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# BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF FINANCIAL COUNSELORS AND FINANCIAL COACHES TO SERVE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

December 3, 2019



Building Financial Security for  
People and Families with Disabilities



# Listening to the Webinar

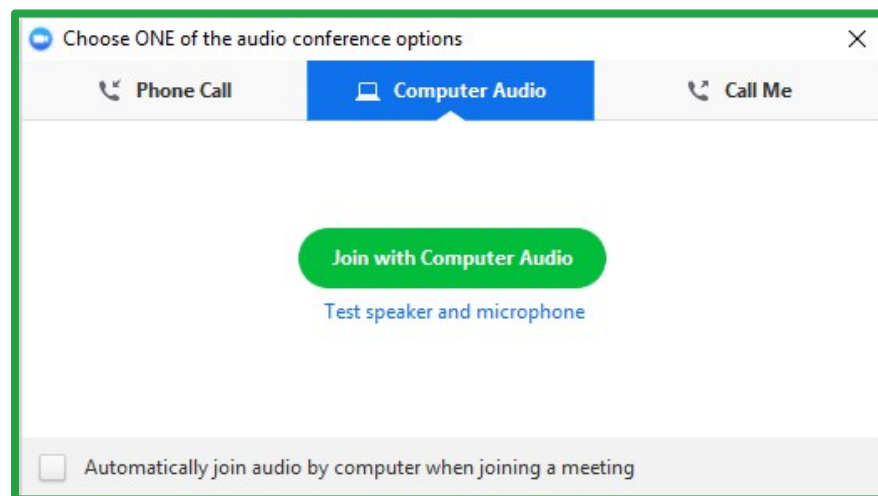
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# Welcome



**Michael R. Roush, M.A., AFC®**  
Director, Real Economic Impact Network  
National Disability Institute

# Webinar Agenda

- **Empowered Cities**
- Key findings and recommendations from financial counseling/coaching survey
- Tools and resources to build capacity to serve people with disabilities

# National Disability Institute (NDI)

- NDI is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to building a better economic future for people with disabilities.
- NDI is the first national organization committed exclusively to championing economic empowerment, financial education, asset development and financial stability for all persons with disabilities. NDI affects change through public education, policy development, training, technical assistance and innovative initiatives.

# National Disability Institute

National Disability Institute envisions a society where people with disabilities have the same opportunities to achieve financial stability and independence as people without disabilities.

Visit [www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org](http://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org).

# Welcome



**Colleen Galvin**  
Senior Vice President,  
New York Tristate Market  
Citi Community Development

# Citi Community Development

- Citi Community Development leads Citi's commitment to financial inclusion and economic empowerment for underserved individuals, families and communities across the U.S.
- Through innovative collaborations with municipalities, community groups and leading nonprofit organizations, Citi's expertise, products and services are harnessed to help expand opportunity for all.



[CitiCommunityDevelopment.com](http://CitiCommunityDevelopment.com)





# What Is Empowered Cities?

**Empowered Cities** is a landmark initiative to advance financial inclusion and economic opportunity for lower-income people with disabilities. Empowered Cities catalyzes municipal efforts to advance economic opportunity for people with disabilities.

# Webinar Agenda

- Empowered Cities
- Key findings and recommendations from financial counseling/coaching survey
- Tools and resources to build capacity to serve people with disabilities

# What is Disability?

- Physical, sensory, cognitive or mental impairment that substantially limits one of more major life activities.
- Individual experience varies by ...
  - Type of disability
  - Severity
  - Age of onset
  - Interaction with the environment
  - Socioeconomic characteristics
- Common element: Risk of being excluded from the financial mainstream.



# The Need for Financial Empowerment



**26%** of working-age people with disabilities live in poverty, compared with **11%** of those without disabilities.

- Disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty.
- Poverty and disability reinforce each other.
- People of color with a disability face an even harder economic reality.
  - 37% of African Americans with disabilities live in poverty; 24% of Non-Hispanic Whites; 29% of Latinos and 19% of Asian-Americans.
- Historically have not had access to targeted financial capability strategies; and
- Face myths that limit their financial empowerment.

# Presenter



**Nanette Goodman**  
Director of Research  
National Disability Institute

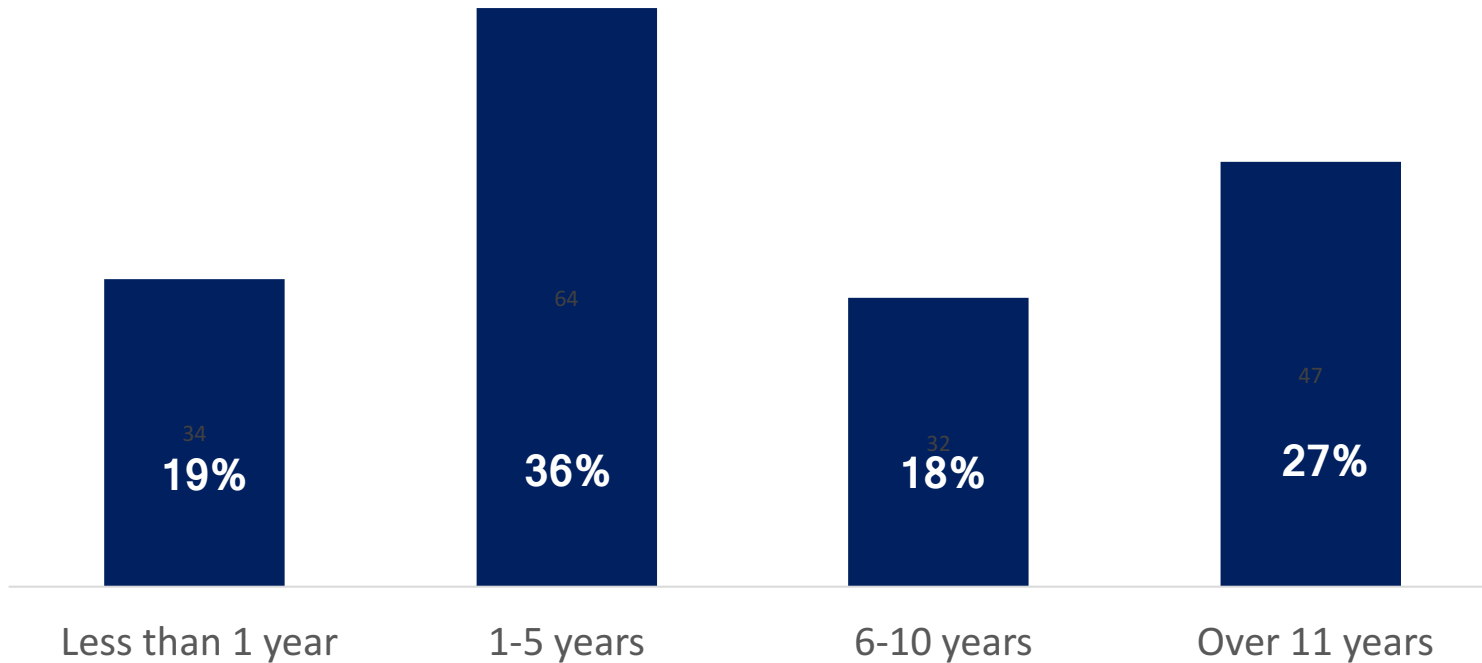
# Understanding the Needs of Financial Counselors and Financial Coaches to Serve People with Disabilities

# Survey of Financial Counselors and Financial Coaches

In 2019, as part of Empowered Cities, NDI surveyed financial counselors and financial coaches to understand their awareness and needs to better serve people with disabilities:

- Administered as an online and in-person survey
- Partner organizations invited their members to respond through newsletters, email blasts, social media and presentations
- Credit counselors, financial coaches, financial counselors, housing counselors

## *How long have you been providing financial coaching/counseling?*



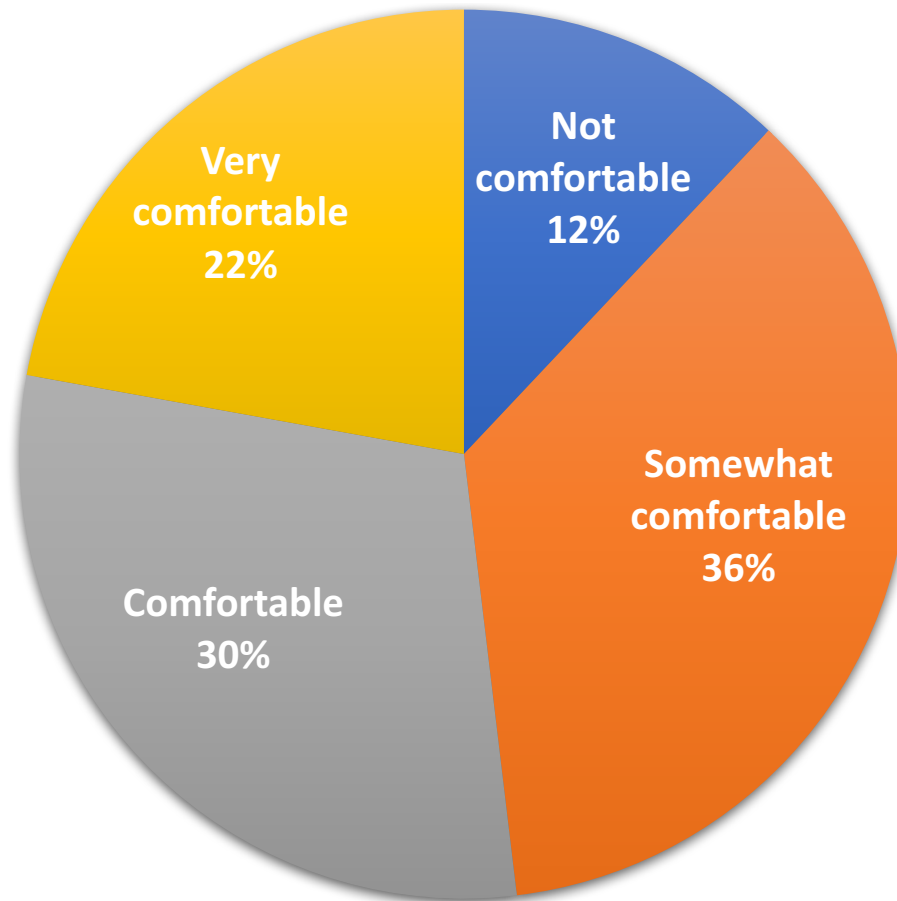


# Number of People with Disabilities Served

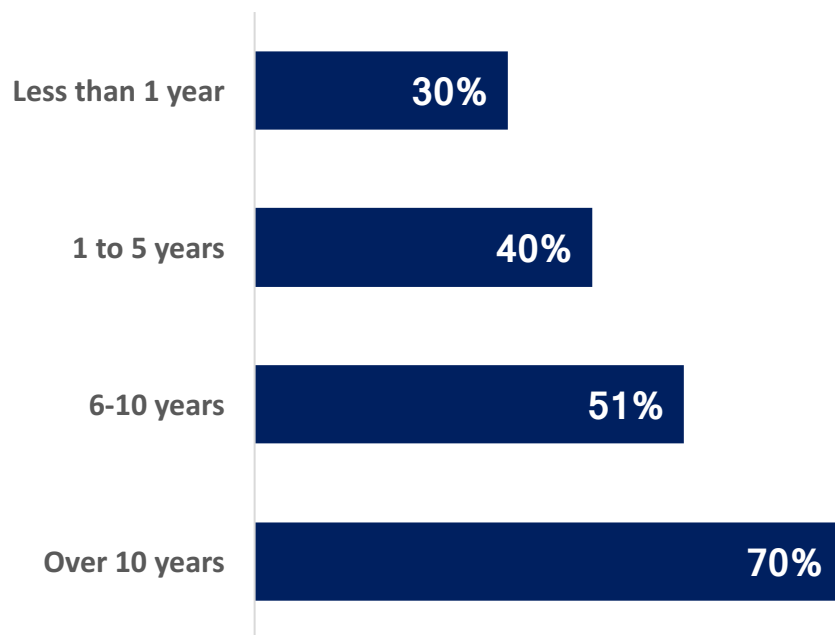
“Estimate of the number of individuals you have provided services to that have identified themselves a person with disability.”

	Percent
None	10%
Very few	61%
Around 20% (one in five)	18%
More than 20%, but less than one-half	6%
Half	2%
More than half	4%

# *How comfortable are you in providing financial coaching/counseling to persons with disabilities?*

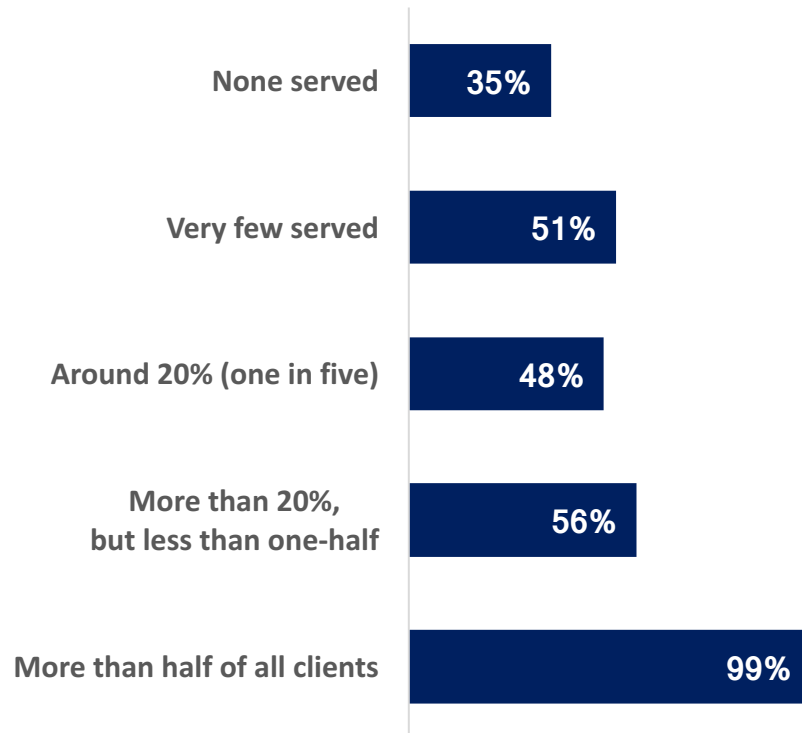


## ***Percentage of respondents indicating they are Very Comfortable or Comfortable serving people with disabilities, by length of time as a financial counselor or coach***



- Newer counselors tend to be less comfortable serving clients with disabilities than counselors with more experience.
- Even among the most experienced counselors, only 70% are comfortable serving clients with disabilities.

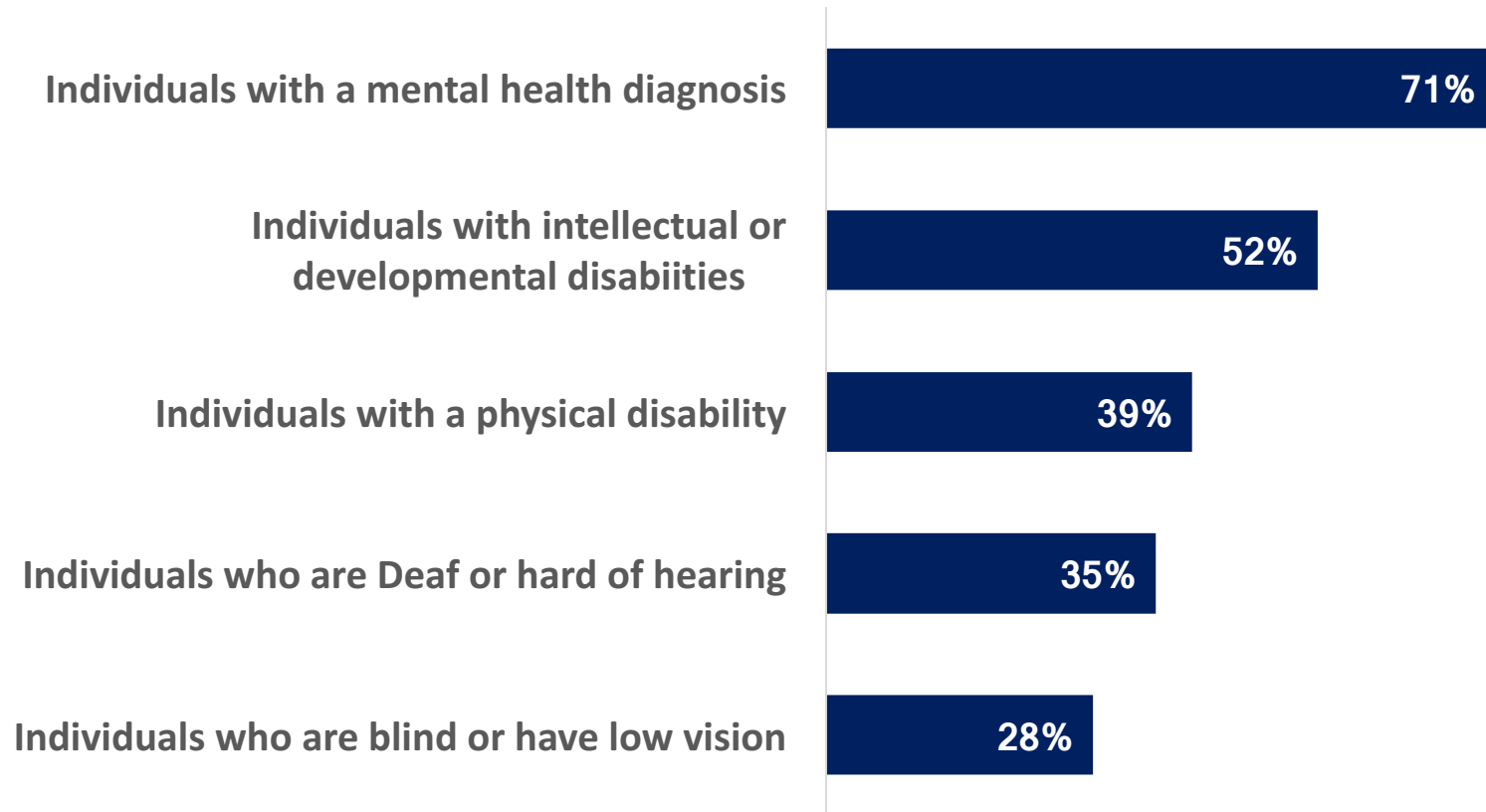
## *Percentage of Respondents Indicating they are Very Comfortable or Comfortable Serving people with disabilities, by the number of clients with a disability they have served*



### Experience matters:

- Counselors who serve few clients with disabilities expressed the lowest level of comfort serving them.
- Counselors who serve a large portion of clients with disabilities tend to be most comfortable.

## *Percentage of respondents who would like to learn more in order to better serve specified subpopulations of the disability community*



# Concerns about Serving Clients with Disabilities

	Percentage who shared concern:
Not sure of the services they might need that are specific to their disability	59%
Do not want to give them advice that would be detrimental to their access to benefits	58%
Not sure about their financial needs and what services they are able to access	47%
Do not want to say something wrong that would offend them	39%
Don't know where to refer them	35%

# Most Common Challenges Clients with Disabilities Express

	Percentage who cited this challenge:
Unable to afford bills	52%
Unable to save for future	51%
Fear of losing benefits	49%
Poor/no credit	41%
Overpayment or debt owed to Social Security	13%
Identity Theft	11%

# Identified Differences in Providing Financial Coaching/Counseling

- Need to adapt, clarify and slow down explanations to make sure the client understands and is not overwhelmed by the material, i.e. provided suggestions such as offering written checklists and additional real-world examples.
- Clients with disabilities are concerned that taking any actions to save or increase their income will compromise their disability benefits or access to services provided by other agencies.
- Clients with disabilities have very low incomes so they tended to want to focus on short-term budgeting rather than long-term financial services.



# Identified Differences in Providing Financial Coaching/Counseling (continued)

- No difference between clients with and without disabilities. Respondents explained that all clients, regardless of disability have individual needs and specific circumstances which the counselor needs to address.
- Characteristics of clients such as reticence to open up until they develop a trusting relationship with the counselor, difficulty focusing and following through, or having a high level of anxiety.
- Need to know the disability-specific resources in the community and several expressed frustration with the lack of appropriate resources.

## Comfort Level in Providing Services on Selected Topics

Topics	I am NOT comfortable with this topic
ABLE Accounts	69%
Assistive Technology / Alternative Financing Loan programs	64%
Impact of Disability Discharge of student loans	60%
Overpayment or debt owed to Social Security	60%
Work Incentives for Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance	60%
Control of financial decision making-Guardianship and Social Security Representative Payees	55%
Asset limits attached to public benefit programs	54%
Financial empowerment strategies specific to persons with disabilities	53%
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	49%
Understanding of the Disability Service System (Social Security Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disability Service System, etc.)	49%

# Preferred Method of Getting Information

Methods of gaining knowledge	Percentage who are likely to use resource:
Quick reference guides for download	86%
Quick reference guides to share with your clients during counseling sessions	82%
Access to a website with disability specific content to build counselor's knowledge	80%
Webinar training on financial empowerment strategies	77%
On-line self-paced training on financial empowerment strategies	77%
In-person training on financial empowerment strategies	67%
Online community where financial counselors/coaches can share tips, best practices, challenges and request resources or support	65%

# Takeaways

- Many counselors and coaches do not think they serve people with disabilities but they probably do.
- Many counselors and coaches are uncomfortable with their ability to serve people with disabilities and are looking for additional training.
- Many counselors and coaches see both similarities in serving this population, as well as differences, and recognize the need to learn more.
- There is a big opportunity for training counselors and financial coaches on how to better serve clients that have a disability.

# Recommendations

- Incorporate disability awareness training as part of your program to increase understanding of who people with disabilities are and the diversity of the community.
- Ensure your program uses universal design principles.
- Include, when appropriate, a question on intake forms such as ...
  - *“Do you have a long-term physical, hearing, seeing, cognitive, mental or emotional condition (illness, injury or disability)?”*
- Increase understanding of the unique financial challenges faced by people with disabilities and how to provide guidance and/or appropriate referrals through continuing education opportunities for your counselors/coaches.
- Develop a resource map and referral system to guide individuals to additional support that may be outside of your scope of knowledge (ex. benefits counseling).

## Recommendations (continued)

- Identify techniques and strategies to tailor sessions to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Recognize that for some individuals, building trust with someone outside of the disability community might take time.
- Incorporate public benefits education and savings opportunities that are specific to the disability community into financial coaching and counseling programs.

# Perspective from the Field on Survey Findings

# Webinar Agenda

- Empowered Cities
- Key findings and recommendations from financial counseling/coaching survey
- Tools and resources to build capacity to serve people with disabilities



# RESOURCES



**Quick Reference Guides**

**Information Briefs**

Visit [empoweredcities.com](https://empoweredcities.com) to download free materials for municipalities and community partners!

# Tools and Resources

## Quick Reference Guides

- Data Collection
- Defining Disability
- Understanding Disability Service Systems
- Identifying Disability Partners
- The Financial Status of People with Disabilities
- Integrated Financial Capability Services
- Incorporating Savings Options for People with Disabilities into Financial Empowerment Programs

## Briefs

- Identifying the Financial Needs of Persons with Disabilities in Local Communities: Examples from 3 municipalities
- Including People with Disabilities in Financial Empowerment Services: Examples from Community-Based Organizations
- Lead the Vision Forward: 4 strategies municipalities can use to build financial inclusion for all

# Tools and Resources

## Quick Reference Guides that address specific barriers

- Entrepreneurship: *“I can’t work for others anymore.”*
- Homeownership: *“I gave up my dreams of owning a home because I receive a public benefit.”*
- Medical Benefits: *“I can’t afford to lose my medical benefits if I work.”*
- Money: *“Other people manage my money; I don’t know where to start.”*
- Part-Time Work: *“I receive SSI/SSDI, so I can only work part-time.”*
- Savings: *“I cannot save money or I will lose my benefits.”*
- Spending: *“I don’t have money left over at the end of the month.”*

<https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/downloads/>

# Financial Inclusion Essentials

A new self-paced online course for financial counselors, financial coaches, disability service providers, and others who want to learn more about building the financial well-being of people with disabilities.

This course will help you ...

- Debunk myths and stereotypes;
- Understand money management rights and resources;
- Navigate favorable tax credits and services;
- Understand employment resources;
- Provide education on major acquisitions; and
- Understand ABLE accounts.

*Available January 2020*

*This course was developed in partnership with  
National Disability Institute (NDI) and AFCPE.*

**[afcpe.org/certification-and-training/financial-inclusion-essentials](https://afcpe.org/certification-and-training/financial-inclusion-essentials)**

# Q&A

“Together, we must remove the physical barriers we have created and the social barriers that we have accepted. For ours will never be a truly prosperous nation until all within it prosper.”

-- President George H. W. Bush, at the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act

**Thank you for the work you are doing to assure financial inclusion is a reality for ALL.**

# Thank You



[CitiCommunityDevelopment.com](http://CitiCommunityDevelopment.com)

# Wrap-Up and Thank You



# Tell Us How NDI Can Support Your Work

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**Sign up for the Empowered Cities listserv:**

<http://bit.ly/empowered-cities-signup>