

A Few Considerations
When Accommodating

CLIENTS WITH DISABILITIES

A REAL ESTATE EBOOK FROM





INTRODUCTION

One of the best things about becoming a real estate agent is that your job directly impacts the lives of others. In one regard, you're helping an individual or family create a financial foundation for their future; in another, you're helping them find a physical space where they can thrive. It's no secret that where we live and gather is such a big part of our life, so for someone who lives with a disability, having the right type of property can empower them to keep leading life on their terms. In this ebook, we offer a few thoughts about accommodating clients with disabilities.

DISABILITY IN AMERICA

You may already know that the [Fair Housing Act](#) makes it illegal to discriminate based on disability, but you may not realize how common disabilities are. According to [a recent Centers for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\) report](#), one in every four U.S. adults lives with a disability that impacts major life activities. Disabilities are classified as belonging to six different categories, including:



Hearing



Vision



Mobility



Cognition



Independent
living



Self-care

“At some point in their lives, most people will either have a disability or know someone who has a one.”

— [*Coleen Boyle*](#), Ph.D., director of CDC’s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities



MOST COMMON FORMS OF DISABILITY

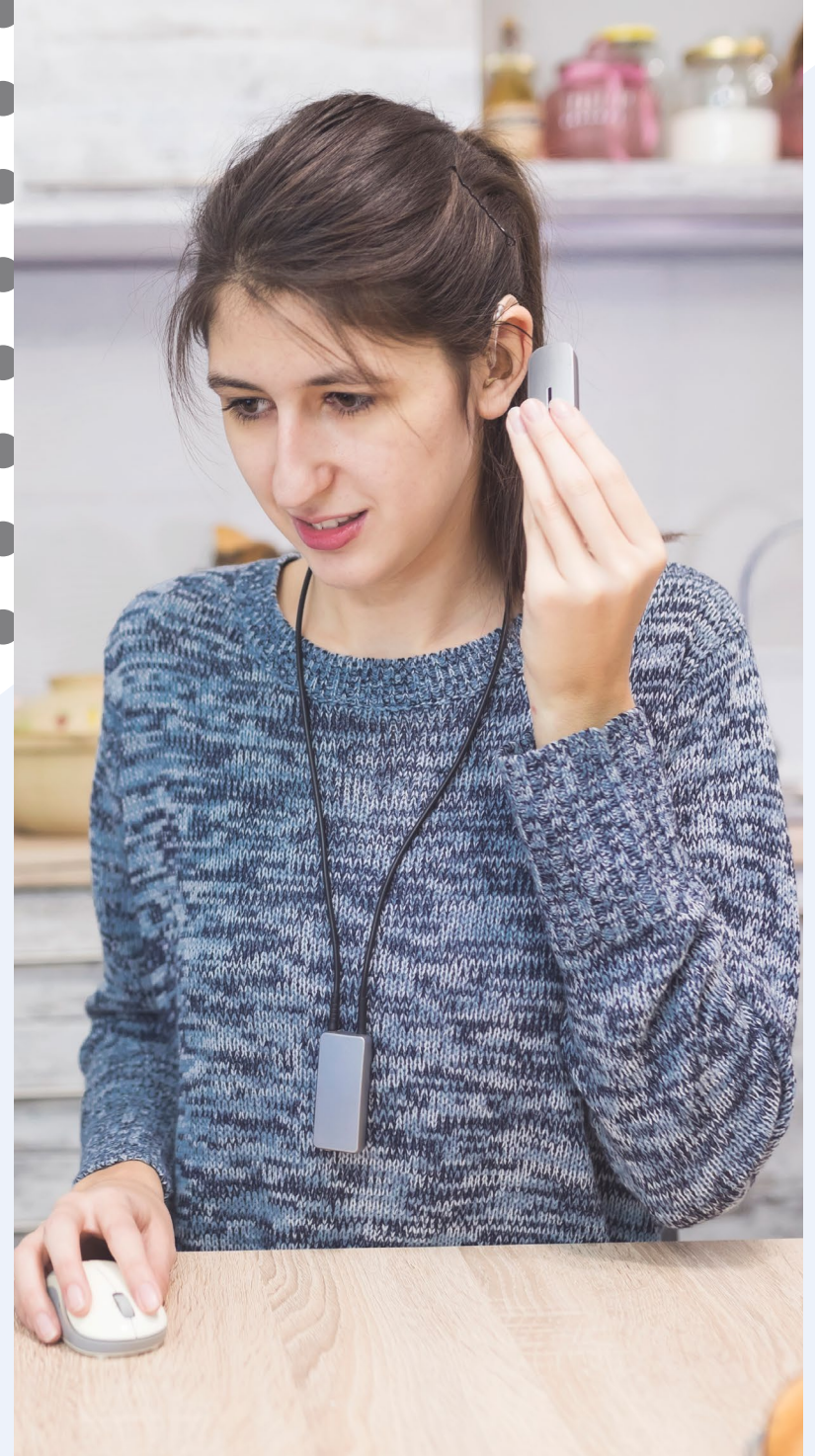
Mobility impairment is the most common form of disability, affecting nearly one in seven U.S. adults. The next most common disability is cognition, followed by independent living, hearing, vision, and self-care. Disability is also more prevalent among older adults, affecting roughly two in five people aged 65 or older.



A DISABILITY ISN'T ALWAYS APPARENT

Oftentimes people's disabilities aren't immediately apparent. For example, a person may have handicap parking privileges and appear to be fully mobile, but they may suffer from a cardiopulmonary condition or something else for which they require accommodation.

Generally, clients who live with a disability will communicate their needs, but it also might not hurt to ask your client if they or someone they live with is challenged with a disability or medical condition. If they say yes, don't just assume their needs, but rather ask them if there are any features that they're seeking in particular, e.g. ranch design, first-floor primary bedroom, spacious bathroom, etc. And remember: People with disabilities shouldn't have to break out their medical records to validate these features or needs. It's important to take them at their word and serve them just as you would any other client.





A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY IS JUST A PERSON

Some real estate agents might not be sure how to approach working with a person with a disability, but it's simple — just treat them like anyone else. According to [“How to Talk to A Person With Disabilities Without Sounding Like an A-Hole,”](#) avoid the “you’re so inspirational” talk track and just ask before assuming they need help with a task. Also, don’t touch somebody’s wheelchair unless invited; that’s personal space. Following these simple rules can go a long way to making your client feel comfortable.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN REAL ESTATE

Once you've spoken with your client about their wants and needs, the search for the perfect property begins. With that said, it helps to familiarize yourself with some of the common accommodations homeowners make to help their friends and family with disabilities thrive. That way, your client can get exactly what they want. We're talking about accommodations such as:



Residential Elevators

Do you have a client who's absolutely in love with a multi-story home but has trouble using stairs? Perhaps a residential elevator is the solution. According to Lifewaymobility.com, a [residential elevator installation](#) can cost anywhere from \$28,000 to \$35,000. So it's something to consider (and share!) as your client looks at homes.



Stair Chairlift

Perhaps a client doesn't require the use of a residential elevator but could still use some assistive technology on the stairs. A stair chairlift might be the answer. 101mobility.com estimates that a [stair chairlift for 12 to 14 stairs](#) will cost somewhere between \$3,000 and \$5,000.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN REAL ESTATE



Indoor/Outdoor Wheelchair Lift

Let's say a property is perfect but lacks an accommodating entrance or exit. An outdoor wheelchair lift or ramp could make your client's dream house. Prices for an outdoor lift range from \$3,000 to \$5,000, or [a ramp can be as little as \\$699.](#)



Restroom Accommodations

Restrooms can be a bit cramped in older homes, so it's important to consider their size. Can a wheelchair easily maneuver in there? Is there enough room to affix accommodation devices? How about the showers and/or tubs? Being thoughtful about this room in particular is crucial as an accessible restroom enables a sense of privacy, dignity, and independence. And remember, if you're not sure what your client's ideal bathroom accommodations are, ask!

ACCOMMODATIONS IN REAL ESTATE



Kitchen/Counter Height

Did you know that [you can build height-adjustable countertops](#) and create an accessible kitchen? Perfect for those who use wheelchairs or otherwise would benefit from a custom counter height, a fixer-upper home might just be a great blank canvas for an ADA-friendly kitchen.



Location

As the saying goes, location is everything. Being close to medical care facilities can make life that much easier for someone who requires regular care. Or perhaps your client prefers the convenience that more modern buildings offer in terms of nearby restaurant availability and shopping. Is the neighborhood park accessible and easily enjoyed? Is the neighborhood loud? Where people live, in many cases, is just as important as how they live.



“This may feel true for every era, but I believe I am living in a time where **disabled people are more visible than ever before**. And yet while representation is exciting and important, it is not enough. I want and expect more. **We all should expect more**. We all deserve more.”

— [Alice Wong](#), activist and author of *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories*



REAL ESTATE IS TRULY FOR EVERYONE

If you are a person with a disability and you're looking to serve your community, a successful career in real estate is absolutely achievable. And with modern technology, it has never been more possible: between online education, virtual stagings, video calls, and online marketing tools, you can largely build a real estate empire from the comfort of your home. Real estate needs more people with disabilities in the field, not only to strengthen the industry but also because people with disabilities are often underserved and would benefit from a real estate agent understanding their path through life on a more personal level. So whether you're an aspiring real estate professional looking to help others or simply an ambitious homebuyer seeking to improve your lifestyle, there's a slice of the real estate pie just waiting for you to take it.



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