TSA’s Improvements for Screening of Passengers with Disabilities
Fiscal Year 2019 Report to Congress

October 3, 2019

Transportation Security Administration
Message from the Acting Deputy Administrator

October 3, 2019

I am pleased to present the following report, "TSA’s Improvements for Screening of Passengers with Disabilities," prepared by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The report summarizes the initiatives TSA has implemented to improve screening of passengers with disabilities.

TSA compiled this document as required by section 1950 of the TSA Modernization Act (P.L. 115-254), signed into law October 15, 2018.

Following congressional requirements, we are providing this report to the following Members of Congress:

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman, House Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security

Inquiries relating to this report may be directed to TSA’s Legislative Affairs office at (571) 227-2717.

Sincerely,

Patricia F.S. Cogswell
Acting Deputy Administrator
Executive Summary

Section 1950 of the *TSA Modernization Act* (Pub.L 115-254), requires TSA to make improvements in screening individuals with disabilities. These improvements must include: (a) revisions of the training requirements for Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) related to the screening of passengers with disabilities; (b) development of best practices based on complaint trends and accommodation requests; (c) placement of signs at major airports which provide contact information for the appropriate employees designated to resolve disability-related complaints that arise from the screening process; and (d) submission of a report to congress containing complaint trends, best practices to address areas of concern, and average screening wait times for individuals with disabilities.

This report describes the mechanisms TSA uses to comply with this act, and enable TSA to consistently review and improve the screening process for individuals with disabilities. TSA’s strategy is to:

- Engage with the disability community;
- Examine complaint trends to identify emerging or continued areas for focus;
- Routinely review and update training materials, and updated retraining; and
- Communicate with the traveling public through signage at checkpoints, and the website on how to get assistance.

In terms of communicating with the disability community, TSA established and regularly engages with its Disability and Medical Conditions Coalition (Coalition) to identify gaps or barriers to access for members of the public with disabilities. The Coalition includes more than 450 national, regional, and local community-based organizations and advocacy groups – including groups representing or serving individuals with physical disabilities, chronic conditions and intellectual/developmental disabilities (ID/DD).

As a recent example, TSA’s Civil Rights & Liberties, Ombudsman and Traveler Engagement (CRL/OTE) arranged two focus group sessions in March, 2019, for Coalition executives to provide TSA senior leadership with information on TSA standard and TSA Pre✓® screening experiences. Based on the input from the focus group sessions, TSA revised both its initial and recurrent training in the third quarter of fiscal year 2019.

TSA Contact Center records from October 1, 2018, through May 31, 2019, indicate travelers filed a total of 1,816 complaints alleging disability-based discrimination. The most frequent concerns raised involved: (1) screening of individuals with mobility disabilities other than wheelchairs or scooters; (2) screening of individuals using wheelchairs or scooters; and (3) screening of medically-necessary liquids, gels, and aerosols. To address these complaint trends, CRL/OTE, Security Operations, and TSA’s Training and Development office updated training materials and then distributed them across the TSO workforce.

TSA also works with the Coalition to create publications for both officers and travelers to remove barriers, close gaps, and improve interactions for travelers with disabilities and medical
conditions with TSA. As an example, in both March and April, 2019, CRL/OTE’s Disability Branch distributed job aids to all members of TSA’s screening workforce, addressing proper screening of medically necessary liquids, gels, and aerosols.

CRL/OTE also holds a semi-annual telephonic coalition meeting, for the purpose of delivering updates and information from various TSA program offices, and answering questions from coalition organizations. In addition, TSA holds an annual disability and multicultural coalition conference that is currently in its 17th year. This year’s conference was held on September 23, 2019, in the Washington, DC area. The conference is designed to strengthen the relationship between TSA and its coalition members through information sharing and solicitation of feedback, while continuing to increase the awareness of various issues and concerns of the traveling public with disabilities, medical conditions and diverse populations. This collaboration advances TSA's security mission while ensuring the civil rights and civil liberties of the traveling public are protected.
TSA’s Improvements for Screening of Passengers with Disabilities

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I. Legislative Language

This document has been compiled in response to section 1950 of the *TSA Modernization Act* (Pub.L 115-254), which states:

**SEC. 1950. IMPROVEMENTS FOR SCREENING OF PASSENGERS WITH DISABILITIES.**

(a) REVISED TRAINING. —
(1) IN GENERAL. —Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, in consultation with nationally-recognized veterans and disability organizations, shall revise the training requirements for Transportation Security Officers related to the screening of passengers with disabilities, including passengers with disabilities who participate in the PreCheck program.

(2) TRAINING SPECIFICATIONS. —In revising the training requirements under paragraph (1), the Administrator shall address the proper screening, and any particular sensitivities related to the screening, of a passenger with a disability—

(A) traveling with a medical device, including an indwelling medical device;
(B) traveling with a prosthetic;
(C) traveling with a wheelchair, walker, scooter, or other mobility device;
(D) traveling with a service animal; or
(E) with sensitivities to touch, pressure, sound, or hypersensitivity to stimuli in the environment.

(3) TRAINING FREQUENCY. —The Administrator shall implement the revised training under paragraph (1) during initial and recurrent training of all Transportation Security Officers.

(b) BEST PRACTICES. —
The individual at the TSA responsible for civil rights, liberties, and traveler engagement shall—
(1) record each complaint from a passenger with a disability regarding the screening practice of the TSA;
(2) identify the most frequent concerns raised, or accommodations requested, in the complaints;
(3) determine the best practices for addressing the concerns and requests identified in paragraph (2); and
(4) recommend appropriate training based on such best practices.
(c) SIGNAGE. —
At each category X airport, the TSA shall place signage at each security checkpoint that—
(1) specifies how to contact the appropriate TSA employee at the airport designated to address complaints of screening mistreatment based on disability; and
(2) describes how to receive assistance from that individual or other qualified personnel at the security screening checkpoint.

(d) REPORTS TO CONGRESS. —
Not later than September 30 of the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of this Act, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Administrator shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the checkpoint experiences of passengers with disabilities, including the following:
(1) The number and most frequent types of disability related complaints received.
(2) The best practices recommended under subsection (b) to address the top areas of concern.
(3) The estimated wait times for assist requests for passengers with disabilities, including disabled passengers who participate in the PreCheck program.
II. Background

The mission of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is to protect the Nation’s transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. With more than 60,000 employees, TSA delivers public-facing security, custody, and customer service programs and activities worldwide. More than 45,000 TSA officers screen over 2.2 million passengers each day at nearly 440 federalized airports. Since inception of the TSA Pre✓® program on December 4, 2013, the more than 400 TSA Pre✓® enrollment centers process an average of 130,000 individuals each month. The TSA Contact Center, which serves as the central point of contact for all non-media public inquiries, responds to more than one million questions from the public each year.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about one in five individuals living in the United States has a disability, and nearly 95 percent of their disabilities are not visible. This report discusses the steps TSA has taken, and plans to take, for continued improvements for screening passengers with disabilities.

To help support its mission, the TSA regularly engages with its Disability and Medical Conditions Coalition (Coalition). Coalition membership has grown over the years and consists of more than 450 national, regional, and local community-based organizations and advocacy groups. CRL/OTE has a robust outreach and engagement strategy with Coalition members which includes the following:

- Issuing monthly e-broadcasts
- Partnering with members to create educational and training materials for the workforce
- Attending Coalition member-hosted conferences around the country
- Facilitating sessions for Coalition executives and TSA leadership to share ideas and information
- Hosting tours of the TSA equipment testing facility
- Convening an Annual Coalition Conference featuring Federal agency executives and senior leadership speakers

The CRL/OTE regularly engages with the Coalition to identify gaps or barriers to improve screening access at airports for members with disabilities. The CRL/OTE gathers insights and recommendations to better inform TSA’s people, processes, technology, and systems solutions to promote access and improve the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to process through security screening with minimal complications. In addition to policy, training, outreach, and engagement activities, it also conducts inquiries of traveler complaints alleging disability-based discrimination in TSA’s security screening activities.

In FY 2017, TSA conducted a self-evaluation and launched a number of enterprise-wide initiatives to improve access to its programs and activities by members of the public with disabilities. On August 13, 2019, TSA’s Component Plan, as required by DHS Directive No. 065-01, was approved by the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Office for Civil Rights.
and Civil Liberties, and it details many ongoing and future activities for strengthening equal access and opportunity for individuals with disabilities in the TSA’s public-facing programs and activities, including security screening. Listed below are highlights outlined within the Component Plan of TSA efforts to improve access to programs and activities for individuals with disabilities:

- During FY 2016 and 2017, CRL/OTE partnered with the Contracting & Procurement (C&P) to secure mandatory inclusion of Section 504 nondiscrimination clauses in the TSA’s contracts for delivery of its public-facing programs and activities;
- In FY 2017, CRL/OTE partnered with the TSA’s Innovation Task Force and RCA to embed Section 504 equities in solicitations to industry (e.g., Broad Agency Announcements) and testing and deployment of people, process, and technology solutions at the checkpoints;
- From FY 2014 and continuing, CRL/OTE conducts onsite and online training and monitoring of the TSA’s operations at federalized airports to promote compliance with Section 504; and
- In FY 2017, CRL/OTE achieved incorporation of Section 504 physical access equities in the TSA’s Checkpoint Design Guide. Some examples include, ensuring a chair is available at each checkpoint for individuals unable to stand for a period of time; including lane width meeting accessibility requirements, and each checkpoint is equipped with an accessibility gate.

The final version of the TSA Component Plan will soon be posted on the DHS website along with Plans from other DHS components.

III. Discussion

In March 2019, CRL/OTE arranged two focus group teleconferences with Coalition executives from 11 nationally recognized disability and veterans’ organizations and executives and TSA senior leadership.

The purpose of the teleconference was to address the three points outlined in Section 1950 of the TSA Modernization Act: Revised Training, Best Practices, and Signage.

An agenda and set of questions on standard and TSA Pre✓ security screening activities (for example, program access, effective communication, physical access, provision of reasonable accommodations) were provided in advance of each teleconference. They provided additional information through written comments, which we incorporated in this report.
The following organizations were invited to the focus group teleconferences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COALITION GROUP I</th>
<th>COALITION GROUP II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Order of Purple Heart</td>
<td>AMVETS (American Veterans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amputee Coalition of America</td>
<td>Paralyzed Veterans of America*</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Diabetes Association*</td>
<td>Wounded Warriors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hearing Loss Association of America*</td>
<td>Open Doors Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Council of Independent Living*</td>
<td>CORAM, Inc.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Association</td>
<td>Guide Dog Foundation, Inc.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism Society of America*</td>
<td>Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Council on Certified Dementia Practitioners*</td>
<td>Parent Education Advocacy Training Center*</td>
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</table>

Figure 1: Coalition group participants at a TSA-led teleconference. *Participated in the teleconference.

A. Revised Training to Improve Interactions with Travelers with Disabilities and Medical Conditions

TSA provides ongoing etiquette and sensitivity training as well as training on how to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities and medical conditions. During the focus group sessions and through written comments, TSA asked for input on experiences with TSA standard and TSA Pre✓® screening activities. TSA used this input to revise initial and recurrent training requirements for Transportation Security Officers (TSOs). The changes include:

- Refining new hire training, such as adding role players and scenarios that include individuals with disabilities to provide more exposure to these types of situations at a simulated checkpoint.
- Changing on-the-job training to expose officers to a broader variety of screening situations involving individuals with disabilities.
- Improving recurrent training, including a new Public-Facing Interactions course that will launch in FY 2020, along with customized training scenarios launched in March 2019 that reinforce proper communication with, and screening of, individuals with certain types of disabilities and medical conditions.

The focus group session also revealed a benefit to updating TSA’s Passenger Support Specialist (PSS) training. These updates cover a broad range of disability etiquette and sensitivity topics, including those specified in this statute as follows, to address proper screening of a passenger traveling with any of the following:

- A medical device, including an indwelling medical device;
- A prosthetic;
- A mobility device;
• A service animal; or
• Sensitivities to touch, pressure, sound or hypersensitivity to stimuli in the environment.

Launched in FY 2012, the PSS program was designed to provide immediate screening assistance for travelers with disabilities and medical conditions. PSS training includes etiquette and sensitivity practices, and effective communication practices for officers developed in partnership with the Coalition. PSS training also includes knowledge checks based on traveler discrimination complaints from actual security screening scenarios.

The updated PSS training is anticipated to launch in FY 2020, and will be required as part of the Agency’s TSO Career Progression initiative. Travelers may request PSS assistance at the checkpoint, or may contact TSA Cares in advance of travel. TSA Cares is a toll-free helpline available for travelers with disabilities and medical conditions. They can call the toll-free number or Federal Relay 711 to get the latest information on screening and to request PSS assistance in advance of travel.

B. Best Practices Address Most Frequent Complaints from Travelers with Disabilities or Medical Conditions

In FY 2014, in partnership with Coalition executives, CRL/OTE launched its Awareness Series and TSO in the Know publications (see Appendix C) to share best practices for screening individuals with disabilities and medical conditions with TSA’s frontline workforce. Through the Awareness Series, a different disability or medical condition is featured each month. Appendix A provides an example of a publication issued to the workforce. Through this publication, TSA provides officers with both a briefing about the disability or medical condition along with best practices identified by Coalition executives for engaging with travelers with the disability or medical condition.

To develop the content for the TSO in the Know series, CRL/OTE partners with Coalition executives to identify best practices for successfully engaging with travelers with disabilities. A library of these publications is available for download on CRL/OTE’s intranet page. It includes screening procedures for individuals on the autism spectrum, individuals who use mobility aids, individuals with service animals, and individuals who use prostheses.

CRL/OTE also hosts recorded webinars featuring Coalition executives, who share best practices. TSA makes these webinars available on demand through its Online Learning Center library. In addition, CRL/OTE issues What to Expect publications to Coalition members on a monthly basis. These publications feature different disabilities or medical conditions and provide useful tips and information to help prepare travelers for screening at the checkpoint. Appendix B provides an excerpt of a What to Expect publication.

Based on TSA Contact Center records from October 1, 2018, through May 31, 2019, travelers filed a total of 1,816 complaints alleging disability-based discrimination. The most frequent concerns raised were as follows:

• 17.6 percent alleged discrimination and/or failure to accommodate when undergoing screening with mobility disabilities (other than wheelchairs or scooters);
• 16.2 percent alleged discrimination and/or failure to accommodate when undergoing screening while using wheelchairs or scooters; and
• 9.8 percent alleged discrimination and/or failure to accommodate when undergoing screening with medically-necessary liquids, gels, and aerosols.
• The remainder of the complaints covered a broad range of issues.

To address the most frequent concerns raised in complaints, CRL/OTE, Security Operations, and TSA’s Training and Development office updated training materials developed in partnership with Coalition executives and distributed them across the TSO workforce. These materials were designed to promote greater awareness on engaging with and screening individuals with disabilities and medical conditions in the areas identified above. The CRL/OTE’s Disability Branch also incorporated best practices in its webinar and in-person training to address these trends in complaints. Best practices include the following:

• Listen to, and acknowledge, verbal or written information the traveler provides about a disability, medical condition, or accommodation request;
• Based on the information provided, communicate the screening options to the traveler according to security screening policies and procedures;
• Respect the traveler’s choices and screen according to established policies and procedures;
• Offer assistance, but don’t be offended if the traveler declines;
• On the traveler’s request, provide a private screening and/or change your gloves; and
• Treat all travelers with dignity, respect, and courtesy.

Currently, TSA does not specifically track the wait times for passengers with disabilities; however, we are developing requirements and will further demonstrate such capable technology to allow for the automated collection of checkpoint processing data and wait times on a national level. TSA, in partnership with automated tracking of passenger movements vendors, will assess the viability to specifically track the wait times for passengers with disabilities.

C. Required Signage to Notify Travelers of Their Rights

In August 2016, TSA started requiring checkpoint signage to notify travelers of their rights under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including how to file a discrimination complaint. In April 2019, the required signage was updated to include a mention of the PSS program. The updated signage also specifies how to contact the appropriate TSA employee at the airport, designated to address complaints of screening mistreatment based on disability; and describes how to receive assistance. Specifically, the sign states: “If you need assistance or have concerns about your screening at the checkpoint, ask to speak to a Supervisor or Passenger Support Specialist.” Appendix C shows the current signage.
IV. Conclusion

TSA implemented a robust strategy to update training products based on input from national disability rights and veterans’ organizations. TSA posts required signage at the checkpoints advising travelers how to get assistance during screening and continues to regularly examine complaint trends to identify areas where refresher training is needed. Finally, TSA has fostered partnerships with TSA’s Disability and Medical Conditions Coalition to create promising practice publications and training designed to remove barriers, close gaps, and improve engagements with travelers with disabilities and medical conditions.
Appendix A

Traveler Civil Rights

The nonprofit, National Cancer Survivors Day Foundation, provides free resources, education, and networking opportunities to hundreds of hospitals, support groups, and other cancer-related organizations that host NCS events in their local communities. The NCS Foundation defines a survivor as anyone living with a history of cancer - from the moment of diagnosis through the remainder of life. The effects of cancer are lasting and simply don't end when treatment does.

Remember the following for screening a traveler who has disclosed they have cancer or that they have a history of cancer:

- The traveler may have prescription and over-the-counter medications, to include medically-exempt liquids, gels, and aerosols that may exceed 3.4 ounces. Although medical documentation is not required, acknowledge any verbal or written information presented.
- Engage in an interactive dialogue with the traveler. The traveler may request a reasonable accommodation, such as moving to the front of the line or remaining seated during screening. If the traveler is traveling with a companion, the companion is permitted to move to the front of the line.
- Acknowledge the TSA Disability Notification Card, or any verbal or written notice of the disability, medical condition, or accommodation requested by the traveler. Be sure to discuss options for screening prior to the commencement of screening.
- If the traveler requires alarm resolution, offer a private screening and allow the traveling companion to accompany the traveler when requested. Ask whether there are any medical devices and sensitive areas prior to touching the traveler. Based on information the traveler shares with you, screen the traveler according to the Screening Checkpoint SOP.
- Treat the traveler with dignity, courtesy, and respect throughout the process.

Make every effort to accommodate individuals who request an alternative method of screening. Follow all steps of the Screening Checkpoint SOP, and use your network if you need assistance.
Appendix B

Heart and Stroke Awareness Month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TSA Pre✓®</th>
<th>Standard Screening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travelers eligible for TSA Pre✓®:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Travelers not eligible for TSA Pre✓®:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Present your boarding pass and government-issued ID to the TSA travel document checker;</td>
<td>o Present your boarding pass and government-issued ID to the TSA travel document checker;</td>
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<tr>
<td>o The TSA travel document checker will scan your boarding pass barcode;</td>
<td>o The TSA travel document checker will scan your boarding pass barcode;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Proceed to the TSA Pre✓® line.</td>
<td>o Proceed to the standard screening line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At the beginning of screening:</strong></td>
<td><strong>At the beginning of screening:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Travelers may use the TSA Disability Notification Card to communicate discreetly with TSA officers. However, showing this card, or other medical documentation, will not exempt a passenger from screening.</td>
<td>o Travelers may use the TSA Disability Notification Card to communicate discreetly with TSA officers. However, showing this card, or other medical documentation, will not exempt a traveler from screening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Travelers with internal medical devices who do not wish to be screened via WTMD can request to be screened by AIT or a Pat Down.</td>
<td>o Travelers with internal medical devices who do not wish to be screened via WTMD can request to be screened by AIT or a Pat Down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Inform the TSA officer if you:</td>
<td>o Inform the TSA officer if you:</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Have any disability or a medical device such as a pacemaker or defibrillator, where they are located and</td>
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Appendix C

Equal Opportunity Notice
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and implementing regulations at 6 C.F.R. Part 15 apply to TSA’s security screening activities. Individuals with disabilities must have access to, and an equal opportunity to participate in, TSA’s security screening activities.

TSA Cares is a helpline that provides travelers with disabilities and medical conditions assistance during the security screening process. Contact TSA Cares 72 hours prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint:

TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov
(855) 787-2227
Federal Relay: 711
Weekdays: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET
Weekends/Holidays: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET

If you need assistance or have concerns about your screening at the checkpoint, ask to speak with a Supervisor or Passenger Support Specialist.

If you feel you have been discriminated against on the basis of a disability or medical condition, you may file a discrimination complaint at:

TSA Contact Center
TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov
(866) 289-9673
Federal Relay: 711
Weekdays: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET
Weekends/Holidays: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET

Or by mail to: Disability Branch
Office of Civil Rights and Liberties, Ombudsman and Traveler Engagement
Transportation Security Administration
701 S. 12th Street, Mail Stop TSA-33
Arlington, VA 20598

You must file your complaint within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act; failure to do so may result in dismissal of the complaint.