

## Museums and the Americans with Disabilities Act at 25: Progress and Looking Ahead

October 15, 2015

By Beth Bienvenu, NEA Director of Accessibility

## Is This the World's Most Accessible Museum?

Those without disabilities might not notice the innovations, but a museum in London is winning plaudits for its design and content.

### Art and Law

## More Than 75 New York Galleries Are Slammed With Lawsuits for Allegedly Violating the Americans With Disabilities Act

Galleries are the latest industry to be targeted by a wave of lawsuits over the accessibility of their websites.

Eileen Kinsella, January 29, 2019

## Wheelchair user blasts Olafur Eliasson show at Tate Modern over rampless work

After consulting with the Danish-Icelandic artist and technicians, Tate says installation “cannot be made safely accessible for wheelchair users”



Article Topics ▾ Advance Your Career ▾ Events ▾ About Museums ▾ Join and Give

### ACCESSIBILITY

## Welcoming Service Dogs to Your Museum

Posted on Aug 26, 2019



### Upcoming Events



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2019

### Practical Book

Presented by:

### OPINION

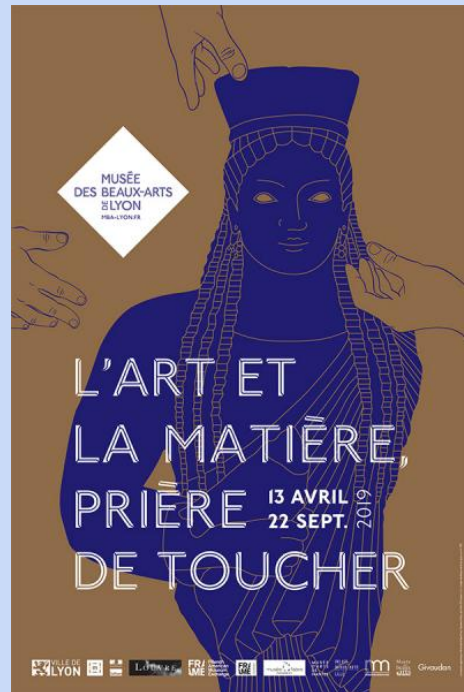
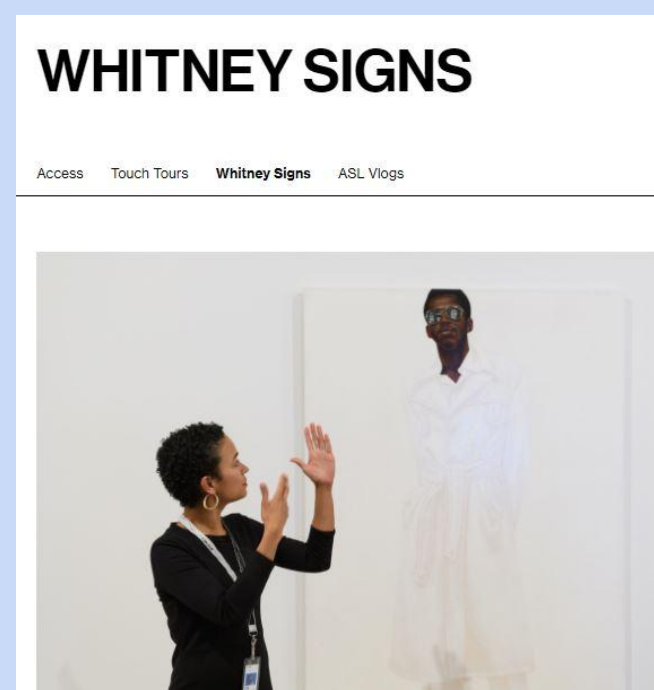
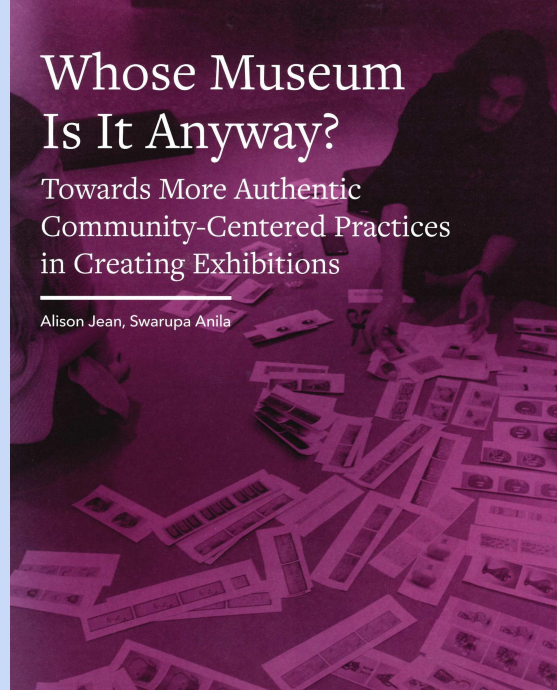
## Fighting the Art World's Ableism

Whether it's through the Vessel or the accessibility of galleries, by not sufficiently supporting the neurodiverse and disabled communities, the art world is inadvertently reinforcing the ableism that pervades American society.



Emily Sara August 2, 2019





WASHINGTONPOST.COM

**The surprising ways design can help people with disabilities**  
Objects on display at Cooper Hewitt help make everyday routines easier.



# Our Mission

## To empower cultural institutions

in Michigan to become more accessible and inclusive for people of all abilities. By sharing resources and experiences, leveraging expertise, refining best practices, and building institutional capacity, we will increase accessibility for people with disabilities, therein increasing accessibility for all.



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



**MACA**

MICHIGAN ALLIANCE for  
CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY



**Accessibility at the DIA**  
3 Year Community Partnership Project





**PHASE 2019: Exploratory**  
**Community Input and Research**  
**Front-end evaluation**

**PHASE 2020: Development**  
**Prototyping programs, new policies, and**  
**exhibit components that will help people**  
**with disabilities interact with art**

**Formative evaluation**

**PHASE 2021: Implementation**  
**Initiate new programs, policies, and**  
**components available to the public and**  
**integrated into DIA operations**

**Summative evaluation**



## Community Focus

- Deaf, Deaf/Blind and Hard of Hearing people
- People with low vision or who are blind
- People with autism/cognitive disabilities

## Community Outcomes

- Share their experiences with art and their feedback about the DIA
- Be heard and supported by the DIA
- Feel empowered to experience art and programs at the DIA fully and independently

## Our Journey with the D.I.A



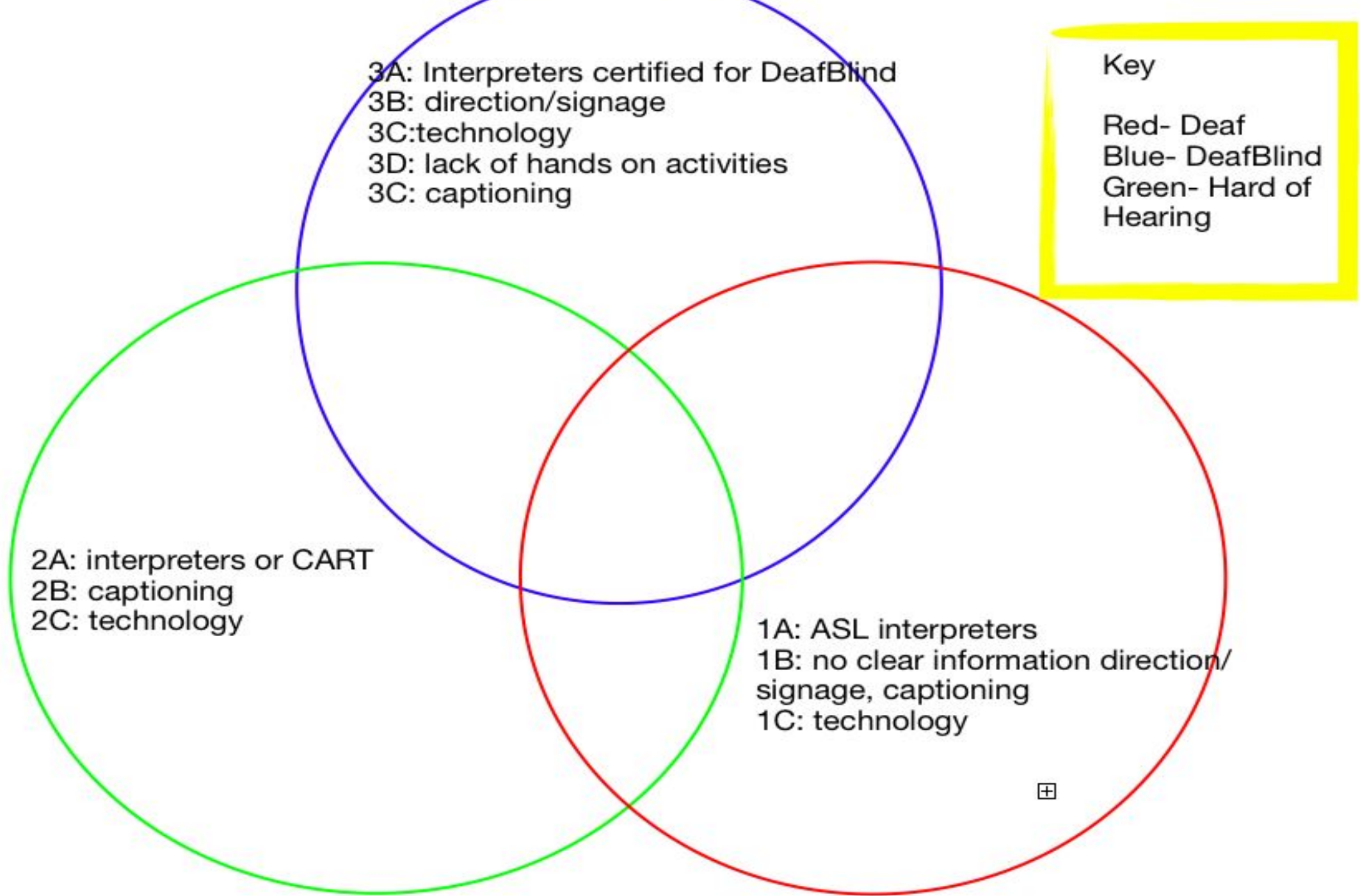
- Beginning of an Alliance, November 2018
- Focus Groups
  - March 23, 2019 - Deaf
  - April 6, 2019 - Hard Of Hearing
  - April 20, 2019 - DeafBlind
- Results of the Focus Groups





# Population of Deaf, DeafBlind, & Hard of Hearing in Michigan

The Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (DODDBHH) estimates the total population of Michiganders who identify as deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing as 733,356 or about 7.4% of the total Michigan population? That breakdown includes 632,825 hard of hearing, 45,853 deaf, and 10,165 deafblind.



“You're welcome until you get in the door. I'm excited until I get there, and then there's definitely discord, if you will and we're not excited, and we don't enjoy it as much as hearing people.”

-Deaf Participant



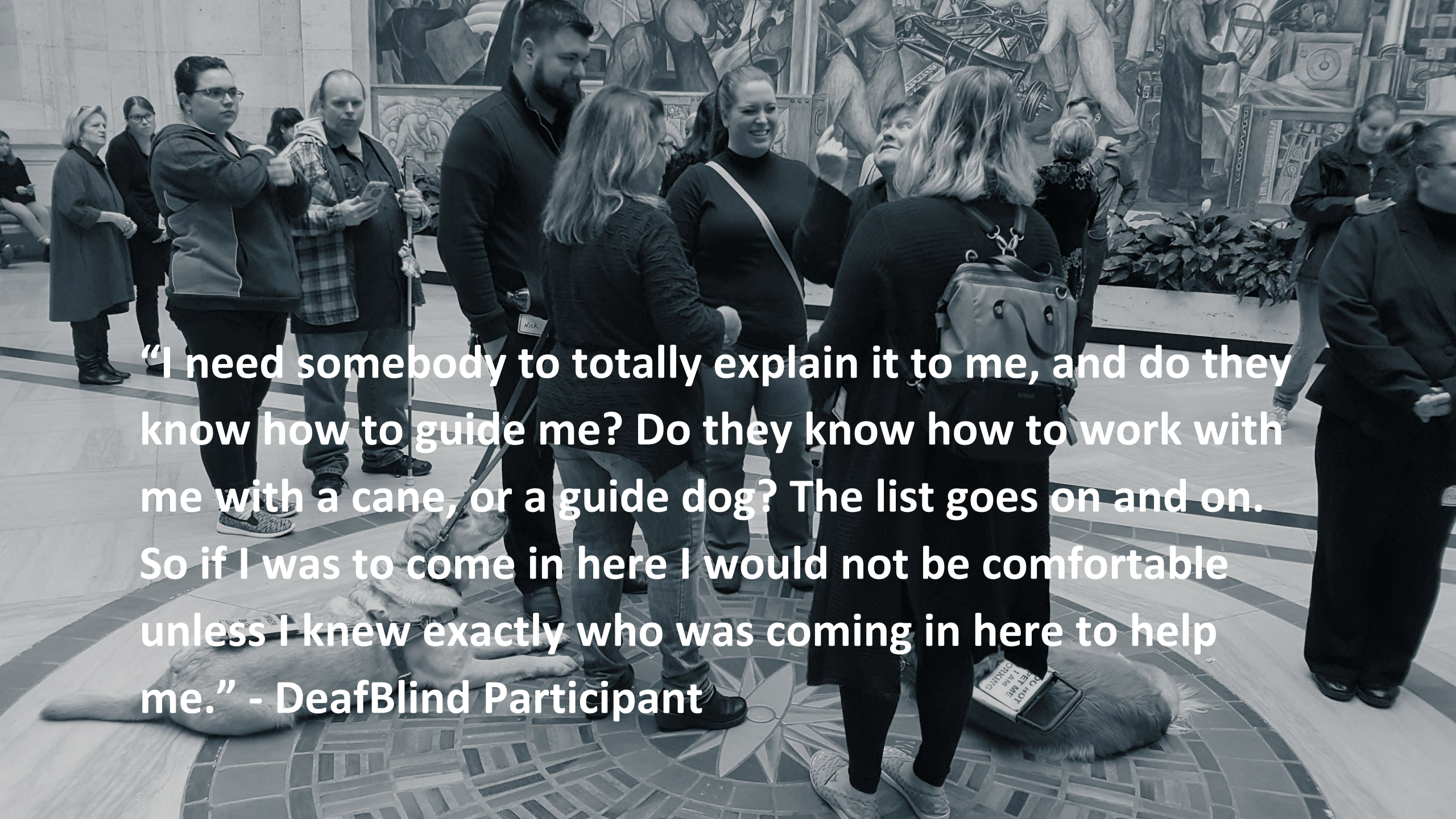


“

Hey, I'm hard of hearing, I'm going to need accommodations. If I go to an event, they always assign me with a sign language interpreter as if that will solve everything, but I don't know ASL. I think people are not educated on how the differences between the hard of hearing, deaf blind, or deaf community is. That's where I think the gap lies.

Hard Of Hearing Participant





**“I need somebody to totally explain it to me, and do they know how to guide me? Do they know how to work with me with a cane, or a guide dog? The list goes on and on. So if I was to come in here I would not be comfortable unless I knew exactly who was coming in here to help me.” - DeafBlind Participant**



# SUPERFEST

DISABILITY FILM FESTIVAL



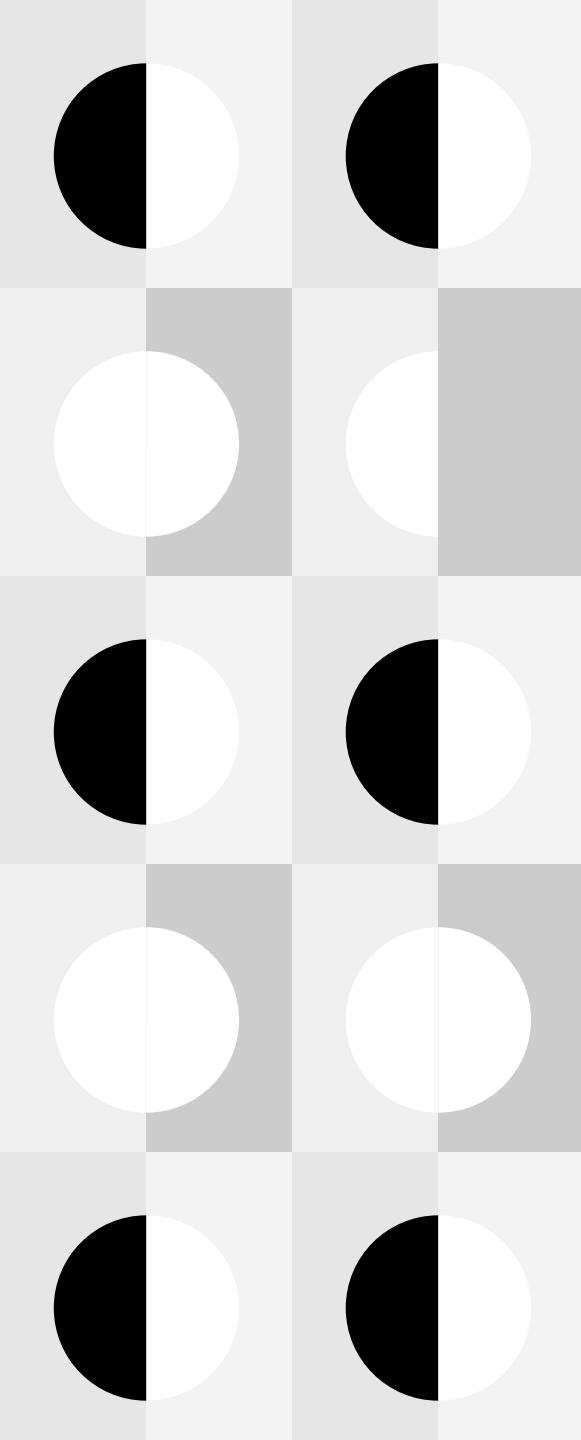
First Accessibility  
Event at the DIA!

Deaf on the panel

Four ASL interpreters

CART









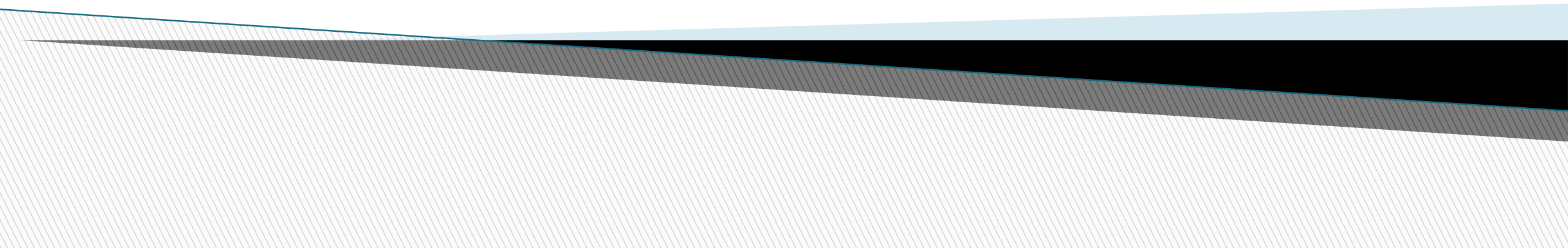




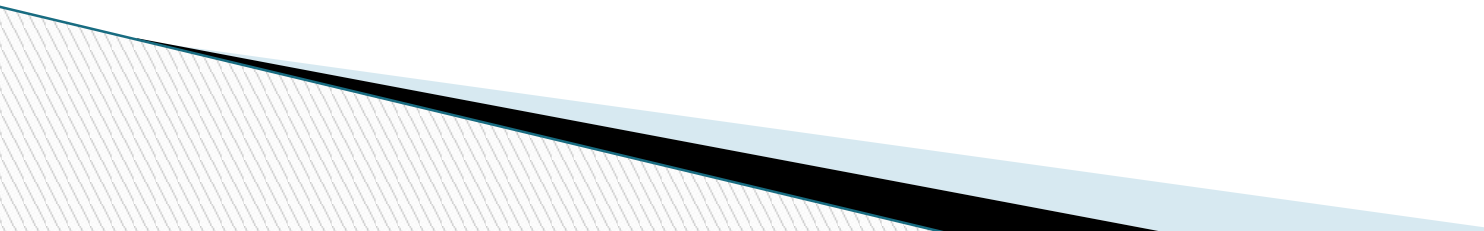




Greater Detroit Agency for the Blind and  
Visually Impaired  
**GDABVI**

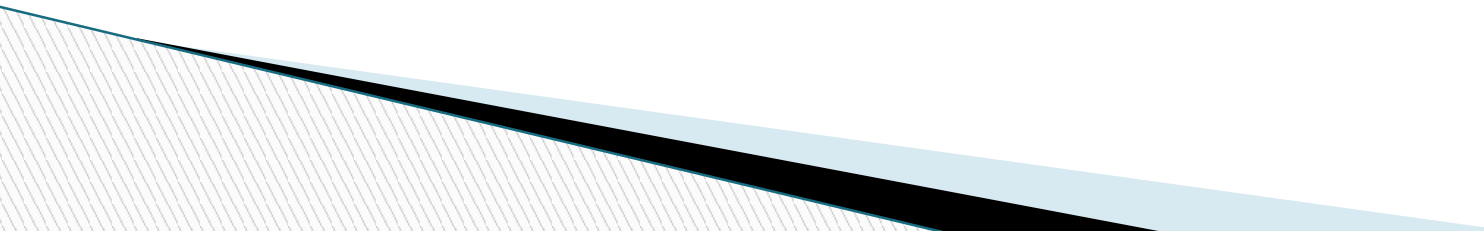


# Mission

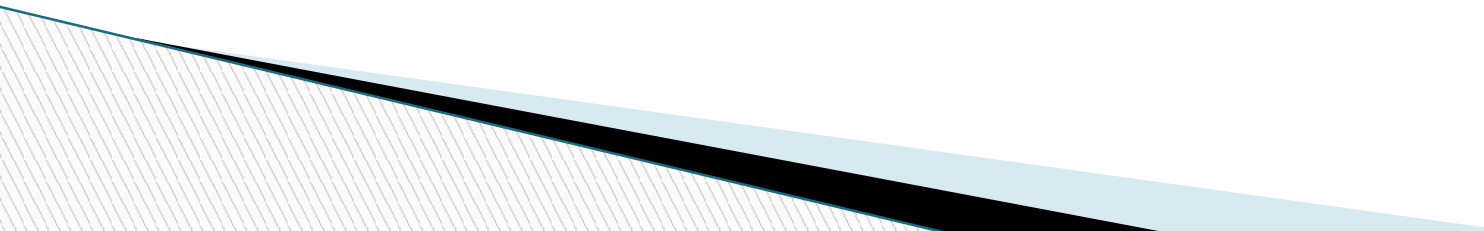
- GDABVI is a non-profit organization comprised of skilled professionals providing quality, innovative services to people in Southeast Michigan who are blind or visually impaired
  - GDABVI works to expand community awareness of the impact of severe vision loss
- 



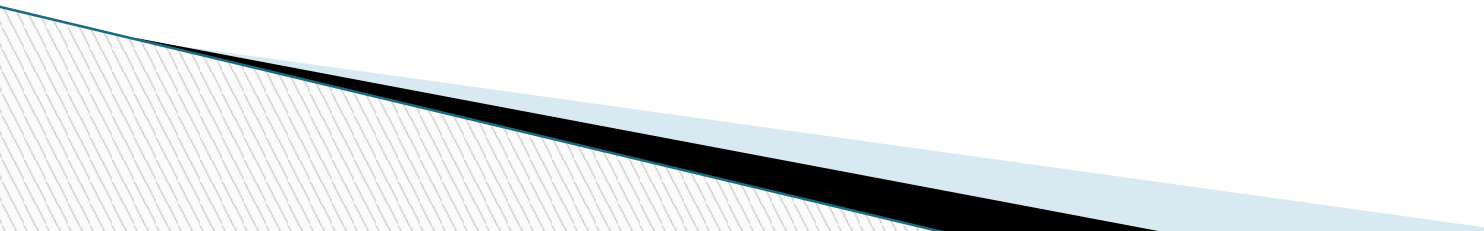
# Who we serve

- GDABVI provides in-home rehabilitation services to seniors and others throughout the 7 county southeast Michigan area
  - We offer summer camps and other programs for children and young people
  - We advocate for community awareness of the special needs of people who are blind or visually impaired
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# How we can help

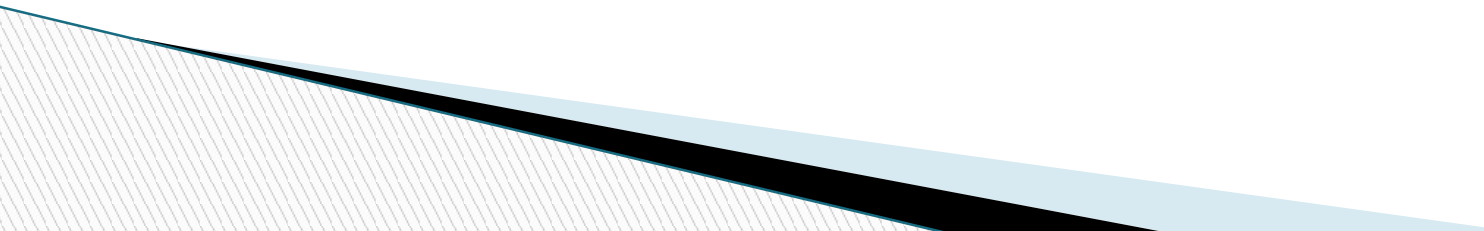
- ▣ Our goal is to help people learn skills of independence and by using them confidently, to overcome barriers like depression, isolation, and unemployment
  - ▣ We also try to assist with social opportunities, access to transportation, community exploration, and knowledge about the use of technology
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# Museum Experience

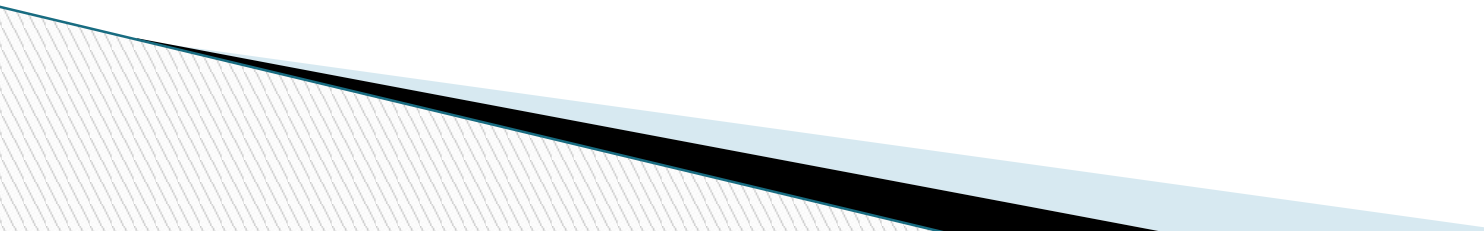
- Vision impairment and blindness can impede a person's experience of museums and cultural institutions
  - People with visual impairments or blindness rely on their other senses to acquire information about their surroundings.
    - They Touch – navigating with a cane
    - They Hear – discerning the presence or absence of space (think Riviera Court)
- 



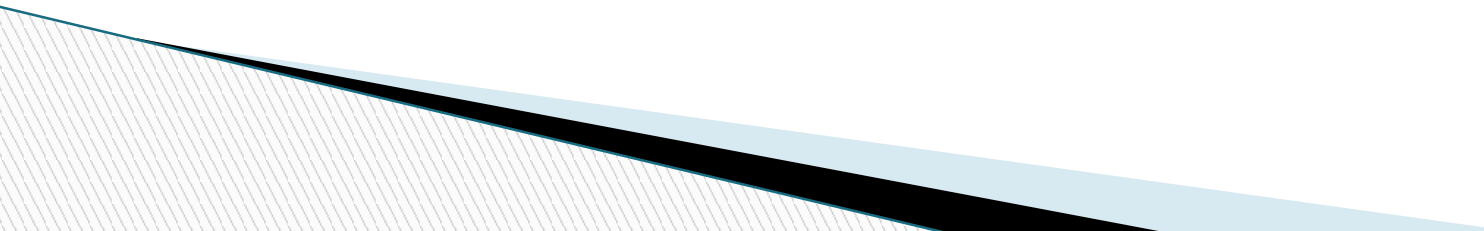
# Special Considerations

- Lighting – too much, too little, glare?
  - Layout - Space to walk around displays
  - Inability to read labels– size of font
  - Inability to touch artworks
  - Need to be up-close to use residual vision
  - Ambient Sound – distractions of video or audio presentations
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# Comments at Focus Group

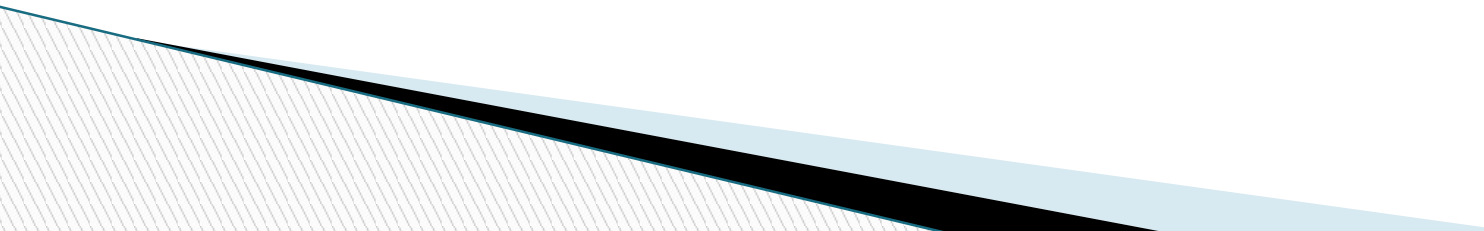
- B/VI people want to be accepted like sighted people
  - B/VI people experience museums in the company of family and friends
  - Many B/VI do not frequent museums often because of the lack of accessibility
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# DIA Focus Groups

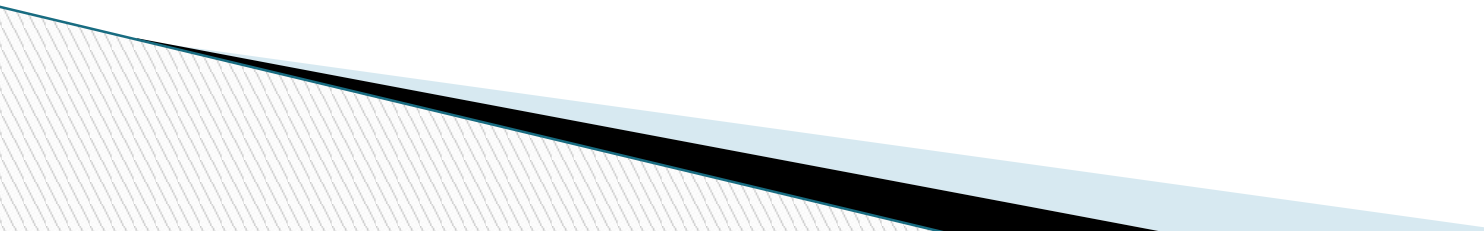
- Blind/Low Vision study participants said:
  - the content or historical context of what they were looking at was important
  - “I use my hands a lot to see”
  - Tactile reproductions of whole or parts of the artwork scaled down is helpful
- 



# More Comments

- Skilled presenters can make a museum visit very accessible (The Henry Ford Museum is an example)
  - Trained staff can transform a forbidding experience into a welcoming one by how they approach a B/VI person
  - Technology advancements open many doors
  - People who are B/VI are creative, curious, and perceptive
- 

# Other points

- Accessible website with information about exhibits and other events – concerts, etc.
  - Desire for independence = desire for respect and dignity
  - People with visual impairments have an interior creative center like everyone else
- 

# Ceramic Works





# Tile design





# Guitar









# Thank you!

Mary Beth Kullen

Community Outreach Coordinator

Greater Detroit Agency for the Blind and Visually Impaired

16625 Grand River Avenue

Detroit, MI 48227

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

Also on Facebook, Instagram

313-272-3900



# DIA Evaluation and Research Department

## Our Mission:

Providing museum decision makers with useful information on visitors and the visitor experience



# Findings Across Focus Groups

- In general, participants did not express a feeling of limitation in art making or appreciation due to their disability
- Participants expressed clear frustration with arts and cultural organizations (including the DIA) that do not create programs, exhibitions, and other resources with accessibility in mind, or that do not provide consistent accommodations for people with disabilities
- Participants want to have the same experience at the DIA as visitors who are non-disabled
- Recommended improvements showed overlap between different types of disabilities, suggesting that strategic changes and accommodations can serve a variety of visitors at once



# Findings Across Focus Groups - The DIA Experience

**DIA Experience:** *Enjoyable, impressive, peaceful, beautiful, and fun*

- Some Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants appreciated video captioning. Some blind and low vision participants appreciated interactions with docents
- Many found lighting, noise, and acoustics challenging
- Some challenges in interaction with security and other service staff
- Several participants expressed frustration at having few opportunities to touch or interact with anything in the galleries - particularly true of those who are blind or have low vision

# Findings Across Focus Groups - Some Suggestions

## Labels

- Larger type, Higher contrast between letters and background
- No labels in cases or behind glass
- More simplified language
- Audio recordings of label information
- Provide spatial descriptions for context
- Many participants also suggested creating an apps or making content accessible on mobile devices (customized by user preferences)
- Provide ASL interpretation of the labels, or show the label in Braille

## **Roundtable Chat**

**From your perspective, which aspect of the project took the most effort?**

**This project had a dedicated budget. If an organization doesn't have a large budget, what should they spend it on?**

**What did you learn that you wished you knew before the project started?**

**Questions from the Audience?**