RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON
Independent Living

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Community Residents Can Increase ADA Compliance by
"Taking It to the Streets"

LAWRENCE, KS — One way to make businesses in a community more accessible to people with disabilities is to simply tell the store personnel how to do it. In the Taking It to the Streets research project, 96 establishments in Chicago were told of their accessibility deficits and Americans With Disabilities Act compliance (ADA) requirements. Six months later, 37% of them had made improvements.

The most common improvements were the least costly and included moving merchandise to widen aisles and providing assistance to customers with disabilities. Other improvements noted were adding grab bars to restrooms, purchasing portable ramps, making dressing room accessible, and installing automatic door openers.

Chain stores, the study found, were more likely to make accommodations costing money than smaller businesses. Having a prior relationship with the manager, too, increased changes made. Reasons given for not making changes were lack of time, cost, resistance to the law, lost information, and management change.

Brigida Hernandez and Fabricio Balcazar, study investigators, presented "Taking it to the Streets: Ethnic Minorities Seeking Community Inclusion" June 3-

6, 2004 at the Society for Disability Studies 17th Annual Meeting Program in St. Louis, MO.

The study was aimed to help blacks and Latinos with disabilities make their own communities accessible and become more empowered in the process. It was part of the Research and Training Center on Full Participation in Independent Living project, a division of the Research and Training Center on Independent Living (RTCI/IL) at the University of Kansas. The RTC/IL furthers independent living for people with disabilities by collaborating with target populations on productive research and innovative knowledge distribution.

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