

**Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living (PCIL)
Uniform Construction Code**

Special Project Fact Sheet

Why are we doing this project?

The Uniform Construction Code (UCC) replaces the various obsolete (and in some areas, nonexistent) building codes in use today with a continuously updated standard. If this code is effectively enforced, it will assure accessibility to most new and renovated buildings. PCIL expects each CIL to have a staff member certified as a BOCA Building Codes Accessibility Specialist. The Specialist will be qualified to advocate authoritatively for code compliant accessibility. Also, this coordinated statewide effort will provide quality training to the construction industry. This will not only enhance the industry's ability to understand and comply with the UCC; it will also build bridges and promote cooperation between the industry and the independent living movement. The training sponsored by the CIL will clarify the relationship between the UCC and the ADA in order to provide the resources needed to help for CIL staff person(s), consumer advocates, and the construction industry to ensure the construction of accessible facilities throughout Pennsylvania.

Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA)

Founded in 1915, Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. is a nonprofit membership association, comprised of more than 16,000 members who span the building community, from code enforcement officials to materials manufacturers. They are dedicated to preserving public health, safety and welfare through the effective, efficient use and enforcement of Model Codes. BOCA members are professionals who are directly or indirectly engaged in the construction and regulatory process.

BOCA is the original professional association representing the full spectrum of code enforcement disciplines and construction industry interests. They are the premier publishers of model codes. BOCA International promotes excellence the building community profession. BOCA offers the certification for Building Codes Accessibility Specialist. For more information, please go the following link on the world wide web: http://www.bocai.org/cert_access_insp.asp. The online course is also offered via BOCA. For more information, please go to the following link on the world wide web: <http://www.bocai.org/campus/homepage.htm>.

Uniform Construction Code, Act 45 of 1999

In November of 1999, Governor Tom Ridge signed Act 45, which established the UCC throughout Pennsylvania. The UCC will provide uniform standards for new construction and renovations around the state. Commercial buildings will comply with the International Building Code (IBC); residential builders will choose either the, International Residential Code (IRC) or CABO (Council of American Building Officials) code. The code applies to almost all buildings, excluding manufactured and industrialized housing (which are covered by other laws), agricultural buildings, and certain utility and miscellaneous buildings.

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The UCC has many advantages. It will end much of the confusion brought about by the various requirements of obsolete and conflicting standards that are in use today. It will require builders to use materials and methods that have been professionally evaluated for quality and safety. Inspections will be required to ensure compliance. (While this will raise the cost of building in some areas, most would agree that the extra cost is a wise investment in quality and safety.)

For the disability community, buildings complying with the IBC are virtually compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Department of Justice has not yet certified the IBC, though negotiations have been going on for some time; however, the IBC has a high degree of accessibility built in. An enforced building code has the teeth that the ADA lacks and will produce architecturally accessible buildings. For one- or two-family homes, the IRC sets standards for safety and quality that are constantly updated, and there is a national effort to include VisitAbility and other access features.

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) is charged with developing the regulations that will implement the new code. L&I's UCC Implementation Team projects that UCC regulations will be published as final rulemaking by the end of 2001. The code should be "online" early next year.

Implementation of the UCC should be of great interest to the disability community. The UCC changes the way accessibility is accomplished in Pennsylvania, in some ways superseding the ADA. The new standard, if enforced, will ensure that new and renovated buildings are accessible to people with disabilities.

The disability community must provide strong, direct advocacy to guarantee enforcement. The law requires that inspectors be certified as Accessibility Specialists to review plans and to inspect for accessibility. This means that they must pass an exam on the appropriate sections of the code. Also, the UCC approach to accessibility is different from the ADA Accessibility Guidelines; advocates must be trained to use it.

Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association (EPVA)

Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association (EPVA) has taken the lead in code issues in Pennsylvania. EPVA has staff involved with code development on the national level. These staff persons understand not only the code itself, but also what it takes to enforce it. Mr. Brian Black and Dominic Marinelli will be conducting the local trainings at each CIL or CIL's designated site. Mr. Black is also a member of the ICC/ANSI A117.

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Accredited Standards Committee for Accessibility. Mr. Black's expertise in the IBC enables him to provide authoritative instruction on these issues. Labor and Industry (L&I) has allowed continuing education credits for Mr. Black's previous training events.

Their contact information is:

Mr. Brian Black, Director of Building Codes and Standards
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Mid-Atlantic ADA Information Center

The Mid-Atlantic ADA Information Center provides information, materials and funding for training about the ADA. The ADA Information Center is one of ten regional centers funded by the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research (NIDRR); the US Department of Education, grant # H133D60006, to provide technical assistance, training and materials on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A major goal of the Center is to promote accessibility to commercial and other public facilities, something the UCC will help to accomplish

PA ADA Coalition (PADAC)

The PADAC is funded by the Mid-Atlantic ADA Information Center to promote the philosophy of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by serving as a clearinghouse for information and educational resources for business. Brochure enclosed.