



# **Train the Person in Front of You: Make Your Training Accessible**

**Created by: Jennifer Kolar, Molly Neher, Agnesa Redere,  
Patty Aguirre PT, and Sarah Indano**

# Presenters and Creators



Jennifer Kolar, KPA-CTP, CPDT-KA, CBATI, Atlas-CT, Diabetes Alert Dog Certified Trainer



Molly Neher, Atlas Director of Operations and Programs, Atlas Team Facilitator



Sarah Indano, Able Trainers Founder, Guide Dog Mobility Instructor, CPDT-KA



Patty Aguirre, PT



Agnesa Redere, PhD, KPA-CTP, CPDT-KA, Fear Free Certified Trainer



# Goals and Learning Objectives

Importance of inclusion

Challenge  
common  
misconceptions

Provide tools to  
make training  
accommodating,  
adaptive, and  
successful

Move you forward  
on an accessible  
training journey



# Understanding Disabilities and Medical Conditions

## Benefits of improving accessibility:

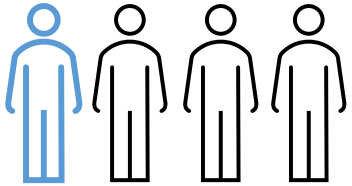
- Reach a wider client audience
- Challenge yourself creatively
- Make the world for people and dogs kinder, more welcoming, and better overall



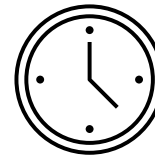
# Understanding Disabilities and Medical Conditions

A **disability** is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

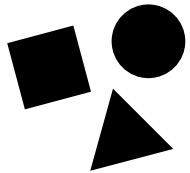
Why is understanding disabilities important?



1 in 4 adults in the US are affected by a disability.



Anyone can become disabled at any time in their life.



Disabilities vary from person to person; some are more visible than others.



Dogs owned by people with disabilities are not necessarily service dogs – they may be pets.





# Improving Inclusivity Starts with Accessibility

In the United States, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides governance to support the rights of disabled people.



## **Accessible:**

A person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a non-disabled person in an **equally effective** and **equally integrated** manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

**Strive to implement accessibility from the start!**



# Determine Your Baseline Level of Accessibility

## Baseline Checklist:



- ☐ How will your clients find and communicate with you?
- ☐ What additional information do you need at intake?
- ☐ How does your client learn best?
- ☐ How in-depth is your knowledge of disability etiquette?
- ☐ Is the location you have chosen to work accessible?
- ☐ What training aids will be optimal for your client?
- ☐ How can your training procedures be modified for people with disabilities?
- ☐ How will your client optimally cue their dog?
- ☐ Are you prepared if something goes wrong?



# Intake Information – Questions to Ask

**To structure an accessible training plan, ask your client to elaborate on:**

- Their primary goals and/or concerns
- Any activities that cause physical pain
- Dexterity, mobility, and transitioning between positions
- If there are environments that they avoid or intentionally seek out
- How they prefer to take in and process information
- Optimal session length, including if breaks are helpful
- Other specific information they think is relevant about working with them and their dog





# Interacting with Clients — Disability Etiquette

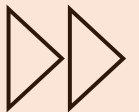
## Guidelines:

- Match the client's tone and language
  - Person first language vs. disability first language.
  - Disability, disabled, able-bodied, and non-disabled are not dirty words.
  - You can laugh along with an individual making a joke about their condition.
- Believe the person's experience
  - Do not try to tell your client how they "should" feel.
- Talk to the person, not their equipment or the person/caretaker with them.



Ask what you need to know to provide support, while being mindful not to be intrusive

*You might get it wrong.*



*Listen, apologize, accept, and move on.*



# Interacting with Clients — Disability Etiquette



**Do:** Ask if the person would like assistance, or if you can touch their equipment to help with training, be mindful of personal space.



**Don't:** Push, touch, or lean on someone's wheelchair/equipment without permission.



**Do:** Observe their handling first. Ask if the person would like you to demo or take the leash. Think of ways to better adapt training.



**Don't:** Take over dog handling without asking and/or assuming they "can't."



**Do:** Include disabled clients in the same activities as other clients. Think of how you can make your program accessible to all.



**Don't:** Treat disabled clients differently from your other clients.



# Disability Etiquette – Not Your Inspiration!

**Inspiration Porn:** Depiction of people with disabilities as inspirational solely or in part based on their disability

- Often for the benefit of able-bodied people and at the expense or disabled people
- Does not acknowledge the complex experience of disability

**Do:** show your clients understanding and support.

**Don't:** use words/sentences like: "You're so brave", "It's so inspiring of you to...", "You have so much strength/willpower" etc.





# Contingency Planning – Questions to Ask

**Individuals with disabilities may have unique needs and procedures during emergencies.**

**Ask your client to elaborate on:**

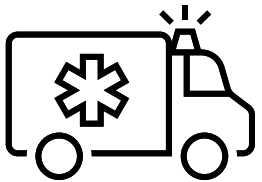


If X happens, how you can support:

- Your client
- Their dog



= Panic attack, seizure, low blood sugar, etc.



Who you should contact in an emergency



Note: normal occurrences are not always emergencies



# Make Your Training Accessible — ABCs

## Consider your ABCs

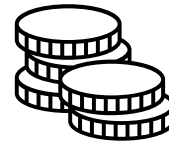
Arrange Antecedents for both the dog **and** the client:



Decide: what is worth training vs. changing the environment or using different tools



Take mobility into consideration



Consider costs:

- Physical + mental
- Monetary



Build a network of people to support your clients in training

What changes can you make to your training right now?







# Make Your Training Accessible — Adaptive Tools

**Accessible tools provide function for your clients:**

Leads:

- With rubber grips
- Hands free
- Magnetic clasps

Marker devices:

- Clicker devices that are easy to use
- Creative clicker placement

Treat delivery devices:

- Wooden spoons with a spreadable reward
- Food tubes
- Remote treat dispensers
- Helpers





# Demonstrations — Adaptive Tools in Action





# Make Your Training Accessible — Use Helpers

## When using helpers, consider:

- Who might you ask to be a helper?
- Dividing tasks between:
  - Handler
  - Helper
- What instructions do you give the helper?
  - Where to stand
  - What to wait for
  - Where/how to deliver treat



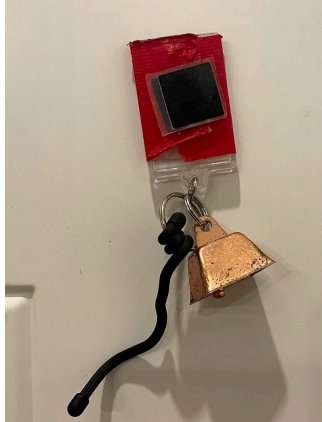




## Demonstration — Utilizing Helpers



# Make Your Training Accessible — Lifestyle Skills



## Target Training

- Accessible targets
- Nose, paws, and chin targets
- Platforms



## Cooperative Care

- Lower the energy expenditure of care
- Targeting behaviors go hand in hand



## Enrichment

- Consider costs
  - Physical
  - Mental
  - Monetary



## Human Equipment

- Early exposure
- Preparation
- Planning





# Make Your Training Accessible — Considerations for Clients

## Potential challenges:

- Difficulty with timing
- Repetitive motions by handler (stimming)
- Clients feeling intimidated if you demonstrate with your dog or theirs
- Sensory overload, brain fog, or limited energy
- Difficulty seeing or hearing the dog/people/environment
- Dexterity or mobility



## Questions for reflection:

- What are some challenges you have faced either personally or with clients?
- How have you worked through them?



# Demonstration — Training with Accessibility in Mind



# Make Your Training Accessible – Social Media and Websites<sup>a</sup>



## Features that support accessibility:

- Image descriptions
- Alt text
- CamelCase
- Closed captions
- Audio transcripts



## Features that limit accessibility:

- Flashing text or images
- Low contrast
- Bloated sites that require high bandwidth
- Requiring a mouse to navigate



agility over the summer.

Photo Description: a male yellow lab has laid down in a white, rigid, short laundry basket. His cream color chest fur pokes out the holes and his body isn't otherwise visible. His big head is draped over the edge, with bright brown eyes looking softly into the camera.

#LabsOfInstagram #LabsOfInsta

<sup>a</sup>See Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1)



# Make Your Training Accessible – Working Inside

## Simple adaptations to consider:

- Ramps
- Chairs
- Brightness and visibility
- Larger print handouts and materials
- Platforms
- Sound and echo



Proactively let your clients know what is and isn't accessible at your training location.



# Make Your Training Accessible – Working Outside



## Considerations when out and about:

- Accessibility of the location
- Places to rest or balance
- Brightness and visibility
  - Too much or too little
- Weather conditions
- Crowds
- Bathrooms





# Review — Become Part of the Solution

Importance of inclusion

Challenge  
common  
misconceptions

Provide tools to  
make training  
accommodating,  
adaptive and  
successful

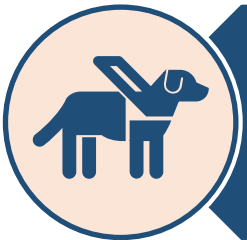
Move you forward  
on an accessible  
training journey



# Find Out More



Volunteer as an Atlas Team Facilitator



Become an Atlas Certified Trainer



Discover Atlas' Teams Set in Motion™ course

Contact us!



[www.atlasdog.org](http://www.atlasdog.org)



[Info@atlasdog.org](mailto:Info@atlasdog.org)



# Resources

- Accessibility Checklist: <https://www.atlasdog.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Atlas-Accessibility-Checklist.pdf>
- Americans with Disabilities Act: <https://www.ada.gov/>
- Inspiration Porn: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxrS7-I\\_sMQ&t=481s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxrS7-I_sMQ&t=481s)
- Find accessible hiking trails: <https://www.traillink.com/activity/wheelchair-accessible-trails/>
- WCAG 2.1: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>
- Intro to digital accessibility: <https://accessguide.io/>
- Clicker Dome: <https://www.amazon.com/Triple-Crown-Training-Quicker-Clicker/dp/B0169FB9KO>
- Clicino Ring: <https://shop.clickertraining.com/products/clicino-clicker-ring?variant=39972027367607>
- Atlas Leash: <https://boldleaddesigns.com/shop/the-atlas-leash-the-most-useful-dog-lead-ever-created/>

