



# Georgia Department of Agriculture

Capitol Square • Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4201

**Gary W. Black**  
Commissioner

## Access to Programs and Activities by Persons with Disabilities

### I. Introduction

State and federal laws require that all public entities ensure that their programs, activities, and services are accessible to persons with disabilities. One of the most important components of accessibility is ensuring that any communication with persons with disabilities is as effective as communications with others.

The Georgia Department of Agriculture (“GDA” or “Department”) consistently strives to ensure that persons with disabilities maintain meaningful access to GDA programs, benefits, activities, and services. In striving for this goal, the GDA will make every effort to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.

### II. Definitions

Commissioner — The Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

Department and GDA — The Georgia Department of Agriculture.

Discrimination — The unfavorable treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person based on the group, class, or category to which that person belongs rather than on individual merit.

Persons with Disabilities — Any person who (a) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, (b) has a record of such an impairment, or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Reasonable Accommodation — Any reasonable step(s) taken to accommodate a disability, unless such step(s) would cause GDA undue hardship.

Translation — The process of transferring ideas expressed in writing from one language to another language.

Translator — Any person who converts language into an alternative form of communication so that it is understandable to persons who communicate differently.

### **III. Ensuring Access**

This document outlines GDA's process of ensuring access to persons with disabilities, training GDA staff members, notifying persons with disabilities of available services, and the availability of complaint procedures.

In short, this Plan aims to ensure that the Department takes reasonable steps necessary to provide meaningful access to persons with disabilities. The method of ensuring effective communication and/or equal opportunity to participate is detailed below.

#### **Coordinating Access**

In order to quickly and uniformly address access issues, the Department has appointed a "Title VI Coordinator" who shall serve as the official GDA disability access coordinator and work in concert with division staff members tasked with monitoring and addressing disability assistance needs. For questions, concerns, complaints, or requests regarding disability-related accommodations, please contact:

Petra Evans  
Title VI Coordinator  
19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S.W., Room 227  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
Phone Number: 404-586-1152  
Fax Number: (404) 232-1547  
E-mail Address: [titlevi@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:titlevi@agr.georgia.gov)

Any GDA employee who observes a need for disability assistance services shall immediately contact the Title VI Coordinator who will be tasked with taking any appropriate and reasonable action to ensure effective communication and/or an equal opportunity to participate fully in the benefits, activities, programs and services provided by GDA.

#### **Disability Assistance Measures**

In order to facilitate effective and meaningful communication and participation, GDA has identified methods and resources that shall be utilized. The following methods and resources will aid GDA in providing meaningful access to all individuals:

- Upon request, GDA will provide at no cost appropriate auxiliary aids and services including, for example, qualified interpreters and translators to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and to other individuals as necessary to ensure effective communication.
- GDA will ensure that its facilities and facilities utilized by GDA are physically accessible for individuals with disabilities.
- GDA will engage in interactive, courteous dialogue with individuals making a request for accommodation.

- GDA will identify staff members proficient in American Sign Language and utilize said staff as necessary to provide assistance.
- GDA will utilize local and community programs that offer services for persons with disabilities. As GDA values building close connections with individuals and communities, these local programs could form a strong tie with persons with disabilities.

### **Staff training**

All GDA staff will be notified of the availability of this document on GDA's website, provided a copy of this document, and educated on the procedures and services available under this document. The information contained herein will serve as an integral part of the GDA staff orientation process for all newly hired employees, and it will be integrated into periodic overviews during staff meetings.

Current GDA staff will receive training on the requirements set forth by this document during group workshop sessions conducted by the GDA Title VI Coordinator. The Department will conduct these trainings on a yearly basis.

Both new employee and current GDA employee training will cover the following topics:

- General overview of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166;
- Department responsibilities to persons with disabilities;
- Disability assistance services offered by the Department;
- Procedures for providing assistance to persons with disabilities;
- Documentation of requests for disabilities assistance; and
- Procedures for handling complaints regarding disability assistance.

### **Providing Notice of Available Services to Persons with Disabilities**

GDA will take reasonable steps to ensure persons with disabilities are aware of available services.

- A notice detailing the availability of disability assistance will be posted in the GDA reception area and in other public places.
- A notice detailing the availability of disability assistance will be posted online at [agr.georgia.gov](http://agr.georgia.gov).
- GDA outreach staff will have distributable documents that advertise the availability of services for persons with disabilities.

## **IV. Complaints**

Any individual seeking to file a complaint may contact the GDA Title VI Coordinator if they feel they have been denied any benefits established by this document. The Department will investigate every complaint pursuant to its official complaint procedures, which can be found in the document titled "Procedure for Non-Employee Discrimination Complaints." To file a complaint, please contact the Title VI Coordinator identified below:

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