

## HOSPITAL ACCESS INITIATIVE

A coalition of Illinois disability rights advocates has launched a Hospital Access Initiative, combining Education, Legislation, Advocacy and Research to enhance hospital access, the provision of in-patient and out-patient healthcare services and accommodations for people with disabilities in hospitals within Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, and McHenry counties.

In general, people with disabilities confront a myriad of access barriers to healthcare - physical barriers (e.g., architectural and inaccessible examination and diagnostic equipment), attitudinal barriers (e.g., doctors misconceptions and assumptions about a person's disability that leads to inferior care, neglect, or denial of care), and communication barriers (e.g. lack of communication facilitators and accessible formats) - which limit meaningful access to healthcare and accommodations in hospital settings. Some specific examples of access barriers affecting persons with mobility, communication or cognitive and mental impairments, persons who are blind or visually impaired and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing include:

### Mobility Impairments

- ❖ Small examination rooms which restrict wheelchair or scooter movement
- ❖ Lack or absence of lift or transfer equipment
- ❖ Examination tables that do not lower to facilitate transfers

### Blindness & Visual Impairments

- ❖ Hospital staff not identifying themselves or their positions
- ❖ Prescription information, care instructions or return appointments are not offered in alternative formats that are accessible
- ❖ Lack of appropriate accessible signage using Braille or raised letters

### Communication or Cognitive & Mental Health Impairments

- ❖ Lengthy delays between the time an appointment is made and the actual appointment
- ❖ Referrals of adult persons with communication or cognitive impairments to pediatric providers, or referral to a psychiatric provider or a hospital's psychiatric unit for care as the person has a mental illness despite the fact that the presenting medical issue is not related to mental illness

- ❖ Early discharge or being discharged from a hospital without notice

### Deaf & Hearing Impairments

- ❖ American sign language interpreters are generally not available during visits
- ❖ Assistive listening devices are not offered, precluding the ability to ask questions or get a complete understanding of the diagnosis, care and treatment
- ❖ Hospital physicians and staff rely on family members to communicate with you

If you or your loved ones have a disability and would like to share with the coalition your in-patient or out-patient experiences in hospitals within Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, and McHenry counties, please contact Judy Panko Reis, M.A., M.S., Access Living, at (312) 640-2184 or via email at [jreis@accessliving.org](mailto:jreis@accessliving.org); Sarah Price, Equip for Equality, at (312) 895-7339 or via email at [sarah@equipforequality.org](mailto:sarah@equipforequality.org); or Andrés J. Gallegos, Esq., Robbins, Salomon and Patt, Ltd., at (312) 456-0381 or via email at [agallegos@rsplaw.com](mailto:agallegos@rsplaw.com). All discussions are confidential.

May 2010