Accessibility: It's a work in progress!
A conversation about putting our commitments into action.

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Introductions

Audrey Homan
Web, Accessibility, Communications

Adrienne Miao
Community Services

Jesse Suter,
Executive Director
Who We Are

The Center on Disability & Community Inclusion (CDCI) at the University of Vermont is Vermont’s UCEDD.

We’re home to 34 full-time staff, and 31 projects.
Turn to your neighbors

What does accessibility mean to you?

What is something your center has done for accessibility?
We are all working to improve accessibility...
In 2002, we heard concerns from our staff.

“No one’s asked for accessibility features. We don’t need it.”

“No one really uses [alt-text]”!

“It’s really not something we have time for right now.”
So, we conducted a survey:

Have you had training on accessibility in past year?

Yes 16%
Then we took action.

2022
Created pilot accessibility trainings.

2023
Measuring results.

2024
Decide if we can offer to others.
Over the summer, we designed a series of monthly workshops.

Plain Language
Event Accessibility
Accessible Design and Readability
Accessible Web Design
Universal Design for Learning
Accessible Word Documents
Accessible PowerPoint Documents
Accessible Multimedia
Our resources

$1,000 budget for hiring two local disability groups to each teach a workshop.

Survey software, Zoom, captioning & ASL interpreters paid for by UVM.

About 11 hours to create each workshop.

(certified accessibility specialist)

(project management and data)

(willing to support new ideas and teach a workshop)
Each workshop was flexible, and inclusive.

✓ Held on Zoom, with captioning and ASL interpretation available.
✓ Offered twice, on different days of the week and at different times of the day.
✓ Available as a captioned video recording and transcript along with the slides.
Each workshop was bite-sized.

- Assumed audience had little or no previous knowledge.
- Covered only a few topics with lots of examples.
- Went slowly, with time for questions.
- Stopped after 45 minutes.
Each workshop ended with the same advice:

- Choose one thing to work on at a time
- You are encouraged to ask for help
- Resist the freakout: Accessibility is hard, and it’s a process.
- Get feedback from people with disabilities
- Don't be afraid to ask for what you need
We made all materials available outside of workshops.

go.uvm.edu/accessibility
And here’s what happened:

94% of CDCI staff attended at least one workshop.
Did it change attitudes?

I believe accessibility is *relevant* to my work. *(Before training)*

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Did it change attitudes?

I believe accessibility is *relevant* to my work. *(After training)*

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Did it change attitudes?

I believe accessibility is *feasible* in my work. *(Before training)*

- Strongly disagree: 0%
- Disagree: 19%
- Agree: 52%
- Strongly agree: 29%
Did it change attitudes?

I believe accessibility is *feasible* in my work. *(After training)*

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Did it change what people do?

I use accessible design in my work. *(Before training)*

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*THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT CENTER ON DISABILITY & COMMUNITY INCLUSION*
Did it change what people do?

I *use* accessible design in my work. (After training)

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<td>😞 5%</td>
<td>🎉 29%</td>
<td>😊 67%</td>
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What motivates you now?

To make sure all families understand our materials!

I think it's important that we model the behavior we'd like to see in the field.

It's at the heart of Disability Studies and Social Justice

To be the best ally-in-progress I can be
What are the challenges?

- It feels like accessibility strategies detract from the pizzazz of materials.
- Not enough time.
- There are a LOT of things to consider!
- Not enough time.
- Not enough time.
And that lack of time keeps showing up in the work.

"There are a lot of moving parts... The accessibility part is not always my priority."

--CDCI staff member, October 2023
What will you try next?

- Reduce complex language in reports and emails.
- Develop accessible video lessons.
- Translating more documents for families and schools.
- Attend more workshops.
Our next steps:

A new round of accessibility workshops this year!

- Plain Language (again)
- Inclusive Language, Inclusive Communities
- Accessible Events
Let’s talk about it...

1. What have you tried at your center?
2. What challenges have you faced trying to change attitudes?
3. How do we get more people to use accessible practices?
In summary:

Choose one thing to work on at a time

You are encouraged to ask for help

Resist the freakout: Accessibility is hard, and it’s a process.

Get feedback from people with disabilities

Don't be afraid to ask for what you need
Questions?
Thanks for your time.

Access this presentation online:

- as a web page
- as a .pdf
- or narrated audio