of the new final rule for over 10 years. VR access, Georgia, and we are very excited to now have specific requirements to look towards and to implement. And the guide that you mentioned is a more easily digestible version of the final rule, which will hopefully help state and local government entities map out an action plan as to how to assess their entity's accessible ICT needs and how to implement that plan. The guide helps to

explain what happens when an agency is contracting out the design or creation of a mobile app or website, what's required regarding password protected website content and exceptions to the final rule, I would say that the exceptions is probably one of the more confusing areas within the guidance there all of the requirements that are listed for exceptions must be met in order for an exception to be something that can be applied. And so this guide really kind of lifts out what those exceptions are, and it specifically gives you examples as to apply those exceptions so that people, so entities, can understand whether or not certain content is going to be excluded from the final rule or not. And I do want to impress upon everyone listening that ADA compliance, whether we're talking about the built environment or information communication technology, it's a journey. It's not really a destination. There's just ongoing obligations for these type of things, and you always work to strive to be as accessible as possible. Because as we change and as our society grows and as the web changes, things are constantly going to be updated and need to be made accessible, new rules may have to come out. So it's really just that it's a journey. It's not so much a destination. It's more of a journey. Stacy,

**Pamela Williamson**

I think you have really hit the nail on the head there, because ADA compliance is one of those things that we need to always be keeping in the forefront and not get pushed to the back burner. We all want to make sure that all of individuals with disabilities can access. Programs and services of the state and local government agencies. Well, Stacy, you have shared some wonderful information with our listeners about the state of Georgia's ADA coordinator office and the ADA title to training that you do for state and local governments, as well as other services that you provide. Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share with us?

**Stacey Peace**

Well, our office is currently working on our July 2024 issue of our ADA in former quarterly newsletter, which is scheduled to launch on July 22 of this year. So if you'd like to subscribe to our newsletter, please visit our website and go to our publications

page. We are also planning on the planning committee for the ADA 34th anniversary celebration that will take place on July 26 2024 at Friendship Baptist Church, and that is located at 80 Walnut Street, Southwest Atlanta, Georgia, 30314 The event will take place from 10am to 12 noon, and it is being spearheaded by Myrna Clayton, who is the founder and executive director of show ability. This is a free event with vendors, refreshments, speakers and entertainment. Additionally, for our state and local government partners, some resources that I would recommend, and I have a very long list, but I've tried to shorten it to some of the main ones. Is our office's website, the Civil Rights Division for the Department of Justice, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or EEOC, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, the Job Accommodation Network, or Jan for short, your regional ADA Center. And for those of us in the southeast region, it would be the southeast ADA Center, your local Assistive Technology Center. For those of us in this region, it would be Tools for Life, the Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation at Georgia Tech, and organizations like the National Association of ADA coordinators or NADAC, for sure.

### **Pamela Williamson**

Well, Stacey, we greatly appreciate all of the information and the resources, and I want to highlight your website again, [ada.georgia.gov](http://ada.georgia.gov), and so that folks can sign up for your newsletter ADA informer, and make sure you do that before July 22 so that you can get next month's edition of that well, Stacy, thank you again for being with us today to share this important information about How the state of Georgia. Ada coordinators office educates and trains local and state government personnel about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Listeners, we thank you for joining us for this episode. You may access all ADA Live episodes with archived audio, accessible transcripts and resources on our website, at [Ada live.org](http://Ada.live.org), listen to the SoundCloud ADA live channel at [soundcloud.com forward slash ADA live](https://soundcloud.com/ada-live) and download ADA live to your mobile device and your podcast app By searching for ADA live have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Use the online form anytime at [Ada live](http://Ada.live), dot O, R, G, or contact your Regional Resource Center at 800-949-4232 all calls are free and

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### **Music4 Wheel City**

They watching. They don't want us be part of the city, man. They put all these steps, man. All these curbs we can't get over. All these inaccessible stores. 4 Wheel City. They don't want us here. We'll survive and we're going to make our own place. Our own world. The 4 Wheel City-

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