



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

November 2023

What We Did: In Plain Language

We are three staff members at the Center on Disability & Community Inclusion at the University of Vermont.

- Adrienne Miao: manages community services
- Audrey Homan: manages communications and accessibility
- Jesse Suter: manages everything

We are trying to make our work more accessible.

And we want to know:

1. What does accessibility mean to you?
2. What is something your center has done for accessibility?

In 2022, we noticed that our staff weren't creating accessible items. When we asked them about it, staff told us they felt they didn't need to make things accessible, or didn't have the time.

When we asked our staff, "Have you had training on accessibility this year?" only 16% said yes. That is a very small amount.

Because of this, we decided to offer monthly workshops on accessibility to our staff. We also decided to measure if this would help. We wanted to know if the training changed how our staff felt about accessibility, and if they made more accessible items.

Here's what we had to work with:

- Audrey was a new employee. They know about accessibility and taught a lot of the workshops.
- Adrienne is good at looking at data and planned everything. She designed the surveys.
- Jesse was willing to let us try this – and taught one of the workshops!
- We had \$1,000, and used it to pay two disability advocacy groups. Each group led one of our workshops.
- The University of Vermont paid for Zoom, captioning, and ASL interpretation.

We gave staff these 8 workshops:

1. Accessible Web Design
2. Accessible Graphic Design
3. Accessible Audio and Video
4. Accessible Word Documents
5. Plain Language
6. Accessible Events
7. Accessible PowerPoint
8. Universal Design

Each workshop was only 45 minutes long and went very slowly so everyone could keep up. Each workshop was offered on Zoom, on more than one day and time. And you could watch a video of the workshop afterwards.

Each workshop had captions if you wanted them.

At the end of every workshop, we told our staff:

- Choose one thing to make accessible. Don't get overwhelmed!
- Ask for help if you don't understand something.
- If you need something made more accessible, ask for it!
- When you make things accessible, make sure to get feedback from people with disabilities.

We wanted to know if these workshops would help staff do more accessible work. To measure this, we asked staff how they felt about accessibility before and after the trainings.

Here is what we found:

94% of our staff attended some of the trainings. After they did the trainings:

- Staff think accessibility is more important now.
- Staff do more accessibility in their work.
- Staff want to show other people that making things accessible is the right thing to do.

But our staff also said:

- There's not enough time for accessibility.
- Accessibility is a lot!
- I don't think accessible designs look as nice.

We are planning to continue with more trainings, practicing using accessible features, and measuring how we are doing.

We hope to offer these trainings to more people at our university.

It's important for our centers to keep sharing what we are trying, what is working well, and what is difficult about making our work more accessible.

Please tell us how you are trying to make things more accessible at your centers. We have three questions.

1. What have you tried at your center?
2. What challenges have you faced trying to change people's attitudes?
3. How do we get more people to do accessibility?

If you want to email us about this presentation, you can email cdci@uvm.edu.

You can also watch this presentation online at <http://go.uvm.edu/cdci-at-aucd>

Thank you!

--Adrienne, Audrey, and Jesse