

The Achievable Foundation

It's achievable

Winter 2019

From the CEO's Desk: Carmen Ibarra



Next year marks the 30th anniversary of the landmark 1990 Americans with Disability Act (ADA). That law was a turning point for individuals with disabilities, dictating that public spaces such as office buildings, buses and trains must be handicap accessible. From specially designated parking spaces to elevators and ramps, the ADA was a massive leap forward for accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

The ADA however failed to address key aspects of accessibility within a doctor's office. While the ADA did require that physical structures in public spaces be accessible, the law only applied to the accessibility of a building itself or the "fixed structure." It did not say anything about the "furnishings" in an office. Imagine going to your doctor's office, which is accessible, but not being able to be weighed or get onto an exam table. In medical offices, things like scales, exam tables or diagnostic equipment are not covered by the ADA and patients with disabilities can experience incomplete exams as a result.

This gap was supposed to be addressed by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), commonly known as "Obamacare." The ACA directed a federal panel to address the issue of furnishings and equipment in medical settings by issuing standards to determine what medical equipment could be made "accessible." These standards were finalized in January 2017, just before President Barack Obama left office. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has chosen not to enforce these new standards, effectively ending them for the time being.

Achievable is tremendously disappointed by this decision. Individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD) cannot live healthy lives if they cannot get a thorough medical exam. At Achievable we've gone to great lengths to make our facility accessible to patients of all abilities, from the office itself to the equipment in the office. Thanks to partners such as Cedars-Sinai and the Ahmanson Foundation, we've remodeled our reception area so that the front doors are wheelchair accessible and checking in for an appointment is easier with the added space. With the help of a grant from L.A. Care, now all of our exam tables are accessible for individuals with mobility challenges. In addition, we can easily get a patient's height and weight through scales and tape measures built into these exam tables. We also use special diagnostic equipment to test hearing and vision for patients that are unable to have the standard hearing and vision tests conducted.

We at Achievable continue to educate policymakers and influencers throughout California and the entire country about the importance of appropriate health care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and what that care looks like. We urge the Trump Administration to reverse its decision on these accessibility standards and fully implement them, thereby creating integration of people of all abilities within a medical office.

Achievers Gala



In September 2018, The Achievable Foundation hosted its annual Achievers Gala fundraiser, celebrating the five-year anniversary of the groundbreaking Achievable Health Center and the now nearly 2,000 patients it serves annually. The elegant evening event at the Marriott Marina Del Rey featured speakers including Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager-Dove, who represents California's 54th Assembly District, and honored individuals and organizations whose support of The Achievable Foundation has been instrumental in its success and rapid growth: Cedars-Sinai and Danise Lehrer, the Achievable Health Center's founding executive director. Attendees were treated to a cocktail reception, an exquisite seated dinner, and silent and live auctions, with proceeds going to support the Achievable Health Center.

Angela Pierucci: Achieving at Achievable



“I’m very determined!” Angela Pierucci can say that again.

Angela is a doctoral student in the applied clinical psychology track at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, which hosts a collaborative program with Achievable. She’s commuted from Bakersfield to the Los Angeles campus every other weekend for two years for her course work, all while keeping a 3.94 GPA.

Now in her practicum, designed for students to get hands-on training, she does that road trip three days a week to earn 850 hours at Achievable, which will progress her to the next step toward her degree—an internship. Angela also has cerebral palsy. Her physical symptoms are severe and necessitate a wheelchair and a round-the-clock assistant.

Despite carrying a nearly perfect GPA, Angela recalls her recent struggles in securing a practicum site: she was rejected from 40 that she applied for. Though her disability was never stated as a barrier, she is uniquely suited to relate to the challenges and misconceptions many Achievable patients and their families face. “I’ve been modifying all my life to tackle the tasks and challenges in front of me—that’s not difficult for me.” But she recognizes that’s not always the case on the other end. Her condition requires the presence of an assistant, and a partner for efficiency in some clinical tasks.

As the rejection letters piled up, Angela became discouraged. She nearly quit, but she thought to herself: “I already have come this far. I’ve been able to maintain the GPA. I’m doing everything I possibly can... All I needed was a chance.” Angela had not heard of Achievable when it was suggested to her as an option by her school. She was told she would be assisting patients with I/DD and felt well equipped to meet that challenge, having grown up in that population. “Achievable struck me as different right away—I was treated more as a clinician, and less as a student or a subordinate because I have a disability.”

It’s been a perfect pairing all the way around. Achievable benefits from Angela’s skill set as well as her unique point of view that helps her relate to patients on another level. If a patient is distressed, she can tell them: “I get you probably more than you’re used to—let’s talk about this, don’t just shut me out...” Since they can see I’m sitting down and struggling, they can relate and think ‘maybe we can work together.’”

Angela “fell into” doing assessments at Achievable, and found an instant knack and affinity for it. An underserved role within an underserved population, her professors have encouraged her, recognizing there is a great need for skilled help in that area. “I love the assessments. And, having cerebral palsy, I understand the value of assessments. You can’t get services without them. My time at Achievable has helped me realize I will end up with a career working with the I/DD population because I’m very familiar with their circumstances.”

Her advice for other determined goal-seekers in a similar situation: “Make sure your goal is something you can physically and cognitively do...after that, don’t give up; there will always be somebody who will accept your challenges. You may have to be patient to find them. Don’t put yourself on a time line—it may be different for you—keep your goals, but be flexible with them.”

Importance of Mental Health Care

Recent studies have confirmed what many in the field have long believed—that adults with I/DD are at higher risk of depression and mental health issues. Study after study pointing to these findings have included a recent UK study of adults with cerebral palsy, and one from the University of Bristol that found that depression affects young adults with autism at more than three times the rate of their peers.

An estimated 30-35% of adults with I/DD also have mental health conditions, and the rate of children and youth who experience psychiatric disorders is much higher still. This population typically requires extensive behavioral, psychiatric and physical services and support throughout their lifetimes, yet they are often overlooked and underserved.

With the rate of I/DD diagnoses also increasing, it is vital to grow the workforce of tomorrow to address the unique needs of this population—physical, mental and behavioral—especially given the current gap in practitioners who have training or experience in this area.

Given Achievable’s mission to provide comprehensive primary care, integrated with mental health care, to address whole-person health and wellbeing, Achievable began a landmark collaboration in the Fall of 2015 with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSP), the leading nonprofit university for psychology and the behavioral science fields since 1979.

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Importance of Mental Health Care *con't*

Continued Page 2

Doctoral students in the field of clinical psychology are eligible to complete a 9- to 12-month advanced practicum at the Achievable Health Center, where they learn to provide comprehensive therapy and treatment for the I/DD population as part of an interdisciplinary team of providers. The training/service model developed with TCSPP has already proven to be successful in meeting a previously un-met need, including contributions from a doctoral student currently in her practicum at Achievable [See Angela Perucci: *Achieving at Achievable*, Page 2].



The Achievable Foundation's mission is to provide high quality, integrated health care to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and other vulnerable populations.

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Achievable is hiring medical providers!!
If you are interested in being part of a team innovating a new model of care for vulnerable populations, especially individuals with developmental disabilities, go to our website to apply:
<https://achievable.org/contact-us/join-our-team/>

Health Care Workforce Development Legislative Breakfast



According to some estimates, by 2020 there will be a national shortage of up to 200,000 physicians and 1 million nurses. In October, Achievable brought together major stakeholders from the health care workforce training and employment fields, including higher education institutions, local workforce investment boards, public officials and their staff, community health centers, hospitals, and other parties that can play a critical role in developing our health care workforce. Thank you to all who joined Achievable Foundation CEO Carmen Ibarra to give insights on this important topic: **L.A. County Supervisory Mark Ridley-Thomas** (2nd Supervisorial District); **Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager-Dove** (54th Assembly District); **Dr. Roberto Gonzalez** (Vice President of Student Services, West L.A. College); **Cynthia Carmona** (Senior Director of Safety Net Initiatives, L.A. Care Health Plan); **Terry Hollingsworth** (Vice President, Human Resources Services, Hospital Association of Southern California); **Dawn Johnson** (Executive Vice President, COPE Health Solutions); **Robert Linares** (Director of Biomedical Pathways at St. John Bosco High School, Salesian College Preparatory School); and **Alma**

Salazar (Senior Vice President of the Center for Education Excellence & Talent Development, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce).

Wine Down with Achievable!

Join us on Sunday, March 31 for a fabulous afternoon of wine and fellowship, all for a good cause! Achievable's second annual wine tasting begins at 1 p.m. at AR Cucina in Culver City. Individual tickets are \$100 while VIP tickets are \$200. Call Josh Kamali at (424) 266-7483 for more details.

