

THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

DISABILITY

INCLUSION

POLICY



ABBREVIATIONS

- CFRN - Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- CLE - Continuing Legal Education
- CRA - Child Rights Act
- DAPD - Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities
- DAPWDA - The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018)
- DIC - Disability Inclusion Committee (Prohibition) Act, 2018
- DIO – Disability Inclusion Officer
- DPO - Disability Policy Officer
- INCLUSIVITY MONITORING TEAM (IMT)
- NBA – NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA
- NCPWD – NATIONAL COMMISSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
- NLS – NIGERIA LAW SCHOOL
- PWD – PERSON WITH DISABILITY
- NCPD - National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
- LWDF – LAWYERS WITH DISABILITIES FORUM
- UNCRC - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- TPPA - Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (2015)
- VAPPA - Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (2015)
- LWD – Lawyer with Disability

➤ **PREFACE**

The practice of law is founded on principles of justice, fairness, and equal opportunity. As lawyers, we are entrusted with upholding the rule of law and advocating for the rights of all individuals. This responsibility extends beyond the courtroom and into the culture of our profession itself.

The Nigerian Bar Association has upheld its motto “Upholding the Rule of Law” in its over 80 years of existence and in furtherance of this commitment created within it a Forum for Lawyers with Disabilities, known as the **Nigerian Bar Association Lawyers with Disabilities Forum (NBALWDF)** in 2021

The NBALWDF under its present leadership deemed it necessary to formulate a Disability Inclusion Policy within the NBA, which is long overdue considering the complexities and dire need for lawyers with disabilities in Nigeria to be fully integrated into legal practice in Nigeria.

Disability inclusion is not merely a matter of compliance with legislation; it is a reflection of our collective commitment to dignity, respect and equity. Lawyers with disabilities in Nigeria bring unique perspectives, resilience, and expertise that enrich our profession and strengthen our capacity to serve diverse communities. Ensuring their full participation is essential to advancing justice and maintaining public trust in the legal system.

This Disability Inclusion Policy sets out the values, principles, and practical measures that guide our profession in fostering an environment where lawyers with disabilities can thrive. It emphasizes accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and the removal of barriers—both physical and attitudinal—that hinder equal participation.

By adopting this policy, we affirm that inclusion is integral to professional excellence. We recognize that a diverse and inclusive legal community is better equipped to understand the complexities

of society, advocate effectively for clients, and uphold the highest standards of justice.

This document is therefore both a call to action and a framework for accountability. It invites every lawyer, law firm, and legal institution to embrace disability inclusion as a professional and ethical imperative, ensuring that our profession reflects the values we defend every day.

Patience Etumudon, Esq

Chairperson,
NBA Lawyers with Disabilities Forum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Disability Policy is fashioned out as a comprehensive framework by which the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) guarantees compliance with extant Disability Rights Legislations and promoting inclusivity. The policy is structured to provide access to legal services and employment opportunities within the Association. It is designed to guide lawyers, staff, and management in upholding professional responsibilities while fostering a supportive environment for lawyers with disabilities in Nigeria.

This policy instrument will affirm the NBA's commitment to non-discrimination and equal opportunity for its members with disabilities, establish clear procedures for accommodating clients, employees, and visitors with disabilities. It will also align practice standards within the NBA to its statutory obligations under our municipal Disability legislations and International Conventions on the subject matter.

The Policy shall apply to all lawyers with disabilities within the NBA, paralegals and administrative staff. It is also envisages that the interests of clients, witnesses, and third parties with disabilities are protected and guaranteed and shall ultimately extend to recruitment, workplace adjustments, and service delivery within constituent firms of lawyers within the NBA.

This Policy is hinged on key principles of:

Accessibility: Which ensures physical, digital, and procedural accessibility in all Law firm's operations within the NBA.

Reasonable Accommodation: Provision of structures that is tailored towards individualised adjustments to enable full participation of lawyers with disabilities in the NBA without undue hardship.

Confidentiality: Measures to be put in place to protect the privacy of disability-related information in accordance with professional ethics.

Awareness & Training: Equipment of lawyers with disabilities and staff of law Firms of members of the Association with knowledge of disability rights and inclusive practices.

The relevant Committee of the NBA shall be saddled with the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the Policy by:

- ***Conducting accessibility audits of office premises and digital platforms.***
- ***Establishing clear processes for requesting and granting accommodation for lawyers with disabilities within the NBA***
- ***Designating a Disability Policy Officer (DPO) within the NBA to oversee compliance and handle grievances arising from non - compliance with the Policy.***
- ***Integrate disability awareness into continuing legal education programmes in conjunction with the relevant Committee(s) of the NBA***

This Policy Document is comprised of 10 Sections.

Sections 1-3 introduces the Policy, the circumstances that necessitated the Policy, the letter and spirit of the Policy and the legal framework under which the policy was midwived.

Section 4 embodies the crux of the Policy which deals on the prohibition of discriminatory practices against lawyers with disabilities. It also makes provisions which ensure equal access to professional development opportunities and leadership roles for lawyers with disabilities within the NBA.

Sections 5 and 6 addresses the lingering problems associated with accessibility to public places and in particular to firms where lawyers with disabilities work. The Section also provides for procedures on accommodation of lawyers with disabilities in Law Firms who are affiliates of the NBA.

Section 7 establishes an Inclusivity Monitoring Team (IMT) at the National and while reporting to the President directly they collect data from the Disability Inclusion Committee (DIC) or Officer within a law firm/bar association from the branches nationwide, which will be a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with the policy. The Committee or officer as the case may be shall also provide mentorship programmes for lawyers with disabilities in the NBA and encourage peer support networks.

Section 8 provides for mandatory disability inclusion training for all staff of law Firms, the Association of sensitization workshops on unconscious bias against lawyers with disabilities in the NBA, accessibility matters and ongoing professional development on inclusive practice.

Section 9 provides for measures to ensure regular audits of accessibility in law firms annual reporting on disability inclusion progress and mechanisms for complaints, redress, and enforcement of disability rights under this policy.

Section 10 lays the foundation for collaboration with disability rights Associations, advocacy for broader adoption of disability-friendly policies across the legal profession and promotion of public awareness of lawyers with disabilities in the NBA as equal contributors to justice.

Conclusion

By adopting this Disability Policy, the NBA demonstrates its commitment to inclusivity, compliance, and professional excellence. It will ensure that lawyers in the association and their staff are equipped to serve clients with dignity, uphold human rights, and maintain the integrity of the legal profession in Nigeria.

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NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION (NBA) DISABILITY POLICY

SECTION 1

1.0 PREAMBLE

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) is committed to promoting equality, dignity, and full participation for lawyers with disabilities. This Disability Policy establishes a framework for inclusion, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation within the NBA and the legal profession at large. It affirms the NBA's dedication to upholding the rights of lawyers with disabilities and fostering an environment free from discrimination, stigma, or exclusion.

1.2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that lawyers with disabilities are able to participate fully and effectively in all NBA activities and the legal profession, on an equal basis with others.

1.2.2 Objectives

This Policy seeks to:

- a. Promote equal access to opportunities, resources, services, and professional advancement for lawyers with disabilities.
- b. Foster an inclusive and respectful culture that values diversity and upholds the rights and dignity of lawyers with disabilities.

- c. Provide reasonable accommodations and support services to facilitate full participation of lawyers with disabilities in NBA activities and programs.
- d. Increase visibility, representation, and meaningful participation of lawyers with disabilities within the NBA and the broader legal community.
- e. Ensure a supportive, accessible, and barrier-free environment for all legal professionals.
- f. Empower lawyers with disabilities through access to resources, mentorship, networking, leadership opportunities, and professional development programs.

1.3 POLICY STATEMENT

The NBA adopts a zero-tolerance stance toward discrimination on the basis of disability. All lawyers, staff, interns, trainees, partners, and service providers with disabilities shall be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Disability shall not be a barrier to membership, participation, leadership, employment, or professional advancement within the NBA.

1.4 SCOPE OF APPLICATION

1.4.1 This Policy applies to:

- a. All NBA members
- b. NBA staff, interns, and trainees
- c. Branches of the NBA
- d. Committees, sections, and forums of the NBA

- e. Partners, consultants, and third-party contractors engaged by the NBA

1.4.2 The Policy covers all NBA-related activities, including but not limited to:

- a. Conferences, Annual General Meetings, and branch meetings
- b. Continuing Legal Education (CLE) and professional development programs
- c. Committees, leadership roles, and decision-making processes
- d. Employment, internships, and volunteer engagements
- e. Digital platforms, publications, and communications

SECTION 2

Definitions of Disability

- a- In this section disability is define as;
 - ✓ A physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.
 - ✓ A disadvantage or handicap, especially one imposed or recognized by the law.
 - ✓ A disadvantage or handicap, especially one imposed or recognized by law, e.g. "the plaintiff was under disability"¹
 - ✓ A person is disabled if; the person have physical or mental impairment where the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to do normal day-to-day activities.²
 - ✓ However, the legal definition of disability is that; "Person with disability" means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with

¹ <https://chloetear.co.uk>

² Section 6 of the Equality Act, 2010; <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others.³

- ✓ Also, disability is any long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the full and effective participation of disabled people in society on an equal basis with others.⁴
- ✓ Thus, the new definition of disability is that disability means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment- or a functional limitation- whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation...⁵

b- For the purposes of this section, 21 types of disabilities envisage which covers physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental health conditions like Blindness, Hearing Impairment, Loco motor Disability, Intellectual Disability, Mental Illness, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Specific Learning Disabilities, Chronic Neurological Conditions, Multiple Sclerosis, Speech & Language Disability, Thalassemia, Hemophilia, Sickle Cell Disease, Leprosy Cured, Dwarfism, Acid Attack Victims, Parkinson's Disease, and Multiple Disabilities.⁶

c- These categories aim for broader inclusion beyond traditional definitions, thus;

1- Blindness: Total inability to see.

2- Low Vision: Partial sight.

3- Leprosy-Cured Persons: Cured but facing physical deformities or disabilities.

4- Hearing Impairment: Difficulty hearing.

5- Loco motor Disability: Impairment of muscles, bones, or joints affecting movement.

6- Dwarfism: Significantly shorter stature.

³ <https://megscpwd.gov.in>

⁴ Define under the united nation convention on the rights of persons with disability (UNCRPD).
<https://www.disabilitysupport.gov.nz>

⁵ <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca>

⁶ India's Right of Persons with Disability, 2016

- 7- Intellectual Disability: Challenges with reasoning and adaptive skills.
- 8- Mental Illness: Affects thinking, feeling, mood, and behavior.
- 9- Autism Spectrum Disorder: Complex developmental condition.
- 10- Cerebral Palsy: Affects movement and posture.
- 11- Muscular Dystrophy: Progressive muscle weakness.
- 12- Chronic Neurological Conditions: Like Multiple Sclerosis or Parkinson's.
- 13- Specific Learning Disabilities: Difficulties with reading, writing, math.
- 14- Multiple Sclerosis: Autoimmune disease affecting the nervous system.
- 15- Speech and Language Disability: Difficulties with communication.
- 16- Thalassemia: Inherited blood disorder.
- 17- Hemophilia: Blood clotting disorder.
- 18- Sickle Cell Disease: Red blood cell disorder.
- 19- Multiple Disabilities: Combination of disabilities, including deaf-blindness
- 20- Acid Attack Victims: Survivors with physical/psychological effects.
- 21- Parkinson's disease: Neurological disorder causing tremors.

d- The other types of disability which include; stroke, spina bifida, arthritis, spinal cord injury, epilepsy, and muscular dystrophy.⁷

SECTION 3

1- Legal Framework

- 1- The Association in developing this policy adopted several existing laws and conventions considerably, included:

⁷ <https://www.enableme.ke>

- i- **The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) (amended).** Discrimination under the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) is primarily addressed in Section 42, which prohibits unfair treatment or restrictions based on ethnicity, community, place of origin, sex, religion, or political opinion, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. While the constitution bans such discrimination, its de jure (legal) protections sometimes clash with de facto (actual) societal practices, especially concerning gender equality in areas like citizenship transmission for foreign spouses, highlighting gaps between legal ideals and lived realities.
Nigeria's Constitution promotes equality, but specific protection against disability discrimination is detailed in the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 (DAPD), which complements constitutional principles like Section 42 (freedom from discrimination) and Chapter II (social objectives) by banning disability-based discrimination, establishing the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) to ensure rights to education, health, and access, and mandating accessibility in public spaces, thereby integrating constitutional ideals into concrete law.
- ii- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);** The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a landmark treaty defining children (under 18) as human beings with their own rights, shifting focus from passive subjects to individuals with civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights, emphasizing survival, development, protection, and participation, ensuring rights like life, education, health, identity, freedom from harm, and family life, making it the most ratified human rights treaty ever.
- iii- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007).** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was adopted in

2006 and opened for signature in 2007, becoming a landmark human rights treaty that shifted the view of disabled people from charity recipients to rights-holders, promoting inclusion, autonomy, and equal participation in society by covering rights in education, health, employment, and accessibility. It applies existing human rights principles to disability, requiring States to remove societal barriers (physical, attitudinal) and ensure full enjoyment of rights, entering into force in 2008 after 20 ratifications.

- iv- **Child's Rights Act (2003).** The Nigerian Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003 prohibits discrimination against children on grounds like ethnicity, origin, sex, religion, or circumstances of birth, emphasizing equal dignity and care, and mandating that the child's best interest be paramount in all actions, though challenges exist in implementation, especially regarding disability rights due to a "subject to available resources" clause. It ensures rights to survival, development, education, health, and freedom from abuse, but requires state adoption for full effect, with 24 states implementing it as of recent reports.

- v- **The Penal Code (1960).** Penal codes address discrimination by criminalizing actions based on race, religion, sex, etc., often under specific articles for incitement or hate speech, while also prohibiting discriminatory practices in employment, housing, and public services, with penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment, depending on the jurisdiction and severity, like Nigeria's penalties for disability discrimination or Zambia's two-year maximum for racial discrimination, all stemming from constitutional rights to equality and dignity.

- vi- **The Criminal Code (1916).** "Criminal Code" typically refers to the laws used to prosecute crimes in a specific jurisdiction. While most anti-discrimination laws are civil (found in human rights or Labour Acts), several criminal codes include specific

provisions that criminalize or increase penalties for discriminatory acts. Below are notable examples of how discrimination is addressed within the criminal codes of various jurisdictions as of 2025:

- 1- **Nigeria (Criminal Code Act)**; Nigeria's Criminal Code Act primarily applies to the southern states and contains several sections that address discrimination or have been criticized for being discriminatory:
- 2- **Gender-Based Discrimination**: Section 214 and Section 360 have been highlighted for unequal treatment. For example, indecent assault against a man is a felony punishable by three years, while the same act against a woman is a misdemeanor punishable by two years. Northern Nigeria (Penal Code): Section 55(1)(d) allows for "correction" of a wife by a husband as long as it does not result in "grievous hurt," a provision often cited as discriminatory against women.
- 3- **Sexual Orientation**: Sections 214 and 217 criminalize "carnal knowledge against the order of nature" and "gross indecency" between men, with penalties up to 14 years.
- 4- **Canada (Criminal Code)**. In Canada, the Criminal Code works alongside the Canadian Human Rights Act. Hate Crimes: Sections 318 and 319 criminalize the advocacy of genocide and the public incitement of hatred against identifiable groups based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity.
- 5- **Sentencing Aggravators**: Section 718.2 requires judges to consider whether an offense was motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on protected characteristics as an aggravating factor for harsher sentencing.
- 6- **European Jurisdictions Luxembourg**: As of April 2023, the Criminal Code was amended to double fines and prison sentences for any offense committed with discriminatory intent based on origin, skin color, sex, disability, or religion.
- 7- **San Marino**: Article 179- bis punishes anyone disseminating ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or inciting

discriminatory acts on the grounds of nationality or sexual orientation.

- 8- **Sweden:** Chapter 29, Section 2 of the Swedish Criminal Code treats discriminatory motives as an aggravating circumstance in sentencing.
 - 9- *Other Jurisdictions:*
 - a- **Zambia:** Section 70(1) of the Penal Code makes it a criminal offense to publish writing or utter words expressing hatred or ridicule toward persons based on race, tribe, or color, punishable by up to two years in prison.
 - b- **Albania:** Article 265 of the Criminal Code punishes the incitement of hatred on grounds of ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation with 2 to 10 years of imprisonment.
- vii- **The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018).** In 2018, Nigeria passed the landmark Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, a crucial piece of legislation aiming for full societal integration by outlawing disability discrimination, establishing the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), and mandating accessibility, with penalties for violations, though implementation faced challenges and required states to "domesticate" the law, a process with varied progress across Nigeria.
- viii- **The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (2015) (As re-enacted).** While the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 (TIP Act) focuses on human trafficking, it's Nigeria's separate Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 (DAP Act) that directly tackles disability discrimination, outlawing discrimination in all areas (employment, transport, education, etc.) and establishing penalties, including fines and jail time, with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) overseeing implementation and handling complaints. The TIP Act mentions disabilities in the context of victims but

the DAP Act is the primary law protecting disabled persons from discriminatory acts, ensuring their integration and rights.

- ix- **The Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (2015).** While Nigeria's Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP Act) of 2015 aims broadly to stop violence, it mainly focuses on sexual & gender-based violence (SGBV) and needs state-level domestication for full effect, with specific protections for PWDs (Persons with Disabilities) better addressed by the later Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, which criminalizes disability discrimination and ensures PWDs aren't denied services or access to life, though both laws face implementation challenges in some states.

- x- **Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015).** The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 provides a framework for protecting the rights of all Persons in Nigeria's criminal justice system, including those with disabilities, by emphasizing human dignity and restorative justice. While it does not contain a standalone "discrimination" section specifically for disability, its general protections are reinforced by the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018.

- xi- **Special People's Law of Lagos State (2010).** Lagos's "Special People Law" (officially the Lagos State Special People Law 2011) and Nigeria's national Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 prohibit discrimination against PWDs in areas like employment, education, transport, and public services, ensuring rights to healthcare, accessibility, and inclusion, with penalties for violations, though enforcement and awareness remain challenges. While the national law sets standards, Lagos also has its own legislation (LASODA) to implement these rights locally, focusing on removing barriers and providing supports.

- xii- **Anambra State Disability Rights Law (2018).** Anambra State has a Disability Rights Law (domesticating the National Act) that prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities (PWDs) in all forms, covering areas like employment, education, transport, and public services, with penalties for offenders; however, despite the law, PWDs in Anambra face ongoing discrimination, including inaccessible infrastructure, denial of agricultural inputs, and exclusion from services, highlighting a significant gap between legislation and practical enforcement, as noted by advocacy groups like JONAPWD and CCD.
- xiii- **Kaduna State Disability Law (2021).** Kaduna State has adopted Nigeria's national Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, which bans disability-based discrimination, mandates accessibility in public spaces, and sets quotas for PWDs in employment, penalizing offenders; however, implementation faces challenges like lack of awareness, political will, and functional enforcement bodies, with PWDs still struggling for rights in areas like education and employment despite these laws.
- xiv- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) prohibits disability discrimination by affirming inherent dignity, equality, and non-discrimination for all persons (Articles 1, 2, 7), ensuring everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, health, and security (Article 25). While not naming disabilities specifically, its universal language guarantees rights for disabled individuals, forming the foundation for later, more detailed treaties like the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that explicitly address disability inclusion, reasonable accommodation, and accessibility, preventing exclusion from mainstream life.
- xv- **Convention on the Eradication of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979).** While the 1979 CEDAW (Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) doesn't explicitly name disability, its broad anti-discrimination principles and the Committee's interpretations (like General Recommendations 18 & 25) extend to women with disabilities, recognizing their compounded discrimination, and mandate States to address gender-based barriers in all areas, ensuring they benefit equally from women's rights protections, often requiring specific attention alongside the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) for comprehensive protection.

- xvi- **The Physically Challenged Persons Social Health Insurance Programme (2005).** In Nigeria, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)—officially launched and operationalized in 2005—included the Permanently Disabled Persons Social Health Insurance Programme as one of its specialized service categories. Despite its existence, significant systemic and practical discrimination hindered the effective participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) during this period.

- xvii- **Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, 2023.** Discrimination against persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria is prohibited by the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, with penalties like fines and imprisonment, while the Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, 2023 provides the detailed framework for enforcing accessibility in physical structures, transport, and information, making discrimination in these areas an offense with specific sanctions, backed by initiatives like compliance certificates from the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD).

SECTION 4

Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity in the Nigerian Bar Association

Preamble

This policy shall serve as a framework for promoting inclusion, accessibility, and respect for diversity within the legal profession, consistent with international human rights standards and best practices.

1. Guiding Principles

- This policy is grounded in the principles of equality, dignity, and non-discrimination as enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 1 and 7)* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 26)*.
- It affirms Nigeria's obligations under the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*, particularly *Articles 5 (Equality and Non-Discrimination)*, *9 (Accessibility)*, *27 (Work and Employment)*, and *29 (Participation in Public and Political Life)* and the *Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018)*,

4. Non-Discrimination

- No lawyer shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability in hiring, work assignments, promotions, compensation, or termination.
- Discrimination includes direct, indirect, and systemic practices that disadvantage Lawyers with disabilities.

- Harassment, stigmatization, or derogatory treatment of lawyers with disabilities is strictly prohibited.

5. Equal Opportunity

- Lawyers with disabilities shall have equal access to professional opportunities, including leadership roles, continuing legal education, and participation in committees or decision-making within the NBA.
- Recruitment and promotion processes within the constituent Firms in the NBA shall be designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and accessibility.
- Reasonable accommodations shall be provided by Law Firms who are members of the NBA to enable lawyers with disabilities to perform their duties effectively.

6. Accessibility

- All physical facilities, digital platforms, and communication systems shall be made accessible in compliance with extant disability rights legislations and international best practices.
- Meetings, hearings, and events shall be organized in ways that ensure full participation of lawyers with disabilities, including provision of assistive technologies, accessible formats, and support services.

7. Confidentiality and Respect

- Information regarding a lawyer's disability shall be treated with strict confidentiality and disclosed only with the lawyer's consent or as required by law.
- Lawyers with disabilities shall be respected as professionals with equal standing and shall not be subjected to paternalistic or exclusionary attitudes.

9. Remedies and Enforcement

- Any lawyer who experiences discrimination or denial of equal opportunity may file a direct complaint to the NBA President.
- Appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken against individuals or Law Firms found to be in violation of these provisions.
- The NBA shall provide remedies, including corrective measures and reasonable compensation, where discrimination against a lawyer with disability is established.

10. Continuous Improvement

- The Association shall promote awareness and training on disability rights and inclusion.
- Policies shall be periodically updated to reflect evolving standards, technologies, and best practices in disability inclusion.

SECTION 5

1- Accessibility Measures

- a- The Association⁸ shall in collaboration with NCPWD⁹ observe and enforce the measures as contained in this policy and any other related Policy for the inclusion of disabilities in Nigeria, as thus;
 - i- **Physical accessibility:** NBA shall ensure a befitting and design environment, buildings, and products to be usable by everyone, including people with disabilities, by removing barriers and ensuring equal access to spaces, transportation, and services, using features like ramps, wide doorways, accessible restrooms, clear signage (including

⁸ The Nigerian Bar Association

⁹ National Commission of Persons with Disabilities Act.

Braille/tactile), and inclusive layouts to support mobility, sensory, and other needs and elevators for lawyers with disabilities in Nigeria.

- ii- **Digital accessibility:** Digital accessibility for lawyers with disabilities involves creating accessible digital tools (websites, documents, software) using web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) - keyboard navigation, alt text, clear structure- and providing assistive tech compatibility (screen readers, speech software, screen-reader compatible websites, accessible legal databases) to ensure equal access to justice and practice, making legal info perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust for all, aligning with legal duties and ADA compliance¹⁰.
- iii- **Communication accessibility:** Sign Language Interpreters, captioning assistive technologies. Communication accessibility means removing barriers so everyone, regardless of disability (hearing, vision, cognitive, etc.), can access and share information equally, involving respectful practices like using captions, plain language, alternative formats (audio, Braille, large print), providing choices in contact methods, and offering extra time for communication.

- 2- **ACCESSIBILITY MONITORING TEAM:** there shall be inaugurated NBA- Inclusion Monitoring Team (NBA-IMT) embedded with a task to ensure the NBA- DIP strict compliance, which include;
 - a- Ensuring every Law firm in Nigeria is disability friendly compliance,
 - b- Ensuring the employability of Lawyers with Disabilities in every law firm in Nigeria.
 - c- Regular audits and reviews shall be conducted to assess compliance and identify areas for improvement.

¹⁰ ADA Compliance means following American with Disabilities Act.

- d- Lawyers with disabilities shall be consulted in the development and evaluation of policies affecting them.
- e- It serve as a medium to convey a complaint from the LWD to the NBA president.

SECTION 6

6.0- REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

- a- Reasonable accommodation refers to modifications or adjustments made in the workplace to enable individuals with disabilities to perform their job duties effectively and enjoy equal employment opportunities.¹¹
- b- “Accessibility.” Accessibility means designing products, services, environments, and digital content so everyone, regardless of age, ability, or disability, can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with them, ensuring equal participation and independence by removing barriers and supporting assistive technologies like screen readers or magnifiers. It's about inclusion, enabling people with visual, hearing, motor, or cognitive impairments to have the same opportunities as others.

6.1 Right to Reasonable Accommodation

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) recognizes the right of lawyers with disabilities to reasonable accommodation in order to enable full, effective, and equal participation in NBA activities, employment, leadership roles, and professional development opportunities.

¹¹ under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires employers to provide necessary adjustments to qualified individuals with disabilities unless doing so would cause undue hardship to the employer. This includes changes to the work environment or the way tasks are typically performed, allowing individuals with disabilities to have equal opportunities in the workplace

Reasonable accommodations shall be provided unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the NBA.

6.2 Procedures for Requesting Accommodation

6.2.1 Submission of Requests

Lawyers with disabilities may submit a written request for reasonable accommodation to the NBA–Lawyers with Disabilities Forum (NBA-LWDF) Liaison Officer through:

- a. Official NBA email channels; or
- b. A designated online accommodation request portal, where applicable.

6.2.2 Required Information

Requests for accommodation shall include the following information:

- a. A clear description of the accommodation requested;
- b. The reason for the request, without requiring disclosure of the specific or underlying disability; and
- c. Preferred contact details for follow-up communication.

6.2.3 Supporting Documentation

Where necessary, the NBA may request supporting documentation from a qualified professional to verify the need for accommodation. Such documentation shall be limited strictly to information required to assess the request and shall not include unnecessary or intrusive details regarding the individual's disability.

6.2.4 Types of Reasonable Accommodation

The NBA shall consider, but is not limited to, the following forms of reasonable accommodation: a. Flexible schedules, hybrid participation, or remote work arrangements;

b. Provision of adaptive or assistive equipment and technology;

c. Sign language interpretation, captioning, or other communication supports;

d. Accessible venues, meeting spaces, and materials;

e. Modification of duties, responsibilities, or participation modalities where appropriate; and

f. Any other reasonable accommodation required to enable a lawyer with a disability to function effectively and participate fully in NBA activities.

6.3 Timeline for Processing Accommodation Requests

6.3.1 Acknowledgement

The NBA shall acknowledge receipt of an accommodation request within three (3) working days of submission.

6.3.2 Decision

A written decision shall be communicated to the applicant within ten (10) working days, stating whether the accommodation is approved, modified, or declined, and outlining any additional steps required.

6.3.3 Implementation

Approved accommodations shall be implemented within thirty (30) days from the date the decision is communicated, unless circumstances require an alternative timeline, which shall be communicated promptly to the applicant.

6.3.4 Appeals Process

A lawyer with a disability who is dissatisfied with the accommodation decision may submit a written appeal to the President of the Nigerian Bar Association within thirty (30) days of receiving the decision.

The appeal shall be reviewed and a written response issued within thirty (30) days of receipt.

6.4 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- a. Confidentiality: All disability-related information, including accommodation requests and supporting documentation, shall be treated as strictly confidential and stored securely.
- b. Limited Disclosure: Such information shall only be disclosed to individuals with a legitimate need to know for the purpose of assessing, approving, or implementing accommodations.
- c. Record-Keeping: Records relating to accommodation requests and outcomes shall be maintained separately from general personnel or membership files.
- d. Data Protection: All records shall be handled in compliance with applicable data protection and privacy laws.

6.5 Commitment to Equal Participation

Through the provision of reasonable accommodations, the NBA reaffirms its commitment to ensuring equal access, dignity, and full participation for lawyers with disabilities in all aspects of NBA activities and the legal profession.

SECTION 7

7.0- Support Structures for the Implementation of the Policy

This Policy shall be operationalized by the following support structures and responsibilities to be carried out by the **Disability Inclusion Officer** (DIO) of the NBA

A Disability Inclusion Officer acts as the bridge between policy and practice, ensuring that lawyers with disabilities and clients are not only accommodated but actively included in the activities. Their role is

strategic, operational, and cultural—driving systemic change across the profession.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISABILITY INCLUSION OFFICER

1. Policy Development & Compliance

- Ensure NBA's policies align with Disability Right Laws.
- Draft and update accessibility guidelines for recruitment, promotion, and client services.
- Monitor compliance with internal and external disability inclusion commitments.

2. Accessibility & Workplace Adjustments

- Identify and remove barriers in physical spaces, technology, and processes.
- Oversee reasonable accommodations for lawyers with disabilities and also clients with disabilities.
- Promote accessible communication formats (screen-reader friendly documents, captioned webinars, etc.).

3. Awareness & Training

- Organize training sessions on disability awareness, unconscious bias, and inclusive practices.
- Provide resources to Managers and Human Resource Managers on supporting employees/lawyers with disabilities.
- Lead initiatives during Disability Rights Day in Nigeria or similar observances.

4. Talent Recruitment & Retention

- Encourage hiring of lawyers and staff with disabilities.

- Develop mentorship and sponsorship programmes for lawyers with disabilities.
- Track representation of disabled lawyers across associate, partner, and leadership levels.

5. Client & Community Engagement

- Ensure services are accessible to disabled clients (physical access, communication aids).
- Partner with disability advocacy groups and Associations.
- Represent the NBA in external disability inclusion symposia and workshops.

6. Monitoring & Reporting

- Collect data on disability inclusion progress (representation, retention, satisfaction).
- Report regularly to leadership on inclusion goals and outcomes.
- Benchmark against industry standards and share best practices.

SECTION 8

TRAINING AND AWARENESS ON DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE NBA

Disability inclusion training is vital for lawyers with disabilities because it empowers them to thrive professionally, dismantles systemic barriers, and strengthens the legal profession's commitment to equity and justice.

The benefits of Disability Inclusion Training in the NBA cannot be over emphasized. Below are the salient benefits

- **Confidence & Empowerment:** Training equips lawyers with disabilities to navigate workplace dynamics, assert their rights, and access reasonable adjustments.

- **Cultural Change:** It fosters awareness among colleagues, reducing stigma and encouraging openness about disability.
- **Client Service:** Inclusive lawyers are better positioned to serve disabled clients, ensuring accessibility in communication, representation, and justice delivery.
- **Legal Compliance & Beyond:** While laws like the ***Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018)*** mandate accessibility, training goes further by embedding inclusion into everyday practice, making it a cultural norm rather than a legal checkbox
- **Breaking Barriers:** Many lawyers with disabilities face systemic challenges such as inaccessible workplaces, under-reporting of disability status, and limited accommodations. Training helps dismantle these barriers by educating firms and colleagues on inclusive practices.

Lawyers in the NBA will garner more knowledge on the topical issues surrounding disability rights which training offers

- **Talent Retention:** Lawyers with disabilities are often loyal, hardworking, and skilled problem-solvers. Without inclusion, firms risk losing valuable talent and perspectives. Training which this policy advocates sharpens and harnesses these potentials.
- **Representation:** Lawyers with disabilities bring true life experiences that enriches advocacy, especially for clients with similar challenges. Their presence ensures the legal system reflects society's diversity.

In order to give impetus to the training objectives of this Policy, the following is recommended as the Training Curriculum for this Policy

1. INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

- Purpose of training: fostering inclusive, equitable workplaces

- Importance of disability inclusion in the legal profession
- Training goals: awareness, compliance, empathy, and practical application

2. LEGAL & ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

- Overview of Disability Rights laws
- Obligations of law firms under anti-discrimination Statutes
- Ethical duties of lawyers to ensure access to justice
- Case studies of legal consequences for non-compliance

3. UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

- Definition of disability (visible, invisible, temporary, permanent)
- Common misconceptions and stereotypes
- Inter-sectionality: disability with race, gender, socioeconomic status.
- Lived experiences: testimonials or guest speakers

4. WORKPLACE ACCESSIBILITY

- Physical accessibility: office layout, assistive technology, ergonomic adjustments
- Digital accessibility: accessible documents, websites, and legal software
- Communication accessibility: plain language, sign language interpreters, captioning
- Reasonable accommodations: process, examples, and responsibilities.

5. INCLUSIVE CULTURE & BEHAVIOR

- Respectful language and etiquette (e.g., person-first vs. identity-first language)
- Addressing unconscious bias and micro aggressions
- Building ally-ship and advocacy within the firm
- Confidentiality and sensitivity in handling disability-related information

6. CLIENT INTERACTION & SERVICE DELIVERY

- Ensuring equal access for clients with disabilities
- Adapting legal services (Court appearances, consultations, documentation)
- Working with interpreters and support professionals
- Case scenarios: inclusive client representation

7. POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Firm-wide disability inclusion policy
- Reporting and addressing discrimination or exclusion
- Accommodation request process for staff and clients
- Monitoring and accountability mechanisms

8. PRACTICAL SKILLS & ROLE-PLAY

- Simulated scenarios: handling requests, inclusive communication
- Problem-solving exercises for accessibility challenges
- Group discussions on real-world law firm situations

9. RESOURCES & SUPPORT

- Internal resources: HR, diversity committees, accessibility officers

- External resources: disability advocacy groups, legal aid Associations
- Continuous learning: refresher courses, updates on legislation

10. ASSESSMENT & CERTIFICATION

- Knowledge checks (quizzes, case studies)
- Certification of completion for compliance records
- Feedback loop for improving future training

It is envisaged that this curriculum will ensure comprehensive, practical and legally grounded trainings on Disability Inclusion within the NBA, while also promoting empathy and cultural change within law firms.

SECTION 9

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES FOR THE POLICY

Monitoring and Accountability procedures should be enshrined in a policy of this nature since they ensure that commitments to inclusion are actually implemented, measured, and enforced—so that lawyers with disabilities have equal access to career opportunities and conducive working environment.

Where there are no measures to ascertain adherence to the tenets of the Policy, the Policy will just exist on paper.

The following measures underscores the need for effective monitoring and accountability for the provisions of the Policy

1. Purpose of Monitoring and Accountability

These procedures ensure that disability inclusion policies within the NBA are effectively implemented, monitored, and enforced, while

promoting equal access, fairness, and compliance with disability rights standards.

2. Monitoring Mechanisms

A. Internal Monitoring

- **Policy Compliance Audits:** Annual reviews of firm policies, recruitment practices, and workplace accommodations should be conducted.
- **Accessibility Assessments:** Regular evaluation of physical spaces (Courtrooms, offices) and digital platforms (case management systems, websites) should be undertaken.
- **Case Tracking:** Monitoring of how disability-related cases are handled to ensure fairness and non-discrimination.
- **Feedback Channels:** Establishment of confidential reporting systems for lawyers and clients with disabilities to raise concerns.

B. External Monitoring

- **Independent Oversight Committee:** Representatives from disability advocacy groups, Relevant Committee of the NBA, and regulatory bodies should play an oversight role in monitoring the Law Firms and NBA itself to ensure strict adherence to the Policy.
- **Peer Review:** Cross-firm evaluations to benchmark disability inclusion practices should be encouraged.
- **Public Reporting:** Annual accessibility and inclusion reports should be published to maintain transparency.

3. Accountability Procedures

A. Individual Accountability

- **Professional Standards:** Lawyers must adhere to disability inclusion principles as part of their ethical obligations.
- **Disciplinary Measures:** Non-compliance (e.g., refusal to provide reasonable accommodations) may result in sanctions by the NBA.
- **Training Requirements:** Mandatory continuing legal education (Continuing Legal Education) on disability rights and accessibility should be embarked on by the NBA.

B. Institutional Accountability

- **Performance Indicators:** The relevant NBA Committee should track metrics such as number of lawyers with disabilities recruited, retention rates, and accessibility improvements.
- **Corrective Action Plans:** Law Firms should be required to submit remediation strategies when audits reveal gaps.
- **Incentives:** NBA should recognize and reward Firms that demonstrate exemplary disability inclusion practices.

4. Reporting & Transparency

- **Annual Disability Inclusion Report:** Firms submit annually data on accommodations, recruitment, and accessibility initiatives.
- **Whistleblower Protections:** The NBA should safeguard individuals who report violations of the policy.
- **Open Data Access:** The relevant Committee/Disability Inclusion Officer should provide anonymized statistics to stakeholders for accountability and research.

5. Continuous Improvement

- **Regular Policy Review:** The Relevant Committee of the NBA should endeavour to initiate an update of the Policy every 2–3 years to reflect evolving standards and technologies.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Lawyers with disabilities, clients, and advocacy groups should be adequately consulted in Policy revisions.
- **Learning & Development:** Integration of disability awareness into leadership training and mentorship programmes of the NBA should be given priority.

6. Enforcement

- **Bar Association Oversight:** National and Local branches of the NBA should enforce compliance through disciplinary Committees.
- **Legal Remedies:** Clear pathways for affected individuals to seek redress should be provided.
- **Escalation Protocols:** Steps from internal resolution → NBA review → Regulatory enforcement.

SECTION 10

10. Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations

10.1 Partnerships with Disability Rights Associations

The NBA shall establish and maintain partnerships with National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, relevant disability rights Associations, etc. for the purposes of:

- a. Promoting the rights and interests of lawyers with disabilities;

- b. Undertaking joint advocacy, research, and capacity-building initiatives; and
- c. Sharing best practices and technical expertise on disability inclusion.
- d. Collaboration with Legal Profession Stakeholders

10.2 The NBA shall collaborate with:

- a. Law schools and professional training institutions;
- b. Law firms and legal employers;
- c. Courts and judicial bodies; and
- d. Regulatory and professional institutions,
- e. To promote disability-friendly policies, inclusive practices, and accessible professional environments.

10.3 Advocacy Measures

The NBA shall advocate for:

- a. Accessible physical, digital, and communication infrastructure within legal institutions;
- b. Provision of reasonable accommodations in education, employment, and professional activities; and
- c. Inclusive recruitment, retention, and career advancement practices.

10.4 Public Awareness and Visibility

The NBA shall promote public awareness by:

- a. Highlighting the contributions, achievements, and expertise of lawyers with disabilities;
- b. Supporting campaigns that challenge stigma and stereotypes; and
- c. Encouraging positive narratives on disability within the legal profession and the wider society.

10.5 Promotion of Disability Rights

The NBA shall advocate for:

- a. Equality, access, and non-discrimination in the legal profession;
- b. Compliance with national and international disability rights standards; and
- c. Accountability mechanisms to ensure inclusive practices across legal institutions.

10.6 Programmes and Activities

The NBA will introduce programmes and activities inclusive of disability intellectual and practice empowerment as follows;

a- Catch-them fresh

- i- There should be periodic visit to primary, secondary and tertiary schools by the NBA where a disability has been sensed to encourage the growing students with disability.
- ii- There should be Special bursary support for students with disability through the NBA by inviting the Local Governments, State Government and Federal Government interventions.

b- Coach-them to grow

- i- This is where the NBA will be coaching the Students of Law a practical aspect of the Legal profession by visiting the NLS campuses across the nation.
- ii- The NBA shall, as inclusivity frontiers, dedicate a session during every opening ceremony of all its National Annual conference and during any NBA committee annual conference as a sensitization strategy to Disability Inclusion within the Legal Profession in Nigeria.

10.6.1 Training and Capacity Building

The NBA shall organize:

- a. Workshops, seminars, and training programs on disability awareness and inclusion for lawyers, judges, and legal stakeholders; and
- b. Continuing legal education initiatives that integrate disability competence.

10.6.2 Awareness Campaigns

The NBA shall initiate and support:

- a. Nationwide and branch-level awareness campaigns on disability inclusion; and
- b. Advocacy activities aimed at challenging stigma and promoting equality.

10.7 Policy Development and Institutional Support

The NBA shall:

- a. Develop and periodically review guidelines and standards on disability inclusion;

- b. Support law schools and legal institutions in adopting disability-inclusive policies; and
 - c. Integrate disability inclusion into NBA planning, programming, and governance structures.
- 2- The Bar shall ensure strict compliance of the provisions enshrined in the Laws above, in line with obligations of employers, and;
 - 3- The NBA shall be responsible professionally in ensuring every branch does not discriminate a Lawyer with disability by complying with this established clear policy, pro-active prevention, providing training and education, ensuring accessibility and reasonable adjustment.
 - 4- NBA Shall be implementing accessibility/inclusivity compliance procedure, upholding professional standards, holding onto individual who discriminate and/or violate the disability right of lawyer with disability.
 - 5- The NBA in collaboration with National Commission of persons with disabilities shall lead the fight for equality and justice in society, which can involve public interest litigation, sponsoring relevant bills, equality and justice in society, which can involve public interest litigation, sponsoring relevant bills, and general public enlightenment on rights and general public enlightenment on rights.