

# THE CONNECTION

DISABILITY CONNECTIONS

January 2019

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## Let's Talk about Independent Living

"Independent living" - Now, if you are a person with a disability it's almost a guarantee that you will hear this term at some point in your life. But, what is independent living? How can such an important term have such a broad meaning? Let's take a look at what independent living is really all about.

At its face, independent living sounds like you must be living on your own, in your own house or apartment, to truly experience independence. Being a person with a disability myself and working in the field of disability services for most of my career, I have found that many people with disabilities and their families are under this impression, many feel that living on their own is not an option for them. Therefore, many people just give up.

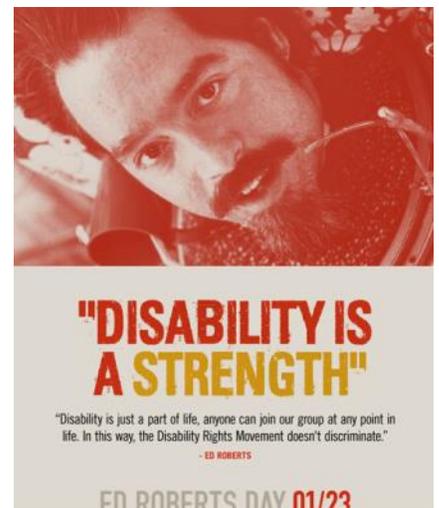
Independent living is always an option! You just have to understand what it really means...

Ed Roberts, the father of the Independent Living Movement (if you don't know who Ed is, Google him... He is a pretty awesome guy!), once said that independent living is a "state of mind...a philosophy." His idea of independent living is simple - Everyone deserves the opportunity to experience all that life has to offer. Ed's idea of independent living does not necessarily mean that a person must be living on their own or in their own house; but rather, he believes that independence is something we can all achieve when we put our minds to it.

Judith Heumann, from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (also a great disability advocate to research), said that independent living "is not doing things by your- self, it is being in control of how things are done." From her perspective, independent living is the ability to control your environment to ensure you can do exactly what you want to do. An example of this might be taking charge of your transition plan or IEP while in high school, or being able to control your attendant care services.

There are many definitions, thoughts and ideas out there about independent living, but one thing is for sure... Independent living is what you make of it! It can be many different things to many different people and that is true meaning of independence. Independent living offers you the freedom to choose how you want to live your life and who can help you achieve your goals. It's not just about having a physical location to call your home, it's about the choices you make, the relationships you build and living the life you've always wanted.

In summary, independent living is all about YOU! Make the most of it!



Hours of Operation  
Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
(325) 227-6624

We will be closed January 23rd in honor of Ed Roberts Day

## American Sign Language APP

The American Sign Language (ASL) Dictionary is a mobile app for iOS and Android devices that presents video instruction of over 5,200 words signed by a professional ASL interpreter.

The searchable dictionary is divided into 7 categories (Idioms and Phrases, Alphabet, General Numbers), each with its own list of entries arranged alphabetically.

Each entry has an accompanying video demonstrating a word, phrase, number, or symbol. Users can play videos at half speed and click the star beside the entry to add it to their Favorites list.

The ASL Dictionary -- available for download on iTunes or Google Play -- has a simple layout: a video display takes up the top part of the screen, with controls and navigation buttons underneath.



## New Veteran's Outpatient Clinic

The San Angelo Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), located at 4220 Southwest Boulevard, is designed to deliver primary care and Mental Health services to eligible veterans living in the following counties: Coke, Glasscock, Irion, Reagan, Sterling and Tom Green.

Fees are based on Sliding scale fees which are variable prices for products, services, or taxes based on a customer's ability to pay. Such fees are thereby reduced for those who have lower incomes, or alternatively, less money to spare after their personal expenses, regardless of income.



Services provided to local veterans include:

- Health screening
- Health promotion
- Health maintenance
- Education
- Management of acute and chronic diseases
- Mental Health including Substance Use
- Social Work
- Women's Health
- Telehealth
- Home Based Primary Care

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday, excluding Federal holidays

For more information on the San Angelo VA Clinic, call 325-658-6138.

## Be My Eyes App



### What is Be My Eyes?

Bringing sight to blind and low-vision people, Be My Eyes is a free app that connects blind and low-vision people with sighted volunteers and company representatives for visual assistance through a live video call.

Be My Eyes enables you to lead a more independent life by giving you access to a network of sighted volunteers and company representatives. By the tap of a button, you can get connected to a sighted volunteer, who is ready to provide you with visual assistance for the task at hand. You can request assistance at any time of the day, from anywhere, and it will always be free.

With the addition of the Specialized Help feature, it is now possible for you to receive assistance from company representatives, who can provide you with specialized assistance with their specific product or service. Here are 10 common ways people are using Be My Eyes:

1. **Finding lost or dropped items** For example: Where is the earring back I dropped on the bathroom floor? Where did I put that sports cap?

2. **Describing pictures, paintings or other pieces of artwork** For example: What does this sculpture depict? What are the colors or mood of this painting?

3. **Matching or explaining colors** For example: Does this shirt match my jacket? Which pair of shoes are the black ones?

4. **Reading labels on household products** For example: Is this window or bathroom cleaner? Shampoo or conditioner?

5. **Reading on computer screens if websites are inaccessible or screen readers are not available** For example: My laptop restarted unexpectedly – can you walk me through the login screen?

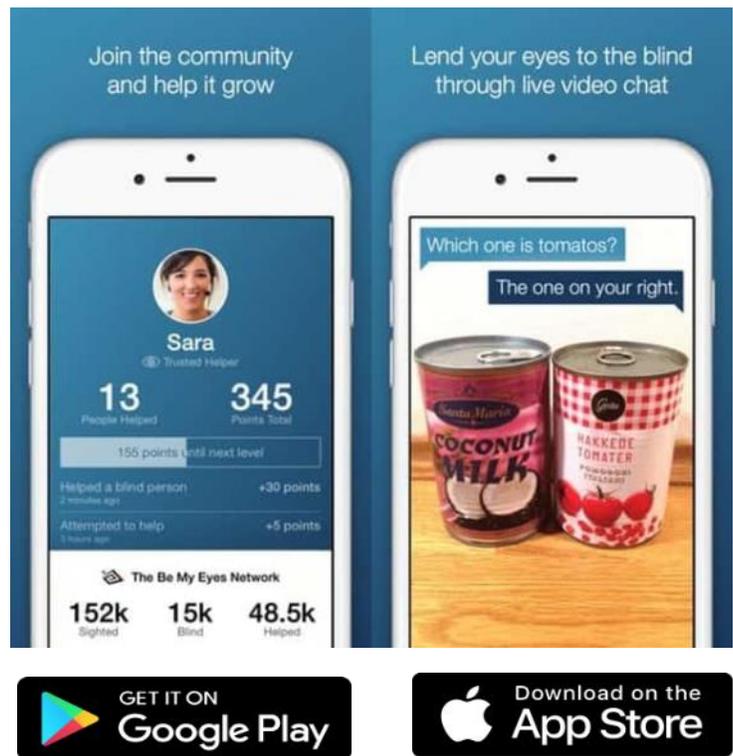
6. **Shopping in supermarkets** For example: Which kind of crackers am I buying?

7. **Identifying the expiration date on perishable food packages** For example: Is this milk still good? What is the expiration date of my bread?

8. **Familiarizing yourself with new places** For example: Is this the street I'm looking for? Where is the power outlet in this hotel room?

9. **Distinguishing between food items** For example: Black beans or green beans? Paprika or Cayenne?

10. **Finding out when public transportation (busses, trains, etc.) are departing or arriving** For example: How many minutes does the screen say I have until the next train arrives?



**Disability Connections programs are free and open to anyone with a disability. If you need help to participate (i.e., interpreters), please let us know 24 hours in advance, so that we can provide these services.**

## Going Home - Transitioning from Care to Community

Transitioning to a nursing home or any institution of care, can be an exhausting, emotionally challenging process. Transitions are usually easier to manage when you know what to expect.

- What's the expected timing of my discharge?
- Who is going to be involved in the decision to go home (physician, discharge planner, family, caregiver etc.) and how can I best communicate with them before the discharge day?
- Will I need to continue certain kinds of care at home (PT, OT, nutritionist), and if so, should I consult with the hospital team for recommendations?
- Should I consider an advocate or care manager ( ADRC, Disability Connections, AAA, etc.) to assist me with in implementing the discharge plan?
- What kinds of caregiver services are available and whom should I consider hiring if needed?
- Will I need to arrange special transportation to go home?
- Do I have all the necessary equipment I will need?
- Do I need to learn about the medications being prescribed and if so, what are the best resources for helping me to do this?
- How will I ensure that I am eating properly and getting the best nutrition possible?
- Will I need to arrange transportation for future medical appointments?
- Do I need to hire a professional caregiver to help me out, and if so, who will conduct the interviews and handle the hiring process?
- Do I know who to call in an emergency?
- What resources can I call on to help me if I am feeling overwhelmed ?

As each day passes, you will feel better about your care decision. As you prepare for the move, take some time to plan out the time after you leave the center on moving day. Maybe you'll want company. Maybe you'll want to know others can be available for a phone call. Be prepared for different options. You may want to ask family and friends to be available, just in case. If you invite family to your home and realize that you're not up to a visit, be honest and let them know. Knowing the answers to the following questions will help you be ready when it's time to go home:

**As you move through these stages, remember to identify resources for support if you need them and try to take care of yourself by eating right and getting enough sleep.**



**TAKE ACTION NOW!**  
Tell your Congresspeople to save the  
**Money Follows The Person Program.**

**MFP**  
MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON  
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

## Visitability

"Visitability" has been a growing trend nationwide for the past ten years. It's the idea that anyone should be able to visit any house, easily enter the place, move around inside, use the bathroom and generally feel welcome.

Accessibility is important for all of us; it could be a young mom or dad struggling with a baby in a stroller, a teenager who broke her foot playing soccer, your co-worker using a wheelchair when he comes over to delete the virus from your home computer or you recovering from surgery after your accident on the ski slopes.

**So what makes a house visitable?** At least one entrance with no steps, 32 inches clear passage through all interior doors, and at least a half-bath on the main floor.

Eleanor Smith, the founder of a Georgia advocacy group called Concrete Change, recalled growing up using a wheelchair after experiencing polio in 1947, when she was 3 years old. She couldn't get into the town library, so a friend would bring out stacks of books and Eleanor would make her choices at the foot of the 10 steps leading inside. Once, while she was playing outside with her best friend, a storm blew in, and her friend's mother tried to pull her into the house, which was not wheelchair-accessible, and her chair fell over backwards on top of her.

Now, laws make accessibility mandatory in public buildings, but the one place that has not caught up yet is homes. We're still building them like they were 100 years ago when the average life span was 50. Most homes in America are not designed to be disability or age-friendly.

Maybe most of us do not think of this until the holidays when people are giving parties and suddenly realize that someone on the guest list won't be able to get in the house because she or he uses a wheelchair or other mobility device. Do you not invite them, and hope they won't hear about the party? It's a civil rights issue. It's a community issue.

I recall meeting a man who used a wheelchair, he had pretty much come to terms with his disability until his son started attending birthday parties. Like the other parents, Dad would come to pick him up just before the party ended, when everyone gathered around to sing Happy Birthday and enjoy the cake. The homes weren't visitable -- this dad could not get in, so he waited in his car at the curb while the others socialized. After the games, when the other parents decided to adjourn to someone's house to watch a golf match on a big-screen TV, this dad went home alone because the friend's house was not accessible. We truly may not recognize how much the inaccessibility of our homes separates and divides us.



Inaccessibility makes friendships harder to create and cuts people off from meetings where information is exchanged and decisions made. Inaccessibility causes people with disabilities and their families not to be invited, or to have to turn down invitations. If they have low incomes, as many disabled people do, inaccessibility often forces them to live in houses where they may literally have to crawl every time they use the bathroom, or stay inside all day because of the steps. Further, inaccessibility forces many people into nursing homes.

**Who benefits from visitability? Everyone!** The young mother with a baby in a stroller, who doesn't have to hump it up and down steps when she visits her friends, the UPS driver who brings your new cabinets and leaves them on your front porch, the homeowner trying to get the new cabinets into the house from the front porch, the Grandma who wants to visit the grandkids but knows she won't be able to use the bathroom when she visits, the college kid moving out with all his boxes and belongings.

Some builders are still reluctant to include visitability components in their homes. Many buyers bypass anything that might suggest they're getting old or aren't as able as they once were. So, maybe there really is such a thing as ableism, exactly like racism and sexism? Surprisingly, it is estimated it costs only \$200 per home to create a zero-step entrance and wider interior doors. One thing that might compel builders to pay attention is the fact that these issues really enlarge the market. By making the house more valuable to more people, you're enlarging your market!

**Look who you're missing out on!** Could someone using a wheelchair, scooter or walker stop by your house for a visit? If steps and narrow doorways prevent that, you might miss out on a visit from these notables: CHRISTOPHER REEVE, actor; RICHARD PRYOR, actor-comedian; ANNETTE FUNICELLO, ex-Mouseketeer, who has multiple sclerosis; STEPHEN HAWKING, physicist, who has ALS; JOHN HOCKENBERRY, onetime NPR reporter, current Dateline NBC correspondent and MSNBC host; MAX CLELAND, U.S. senator from Georgia, head of Veterans Administration under President Carter; LARRY FLYNT, Hustler magazine publisher.



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