



Florida Housing Coalition Conference Reflections
By Jose Morales, 2018

First, I want to truly thank WID for the tremendous opportunity provided that allowed me to learn, engage, and represent individuals with disabilities from the community. I am also very appreciative of the support, coordination, and advocacy of both Loretta and Kat. They were really good at providing me an orientation and awareness of the venue. They were able to provide me some of the material ahead time in an accessible format. Most importantly, they were always really easy to find, and everyone at the conference was aware and understood the purpose of our presence.

My name is Jose Morales. I am the Lead Information Referral Coordinator and ADA Manager at a center for independence in Jacksonville, Florida. One of the top three barriers we have identified for people with disabilities in my region is housing. In the whole state, there is a housing crisis, but for people with disabilities, there's an even greater shortage. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of representation from the disability community at forums where decisions on housing are made. Topics, such as universal design, accessibility, ADA accommodations, and outreach to disability groups, are rarely if at all discussed. The Disability Ambassador program allowed me and many in my same demographic to have a voice and advocate equal access and opportunity.



Jose as a Disability Ambassador

The program enhanced me personally and professionally. I gained a tremendous amount of information and resources that I will be able to use to impact others. I also got the opportunity to network and obtain contacts that will impact my community in a disability housing task force

that I am a part of. I also got leads that may support me in the future to identify more housing inventory for people with disabilities in Jacksonville. Some of these contacts will also be able to participate and attend in events that will increase the awareness of people with disabilities related to the housing issue.

Honestly, I am very honored and proud to have been able to participate. I obviously want to thank JPMorgan Chase and WID for making this happen and allowing people with disabilities like myself to engage and promote essential barriers and opportunities for our community. I will always be thankful and respect this experience.

Jose Morales is the Lead Information Referral Coordinator and ADA Manager at the Independent Living Resource Center (ILRC) in Jacksonville, Florida. He is also a member of the Mayor's Disability Council and a part of a housing task force that identifies barrier and solutions for accessible and affordable housing options for people with disabilities.