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# E-LIFELINES SUMMER 2021



## Celebrating the ADA Anniversary – July 26, 1990

On July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law and said, “**Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.**”

This year we celebrate the **32<sup>nd</sup>** anniversary of the civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, education, transportation, public spaces and ensures equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in public life.

Enforcement of the ADA has not been a priority and there are still barriers everywhere that prevent equal access. While we celebrate some changes, we also see the inequality and injustice individuals with disabilities still face. The barriers described below all continue to keep people with disabilities from having equal opportunities.

**Attitudinal barriers** include behaviors, perceptions and assumptions that usually form from lack of knowledge or understanding. Some examples of attitudinal barriers include:

- Assuming a person with a disability is not capable of doing a task or that you must do things for them.
- Believing a person with a disability is inferior or less than.
- Assuming someone with a speech impairment cannot understand you or thinking you need to shout to a person with hearing loss.
- Acting like providing an accommodation to a person with a disability is doing them a favor.
- Thinking someone with a disability should live in an institution instead of living on their own in the community with needed support.

**Architectural or physical barriers** are the most visible or noticeable barrier to others. These include:

- Buildings that do not have accessible entrances or do not have properly working elevators.
- Sidewalks that lack curb cuts or are too narrow for wheelchairs or walkers, are in need of repair or are not even there.
- Poor lighting that makes it difficult to see for a person with low vision or someone who reads lips to communicate.

**Organizational or systemic barriers** are barriers created by society. A few examples would include:

- Lack of affordable, accessible, integrated housing.
- Limited accessible transportation options, especially in rural areas.
- Lack of affordable, accessible healthcare for individuals with disabilities.
- High unemployment rates and underemployment for people with disabilities.

**Information or communication barriers** are challenges that individuals with disabilities face with hearing, speaking, reading, writing, or understanding. Examples of communication barriers include:

- Using words that are difficult to understand.
- Electronic documents that are not accessible for screen reading software.
- Print that is too small.
- Not providing a sign language interpreter when meeting with someone who speaks American Sign Language (ASL).
- Videos and virtual meetings that are not captioned or transcribed.

**Technological or digital barriers** occur when a device or other technology is not accessible. Examples include:

- Computers or software that are not accessible to individuals with disabilities that need adaptive software, such as screen readers.
- Requiring someone to use websites or social media platforms that do not meet accessibility standards without providing accommodations.

The intent of the ADA was to have full integration of people with disabilities, but there is still a long way to go. Denise Jacobson, writer and disability educator said,

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*“The ADA was a wonderful achievement, but it was only a tiny tip of the iceberg. You can pass a law, but until you change society’s attitudes, that law won’t mean much.”*

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**Make your voice heard!** If you want to learn how to advocate or need information on accessibility and accommodations, please contact LIFE CIL: 309-663-5433. To learn more about the Americans with Disabilities Act, visit the ADA National Network: <https://adata.org/learn-about-ada>.

## Summer Safety

While enjoying the warmer weather, here are some summer safety tips to keep in mind. Remember the sun is the hottest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### Keep Hydrated

It is always important to stay hydrated, but it is especially important when it is hot and humid because you are sweating more.

Have water with you and drink water even if you do not feel thirsty.

Eat foods that have high water content like lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, pineapple, and melons to help stay hydrated.

### Stay Cool

Be in the air conditioning as much as possible. If your home does not have air conditioning, find places in your neighborhood or community to visit such as a cooling center. East Central Illinois Area on Aging has a list of cooling centers available here:

<https://eciaaa.org/index.php/home/advocacy-alerts/54-archived/164-list-of-illinois-cooling-centers>

Take cool showers or baths.

Cover your windows in your home with drapes to keep the sun out as much as possible.

Do not stay in a hot car or leave pets or children in hot cars.

If you must be outdoors, take breaks from the heat.

### Protect Yourself

Wear sunscreen and insect repellent.

Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.

Wear a wide brim hat or stay in the shade when possible.

Avoid doing strenuous or high-energy activities.

### Take Precautions

Be prepared for any kind of weather by having an emergency weather kit that would include things like non-perishable food, flashlights, water, and first aid kit.

When swimming, know your limits and do not venture out too deep, avoid swallowing any water and avoid swimming alone.

If you go boating, make sure there are enough life jackets for everyone.

When grilling, never leave it unattended, and keep it clean of grease and fat.

If you are biking, wear a helmet and have proper lights and/or reflectors.

### Know the Signs of heat illness

Watch for signs of heat illness such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Signs of these conditions include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heavy sweating</li><li>• Paleness</li><li>• Weakness</li><li>• Dizziness</li><li>• Headache</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea or vomiting</li><li>• Muscle pain, cramps, or spasms</li><li>• High body temperature and you are not sweating</li><li>• Confusion, fainting or unconsciousness</li><li>• Rapid pulse</li></ul>
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If you are experiencing these symptoms, get to a cooler place, sip on water or a sports drink. If you don't improve, seek medical help.

### Don't Forget Your Pet(s)

Pets need water, shade, and cool air too.

Do not leave them outdoors for long periods of time.

Do not leave them in a hot vehicle.

## An IMPACT Story: On the Move

In May 2022, LIFE CIL's Community Reintegration Advocate, Andrea, assisted a couple with reintegrating from the nursing home to an accessible, one bedroom apartment in Bloomington.



*Vincent Edwards and Tammy Grissom*

*"It was meant to be"* Vincent Edwards and Tammy Grissom met in the fall of 2021 when their paths crossed following hospitalizations. Soon after they met, they hit it off and made the goal of increasing their strength and health and obtaining a place of their own in the community. About eight months after residing at the nursing home, they started to look for resources to help them get out. They had a close friend who had recently transitioned through our Community Reintegration Program and reached out to Andrea.

Andrea met with them right away and assisted with housing and paratransit applications, obtaining birth certificates and other essential documents. A month after their housing applications were submitted, they were notified that a unit was available. Andrea worked quickly with them, completing a shopping list, and coordinating their supports in the community.

On moving day, Andrea met them at the nursing home, assisted them with their discharge and the move. That evening, Tammy and Vincent prepared a home cooked meal and had some friends over for dinner. Since their move, they have been busy catching up with doctors' appointments and getting connected with specialists that they were unable to see while in the nursing home.

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*"We don't know how we would have done this without you and the program."*

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Vincent and Tammy are enjoying being in the community, getting to know their new neighbors, and living life as they choose again. During their free time, they visit with family, friends, and neighbors, and enjoy the freedom to go where they want, when they want.

Vincent and Tammy are happy living independently and building their new life together.

LIFE CIL's Community Reintegration Program can assist eligible people with disabilities to move out of nursing homes and other institutions into independent lifestyles of their choice. Please reach out to Andrea with questions about this program. 309-663-5433 or [andrea@lifecil.org](mailto:andrea@lifecil.org).

## Seniors with Vision Loss Program is on the Road

Over the past several months, our Vision Access Advocate, Kim, has taken the Seniors with Vision Loss program “on the road.” She has packed her bags full of great assistive devices for people with low vision 55 years or over with severe vision loss. She has visited many assisted living facilities in Mclean County. During her Low Vision Open Houses, Kim shows qualified seniors how to use various assistive devices such as writing guides, large print calendars, address books, and check registers; talking calculators, clocks, and watches; talking scales and blood pressure monitors. She helps seniors identify what strength magnifier (handheld and standing), or video magnifier they require to enlarge print to a size they can see to read. She takes the always popular 20-20 vision pens to the seniors and shows them how they work without soaking through the paper. These pens have a solid point and make a bold black line to provide contrast on white paper; notes and appointments are much easier to review and keep when the person with vision loss can read what they have written. Kim remarks,

*“I thank the Enrichment Directors at the facilities for encouraging eligible seniors to attend these events as it makes it so easy to provide the devices to the residents. Residents always tell me how wonderful this program is and that it’s like Christmas!”*

Kim agrees with the residents, and says, *“It’s like I get to play Santa Claus for my job!”*

**There is no cost for these services or devices.**

When Kim completes these events in Mclean County, she will begin reaching out to facilities in Livingston, Ford, and Dewitt Counties.

If you support groups of seniors and are interested in having Kim provide a Low Vision Open House at your facility, please contact her at **309-663-5433** or email her at [kim@lifecil.org](mailto:kim@lifecil.org).

## 20 Surprising Health Problems an Eye Exam Can Catch

*By, Reena Mukamal*

Eye exams aren’t just about vision. They’re about your health.

Your eyes are windows to the live action of blood vessels, nerves, and connective tissues throughout your body. Problems spotted in the eye are often the first signs of disease lurking elsewhere. Here are 20 surprising conditions your eye doctor may detect during a comprehensive eye exam:

**Aneurysm** - An aneurysm is a bubble in the wall of a blood vessel. This weak wall can leak or rupture. Signs of an aneurysm can include a severe, one-sided headache or loss of facial or body function. Aneurysms can be catastrophic and require immediate medical attention.

**Brain tumor** - Tumors can cause increased pressure in the brain that gets transmitted to the eye. Swelling near the back of the eyes causes changes to the optic nerve that an eye doctor can see. Loss of side vision, recent double vision or changes in the size of a pupil are other signs of a brain tumor.

**Cancers of blood, tissue or skin** - Numerous cancers can be found during a detailed eye exam. Skin cancers affect the eyelids and outer surfaces of the eye. The most common types of skin cancers are basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma. Leukemia and lymphoma can also affect the interior aspect of the eye. Tumors in the breast and other areas can spread to the ocular structures.

**Diabetes** - Tiny blood vessels in the retina that leak yellow fluid or blood can be a sign of diabetic retinopathy. Sometimes, this disease appears in eye tissue even before a person has been diagnosed with diabetes. Early detection can help people avoid vision loss and other serious complications.

**Giant cell arteritis** - Giant cell arteritis (GCA) is a lingering inflammation of medium-sized arteries that affects the arms, upper body and neck. These same arteries help nourish the eyes, and inflammation can result in blurred vision, double vision, or even sudden vision loss in one or both eyes. A dilated eye exam and blood tests for this condition can allow for an early diagnosis of GCA. Medical treatment can prevent a lifetime of blindness or even early death.

**High blood pressure** - Unusual bends, kinks or bleeding from blood vessels in the back of the eye can signal high blood pressure, which affects one in three American adults. High blood pressure is a known risk factor in the onset and/or progression of glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, and other diseases. Your doctor may notice signs of high blood pressure during a dilated eye exam.

**High cholesterol** - A yellow or blue ring around the cornea may be a sign of high cholesterol, especially in a person younger than age 40. Deposits in the blood vessels of the retina can also indicate elevated cholesterol. This may be the precursor to a life-threatening stroke.

**Lupus** - This inflammatory disease can coincide with dry eyes. Lupus can also cause swelling in the white part of the eye, the middle layer of the eye or the light-sensitive tissue in the back of the eye.

**Lyme disease** - Lyme disease is an infection spread by ticks, which leads to inflammation throughout the body. Many people with Lyme disease experience inflammation of the optic nerve as well as an increase in floaters at the onset of infection.

**Medication toxicities** - Several drugs may be toxic to the retina and the optic nerve. Symptoms of toxicity include red, scaling eyelids, red eyes, scratchy corneas or conjunctivitis.

**Multiple sclerosis** - Inflammation of the optic nerve can be a harbinger of multiple sclerosis, a degenerative disease that affects the nervous system. Often, this inflammation goes hand-in-hand with severely blurred vision, painful eye movement or even double vision.

**Myasthenia gravis** - Myasthenia gravis is an ongoing autoimmune disorder that causes muscles to weaken and tire easily. The first symptoms of this condition often involve the eyes. The most common sign of the disease is drooping eyelids in one or both eyes. Other symptoms include double vision, weakness in the arms or legs, or life-threatening problems with breathing, talking, chewing or swallowing.

**Rheumatoid arthritis** - Ocular signs of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) most commonly include red eyes with deep, severe pain. This symptom can signal scleritis, a painful inflammation of the white part of the eye which requires medical therapy. Many people who have RA also suffer from dry eye.

**Sarcoidosis** - This inflammatory disease affects multiple organs the body, including the eyes. The most common eye symptom of this disease is iritis, a recurring, painful inflammation of the iris or colored part of the eye. This condition also causes severe light sensitivity.

**Sexually transmitted diseases** - Syphilis, herpes, chlamydia, HIV, gonorrhea, genital warts and pubic lice can all affect layers of the eye. These serious conditions are often detected during an eye exam.

**Sickle cell disease** - People with sickle cell disease, a genetic blood disorder, develop stiff, comma-shaped red blood cells that can block the flow of blood throughout the body. This disease can cause a huge spectrum of ocular changes, from redness and burst blood vessels on the surface of the eye to severe hemorrhages and even retinal detachment inside the eye.

**Sjögren's syndrome** - This autoimmune disease causes the body's white blood cells to attack the glands that make tears and saliva. Unsurprisingly, dry eyes are a key feature of Sjögren's syndrome. Other symptoms include burning or stinging in the eyes, blurry vision and dry mouth.

**Stroke** - Blood vessels of the retina sometimes contain blockages or clots. These blockages can cause sudden blind spots or give the sense of a "curtain" closing over a person's vision. These can point to an increased risk for stroke. A loss of side vision may also be a warning of brain damage caused by a previous stroke.

**Thyroid disease** - Protruding eyeballs and retracting eyelids are telltale signs of hyperthyroidism, most commonly caused by Graves' Disease. This happens when the thyroid gland produces too much or too little hormone. Sometimes this coincides with dry eye, blurry vision or vision loss.

**Vascular disease** - Clotting disorders and bleeding disorders may cause visible bleeding in and around the eye. These are known as subconjunctival hemorrhages. These disorders can also cause retinal hemorrhages that threaten vision.

**Vitamin A deficiency** - Dry eyes and night blindness are both signs of Vitamin A deficiency. Without enough vitamin A, your eyes cannot produce enough moisture to keep them properly lubricated. Low levels of vitamin A also lead to night blindness, by preventing production of certain pigments needed for your retina to work properly. Vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of preventable blindness in children worldwide.

**The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that all adults get a complete eye examination at age 40. This is when early signs of disease or changes in vision may first appear.**

**If you have risk factors such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or a family history of eye disease, don't delay – schedule an eye exam at an earlier age.**

It's important to remember that these symptoms don't guarantee you have a certain health condition. Whenever an eye exam reveals a possible health problem, your ophthalmologist will recommend further testing by a specialist or your primary care provider.

Reviewed By Rebecca J Taylor, MD Apr. 29, 2022

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/surprising-health-conditions-eye-exam-defects>

# Personal Assistants make all the difference!

A personal assistant, or PA, is an individual who assists a person with a disability in activities of daily living. The personal assistant works under the direction of their employer (the person with the disability) and may assist the person with personal care, meal preparation, shopping, errands, and housekeeping. Duties will vary depending on the person. PAs help individuals with disabilities live independently at home instead of in a nursing home or other institution.

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*“One day my PA came just like any given day but it wasn't a normal day. When she got there, she noticed that I was having a stroke and rushed me to the hospital. PAs are vital.” - Rob Ballantini Jr*

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LIFE CIL is always looking for individuals to work as PAs. Print an application from our website (<https://www.lifecil.org/employment/personal-assistant/>), or call and have an application mailed to you.

Current pay with the DRS Home Services Program is \$15.50 an hour.

Questions? Contact Vicky at 309-663-5433, x 205

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*“PA's are the true heroes in their clients' lives!” - Chris Gardner*

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## Stay Tuned

**LIFE CIL staff are available by phone and email during regular business hours.**

LIFE CIL's doors are not yet open to the public. Our staff is in the office to take your calls, respond to emails and schedule appointments via Zoom or in-person, as necessary.

### **APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED.**

Our equipment loan program continues to operate via curbside pick-up and drop off. We are scheduling appointments between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If you need to borrow, return, or donate equipment, please call to schedule an appointment.

We remain an ITAC Amplified Phone Selection Center. If you are hard of hearing and would like an amplified telephone or a cellular amplifier, contact us for more information. You may schedule an appointment to test the phones at our Bloomington and Pontiac offices.



# Be A Friend For LIFE: Become a Member

Please consider being a **Friend for LIFE** and become a member of LIFE CIL.

**If you become a member or renew your membership by September 30, 2022, you will be entered into a raffle for a \$50 gift card to a local grocery store provided by an anonymous donor!**

One entry per member. Drawing will be on Monday, October 3, 2022 and winner contacted via phone and/or email. We appreciate your support!

**Why become a member of LIFE CIL?** LIFE CIL assists people with disabilities lead active, independent lives in the community. By becoming a member, you are supporting the Independent Living philosophy, our mission, and our organization. Help us help others – your membership allows us to assist over 3,000 people each year!

**What do I get by becoming a member?** As a member of LIFE CIL, you will...

- Receive invitations to our events throughout the year, including our Annual Meeting in the fall.
- Right to vote for our Board of Directors.
- Receive a LIFE CIL t-shirt and window cling.

LIFE CIL is a charitable, not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization, which means your membership fee could be tax deductible, as the law allows.

**How do I become a member?** Complete a membership form and return to LIFE CIL with your payment. All memberships (except LIFETIME) will be valid for one year. Financial assistance is available for those who wish to become individual members but are unable to pay the fee.

The membership form is included in this newsletter for your convenience. Complete and return any of the following ways:

- Drop off or mail with payment (make checks payable to LIFE CIL) to:

**Bloomington Office:**

LIFE CIL  
2201 Eastland Drive, Suite 1  
Bloomington, IL 61704

**Pontiac Office:**

LIFE CIL  
601 N. Ladd Street  
Pontiac, IL 61764

- Or, Email the form to [brianne@lifecil.org](mailto:brianne@lifecil.org) and pay online at: [www.lifecil.org](http://www.lifecil.org) or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/lifecil](https://www.facebook.com/lifecil). Please note in email that you have paid online.

## LOCATIONS

### Bloomington

Phone: (309) 663-5433  
Fax: (309) 663-7024  
Toll-Free: (888) 543-3245  
2201 Eastland Drive, Suite 1  
Bloomington, IL 61704

### Pontiac

Phone: (815) 844-1132  
601 North Ladd Street  
Pontiac, IL 61764



If you have any questions about services during this time, please reach out to us via phone, email, or message us on Facebook.

*If a friend sent this newsletter to you and you'd like to be added to our email list, give us a call or email ([brianne@lifecil.org](mailto:brianne@lifecil.org)) We never sell or give away your information!*



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<https://www.lifecil.org> and <https://www.facebook.com/lifecil>