

Technology and Disability – The intersection of Success

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Introduction

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What is Disability Rights in Tech Policy?

- Centering people with disabilities in conversations about the development, procurement, auditing of technologies (and technology policy)
- Combating tech-facilitated disability discrimination in hiring, voting, education, public benefits, and more.

Goals

- Help **technology justice organizations identify and explore** ways to better integrate a focus on disability into their regular work
- Help **disability rights and justice groups identify opportunities** to engage on technology justice issues
- **Spark dialogue and collaboration** across fields in service of just and inclusive work
- **Provide a public resource** benefitting:
 - Technology policy leaders
 - Disability policy leaders
 - Foundations that invest in these issues

Tech-Facilitated Disability Discrimination — Foundational Issues

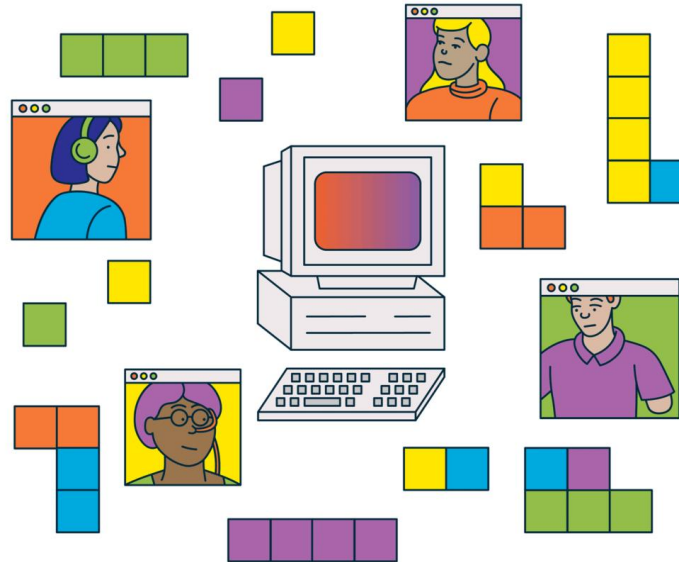
- Algorithmic outputs are a result of algorithmic inputs.
- Datasets that are used to train systems are often not inclusive of people with disabilities due to issues with data collection, including stigma, exclusionary or inaccessible data collection practices, and variations in defining disability
- More inclusive design = more inclusive datasets (but in a privacy-protective way).

Expansion: Building a Disability-Inclusive AI Ecosystem

Building A Disability-Inclusive AI Ecosystem

A Cross-Disability,
Cross-Systems Analysis
Of Best Practices

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Image description: Graphic for CDT report, entitled “Building A Disability-Inclusive AI Ecosystem.” Illustration with a mainframe computer, surrounded by web browser windows showing persons with disabilities in different contextual data systems, and data blocks. Top to bottom, left to right: person in a blue shirt wearing headphones; person in an orange shirt; person in a green shirt wearing a NJ tube; person in a purple shirt with a limb difference. On the bottom right, it says “March 2025,” the publication date.



Building a Disability-Inclusive AI Ecosystem

- In 2025, CDT and AAPD released a report that aims to provide recommendations for various stakeholders on how to ensure that people with disabilities can enjoy the benefits of AI and other emerging technologies, while being protected from the risks.

Stakeholders & Systems

- The stakeholders included within the report include:
Disabled community members, Disability rights and justice advocates, government agencies, and private-sector AI practitioners (like industry developers).
- The report discusses how disabled people interact with technologies in the following systems:
Employment, education, government benefits, information and communications technology (ICT), healthcare, transportation, and the criminal legal system.

Employment

- ❖ AI-enabled tools are being integrated into every aspect of employment, from hire to retire, and can impact disabled people (and potentially violate disability rights statutes, particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act) at every step.
- Main technologies: Hiring tools; AI tools used in HR (performance reviews, accommodations); Bossware.



Image description: Graphic for CDT Research report, entitled "Screened Out: The Impact of Digitized Hiring Assessments on Disabled Workers." A multi-panel color illustration includes a wheelchair user typing, a person with headphones facing an error on a laptop, a close-up of a person with a hearing aid, and a person with glasses. Geometric shapes and icons connect these panels, highlighting hiring assessments and discrimination disabled people face.

Recommendations

- **People with disabilities should:** familiarize themselves with their employment rights (including individualized accommodation processes and accessible hiring); and raise awareness of the impact AI and algorithmic tools can have on people with disabilities.
- **Employers should:** give workers specific notice of the types of technologies used in hiring and on the job; explore alternate selection procedures to minimize discriminatory impacts; engage in pre-and-post deployment audits of any automated tools.
- **Agencies should:** issue guidance to employers on AI-integrated employment tools; remind companies they are required to provide accommodations to disabled workers under the ADA.

Education

- ❖ Education technologies can have discriminatory impacts on students with disabilities, that can even rise to the level of violating disability rights laws.
- Key statutes: Americans with Disabilities Act, IDEA, Section 504
- Main technologies: Student activity monitoring software; remote proctoring software; predictive analytic software (used to identify students at risk of committing school violence or poor academic outcomes); generative AI tools.



Image description: Graphic for CDT report, entitled "Late Applications: Protecting Students' Civil Rights in the Digital Age." It has a blue banner on top, a brown banner on the bottom, and the CDT logo on the bottom right.



Recommendations

- **The disability community should:** actively engage with school administrators about their use of technology; raise awareness of the presence of AI-integrated educational tools and their impact on student civil rights.
- **Developers of education technologies should:** consider accessibility; follow principles of inclusive design; test tools for disability-related bias and discrimination prior to selling products to schools.
- **Agencies should:** collect information on the use of AI-driven tools and how they impact students with disabilities; conduct analysis and publicly report information on tech use in schools and its impact on disabled youth; conduct pre-and-post deployment audits.

Information & Communications Technology (ICT)

- ❖ Many AI-enabled ICT tools can help people with disabilities, including many assistive technologies (e.g., communication software for d/Deaf or blind individuals). But, they can also pose risks.
- Main risks: accuracy (e.g., for AI-enabled captions); privacy.

Internet Privacy Is A Disability Rights Issue

ARIANA ABOULAFIA / JAN 19, 2024

Former CDT intern Sydney Brinker contributed to the research for this article.



Image description: Graphic for an article in Tech Policy Press written by Ariana Aboulafia, entitled "Internet Privacy is a Disability Rights Issue." The article has an orange graphic of people on their phones with various disabilities, including one individual in a wheelchair, one using a cane, and one with what appears to be a service dog.

Recommendations

- **People with disabilities should:** consider opting in to minimal information and location sharing to protect privacy when using assistive technologies.
- **Developers should:** ensure tools are privacy protective (by incorporating data minimization and purpose limitation); ensure privacy policies are written in plain language; make AI tools accessible.
- **Agencies should:** consider training 508 coordinators on AI tools; consider issuing guidance indicating that Section 508 standards likely apply to AI technologies procured, developed, and implemented by federal agencies.

CONCLUSION

- In order to truly build a disability-inclusive AI ecosystem, various stakeholders — people with disabilities, disability advocates, people who work within the tech industry, attorneys, and government actors — should understand how people with disabilities interact with AI-enabled technologies, and commit to maximizing benefits and mitigating harms for this population.
- CDT's Disability Rights in Technology Policy project focuses on maximizing the benefits and mitigating the harms of technology for people with disabilities. Find out more, [here](#).



Alt text: an image of the iPhone wheelchair emoji, which consists of a drawing of a white stick figure of a person in a wheelchair moving forward (to the right) with a blue background

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