

CIRA Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program

Central Illinois Regional Airport (CIRA) is starting a new program to assist travelers and visitors with disabilities which is becoming a global lanyard initiative across airports.

CIRA is among the many U.S. Airports to join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program which allows a person to self-identify as someone with a hidden disability who may require additional assistance. This will allow passengers who require a little extra assistance with travels through CIRA made easier.

Many travelers have disabilities that are not immediately visible but still create challenges in their daily lives. The sunflower lanyard helps create a simple way to signal airport staff that a passenger has a disability without revealing the nature of the disability.

Simply, airlines can provide the lanyard to any passenger who asks for one. There is no prerequisite for them and passengers should still arrange assistance with their airlines if a disability service is needed. Hidden disabilities can include autism, anxiety disorders, epilepsy, learning disabilities, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and many other impairments or chronic illnesses.

Overall goal is to provide passengers with a hidden disability a more comfortable, safe and easier travel through CIRA.

Other accessibility services available at CIRA:

- Mother's Lounge
- Wheelchair access
- Visual Paging
- Free Shuttle Bus Service
- Service Animal Relief Area

Additional Information:

- A lanyard or more information can be upon request at operations@cira.com
- Javier Centeno, ADA Coordinator, 309.663.7384
- Airport Operations, 309.834.7396 24/7/365
- TSA Cares, a program that allows a traveler to pre-arrange to have a TSA officer assigned to assist them through the checkpoint screening process. More on TSA Cares at <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/passenger-support>
- The CIRA website under the "At the Airport" tab under Accessibility <https://cira.com/at-the-airport/accessibility/>

CIRA Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program 101

What are Hidden Disabilities:

Hidden disabilities are not always visible but can affect the daily life of a person living with them. Types of hidden disabilities include (but are not limited to): Low Vision or hearing loss, Autism Spectrum, anxiety disorders, colostomies, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, dementia, Crohn's disease, epilepsy, fibromyalgia, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), learning disabilities, or mobility issues.

History

The Sunflower Lanyard Scheme® was originally created to act as discreet identification that the wearer, or their companion, has a hidden disability and might require additional assistance. Gatwick was the first airport to introduce the scheme in May 2016, and multiple other airports across the UK have adopted the sunflower lanyard. Based on the success of the lanyards in airports additional organizations have adopted them including supermarkets, cinemas, shopping centers, railway stations, museums, and sport venues.

How does it Work?

Wearing a sunflower lanyard enables passengers to self-identify having a hidden disability. By wearing a lanyard, airport staff will be aware that a passenger has a hidden disability. It is a voluntary program and passengers are not required to participate. Airport staff will not know a passenger's specific disability unless they self-declare it on the tag. Airport staff are trained to recognize the lanyards as identifiers and ask if additional help is needed. They are to never ask what the disability is.

Considerations that passengers with hidden disabilities might appreciate:

- Some disabilities, such as autism, chronic pain, dementia, anxiety, or hearing impairment, are invisible. **NEVER question** someone about their disability
- Speaking face-to-face to allow lip reading
- Talk and act normally, using clear and easy-to-understand language
- People with poor vision will not have direct eye contact and may not be using a cane or dog.
- Do not pet working service dogs
- Be Patient! Give them time to finish what they are trying to say
- Making others aware a person may be struggling or have behavioral issues
- Allowing more time to complete the travel process
- Describe what you are doing or will do to help
- **Remember to be kind and show respect!**

[Does wearing the lanyard give access to expedited security screening?](#)

Wearing a lanyard **DOES NOT** guarantee fast tracking through security or any preferential treatment. Passengers are still required to arrange special assistance with their airlines. However, wearing a lanyard will assist airport staff to recognize that additional assistance may be needed.

[Who can wear a lanyard?](#)

Anyone who self identifies as having a hidden disability or is supporting someone who has a hidden disability can wear a lanyard. No additional verification of a specific disability is required, and they are provided at no extra cost. Each Airline has been provided with them to distribute.

[Where can I find a lanyard?](#)

The Bloomington Normal Airport Authority has provided each one of the airlines with lanyards to distribute. However, a lanyard can also be picked up on the second floor of the terminal in Suite 200 at the Administration office.