Case 10: Whose job is it to fix the blocked route?

A construction detour sends Sami toward stairs on her way to a city workshop, and her bus comes in 12 minutes.

On your own Read What happened. Underline where the detour sign points. About 6 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who writes down the corner, the time and the sign before Mateo posts. **New skill:** Report a problem to the office responsible.

Sami, Jordy and Mateo plan with picture cards on a whiteboard.

What happened

It is Tuesday, 4:05 p.m., at the corner of Elm Street and 4th Avenue. Sami is on her way to a free community workshop run by the city's parks department. It starts at 5. Sami uses a manual wheelchair, and her bus comes in 12 minutes. Mateo is with her.

The curb ramp on the northeast corner is blocked by construction fencing. A sign reads "SIDEWALK CLOSED AHEAD. PEDESTRIAN DETOUR." Its arrow points to a path that begins with a flight of stairs. That detour does not work for Sami.

Mateo already has the sign on video, and his first idea is to post it. Sami asks whether the video gets her on the bus. It does not, so Mateo puts the camera down. He checks the other corners for a ramp while Sami looks up the next bus stop.

Later, they want to report the corner to the city. Mateo wonders whether the city is breaking the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). First, they need to know what one video can show and which office is responsible.

Your question: Whose job is it to fix the blocked route, and what should Sami and Mateo tell the city?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 6 minutes.

Program access Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities.

En español: acceso a los programas

In this case: The city runs the workshop. Program access asks whether Sami can reach and join the workshop, not only whether one ramp is open.

Barrier A barrier is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part.

En español: barrera

In this case: Fencing blocks the curb ramp at Elm Street and 4th Avenue, and the detour points to stairs. The flyer gives no way to request access.

ADA coordinator An ADA coordinator is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints.

En español: coordinador de la ADA

In this case: Mateo plans to send the city's ADA coordinator the corner, the time, the sign and one question, if Sami agrees.

Who is involved

Sami

Trying to catch her bus to the workshop

"The sign says detour. The detour starts with stairs. So, no. Twelve minutes."

Mateo

Filmed the detour sign

"I had the sign on video before I even thought about it. Sami asked if that gets her on the bus. Fair. Camera down."

Your first guess

Before you look at the evidence, whose job do you think it is to fix Sami's route?

I think it is ___'s job because ___.

Notes

Reading passage

Twelve minutes at Elm and 4th

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Program access**: Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities.
- **Barrier**: A barrier is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part.
- **ADA coordinator**: An ADA coordinator is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints.
- **Claim**: A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Jurisdiction**: A jurisdiction is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority.

The story: A detour that starts with stairs

It is Tuesday at 4:05 p.m., at the corner of Elm Street and 4th Avenue. Sami is heading to a free community workshop run by the city's parks department. It starts at 5. Sami uses a manual wheelchair, and her bus comes in 12 minutes. Mateo is with Sami.

The curb ramp on the northeast corner is blocked by construction fencing. A sign reads "SIDEWALK CLOSED AHEAD. PEDESTRIAN DETOUR." Its arrow points to a path that begins with a flight of stairs. "The sign says detour," Sami says. "The detour starts with stairs. So, no."

Mateo already has the sign on video. His first idea is to post it. Sami asks one question: does that get her on the bus? It does not. So Mateo puts the camera down. He checks the other corners for a ramp while Sami looks up the next bus stop. The report can wait an hour.

Stop and think. Why does Sami care more about the bus than about the video right now?

What one video can show

Later, Mateo wonders whether the city is breaking the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA. That is a big **claim**, a word from Case 1. A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence. But one video of one corner cannot prove what a whole city is doing. It can show what happened, where and when.

What one video can show, continued

A **barrier** is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part. The fenced ramp is one barrier. The workshop flyer may be another. It says "All welcome!" but gives no way to ask about an accessible entrance.

In Case 9, you learned that a **jurisdiction** is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority. The city runs the workshop, so the city is responsible. An **ADA coordinator** is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints. That is who should get the report, not Mateo's followers.

Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities. A good report names the corner, the day and time and where the sign points. It asks one question: is there an accessible detour, and how long will the ramp be blocked? Mateo will send it only if Sami says yes. Your job is to write down the corner, the time and the sign before anyone posts.

Stop and think. What can Mateo's video prove, and what can it not prove?

How the ADA began

On March 12, 1990, about 60 disabled activists set aside their wheelchairs and other mobility aids and climbed the steps of the U.S. Capitol. The youngest was eight-year-old Jennifer Keelan. The protest became known as the Capitol Crawl. It showed Congress what stairs do to public life. The ADA was signed that July (HISTORY, July 24, 2020).

Stop and think. Why should Mateo ask Sami before he reports a barrier she faced?

Sources

Real source | **HISTORY** | **July 24, 2020**

When the 'Capitol Crawl' Dramatized the Need for Americans with Disabilities Act

Notes

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 12 minutes.

Evidence A | Construction sign

The detour sign

The sign reads “SIDEWALK CLOSED AHEAD. PEDESTRIAN DETOUR.” Its arrow points to a path that begins with a flight of stairs. The sign went up on Monday. Mateo recorded it on Tuesday at 4:05 p.m.

Look closely: Where does the arrow point? Who could not use that path?

What it shows

One question I still have

Evidence B | Route map

Sami and Mateo’s route map

1. Home to the corner of Elm Street and 4th Avenue: sidewalk clear. 2. Northeast curb ramp: blocked by construction fencing. 3. Bus stop: next bus in 12 minutes. 4. Bus to the parks department building. 5. Workshop entrance and room: not yet checked.

Look closely: Which stage is blocked, and which stage has nobody checked?

What it shows

One question I still have

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | **Flyer**

The workshop flyer

The flyer reads “Free Community Workshop Series. Tuesdays, 5—7 p.m., Parks Department Annex. All welcome! Questions? Call the front desk.” It gives no information about accessible entrances or how to request access.

Look closely: What does the flyer tell someone who needs to request access?

What it shows

One question I still have

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: program access

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 8 minutes.

Program access is an ADA rule that a city's services, taken as a whole, must be usable by people with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Justice explains that Title II of the ADA covers state and local government programs and services. Program access generally does not require every older building to be accessible. For example, a city can relocate a service to an accessible place. Existing buildings and new construction have different requirements.

Access covers the whole visit: finding the information, getting there, going in, taking part and leaving. A **barrier** is something that blocks or limits a person from taking part. Sami meets one barrier at the curb ramp. The workshop flyer could be another, because it gives no way to request access. The Justice Department's guide for cities also covers curb ramps during street work.

One video of one corner cannot show whether a city is following the law. It can show what happened, where and when. An **ADA coordinator** is the staff member a government names to handle disability access questions and complaints. That office can say whether an accessible detour exists. Before you report a barrier someone else faces, ask them what they want said.

Professional standards

Real source | **American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)**

ASPA Code of Ethics: 3. Promote democratic participation

"respect and assist all persons in their dealings with public organizations"

In plain words: ASPA members in public service agree to help every person use public programs and services.

Question: The parks flyer says "All welcome!" with no access information. What should it add so Sami can request access?

Your answer

The flyer should add ___.

In the news

Real source | HISTORY | July 24, 2020

When the 'Capitol Crawl' Dramatized the Need for Americans with Disabilities Act

A throwback to March 12, 1990, when activists climbed the Capitol steps to show what stairs do to access. The ADA was signed that July.

Real source | THE CITY | October 3, 2025

North Bronx Subway Station to Get Elevators, Nearly a Decade After ADA Lawsuit

A lawsuit pushed a transit agency to add elevators, showing how the ADA makes access a public duty.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Mark whether each piece of evidence supports or narrows each claim. Then write whose view is missing. About 8 minutes.

Sort what the evidence supports. Which claim can you make today, which one needs more facts, and who can supply them?

Evidence	**Claim 1** The city is breaking the ADA.	**Claim 2** On Tuesday, the posted detour did not work for a wheelchair user.
1 Photo: the northeast curb ramp blocked by fencing on Tuesday at 4:05 p.m.		
2 Detour sign points to a path that starts with stairs		
3 DOJ: Title II requires program access, not every facility to be accessible		

Still open

- Is there another accessible route to the bus and the workshop? Ask the ADA coordinator.

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is ___. I would ask ___.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Mateo should do and explain why. Then fix the two marked phrases. About 8 minutes.

Mateo wants people to know about the blocked corner. What should he do?

- [ ] **A** Post the video with a caption saying the city is breaking the ADA.
- [ ] **B** Send the ADA coordinator the corner, the time, the detour sign and one question, if Sami agrees.
- [ ] **C** Skip the report if Sami finds another bus stop that works today.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

(1) The city is breaking the ADA. There is construction blocking the ramp and a wheelchair user I know couldn't get to the bus. We were standing there for like ten minutes trying to figure out another way and the sign just pointed to stairs. My friend almost missed her workshop because of it. This is discrimination and completely illegal. Nobody even cares about this. You need to (2) fix every ramp in the neighborhood right away or we will post the photos everywhere.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

Grades 6—8

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft.

Map Sami's trip from home to the workshop and mark each place something could go wrong.

Use: The route map, the detour sign description and Sami's conversation.

You'll make: Annotated map plus 3—4 sentences

Time: 45 minutes

1. Read the route map in Evidence B. Number the five stages of Sami's trip.
2. Mark the stage where the ramp is blocked.
3. Read the detour sign in Evidence A. Circle where its arrow points.
4. Decide whether Sami can use that detour. Look for stairs.
5. Write 3 or 4 sentences in the Your draft box, with one question for the city.
6. Check that your question matches what Sami wants.

Show it your way

Write it: Write 3—4 sentences with the frame "At __, the barrier was __. We could ask __."

Say it: Walk a partner through Sami's trip stage by stage, pointing to where something could go wrong and what you would ask the city.

Show it: Mark the printed route map with a symbol at each barrier and a question mark wherever you need more information.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Your task, continued

The stage where the ramp is blocked

Where the detour sign points

A stage nobody has checked

Your draft

Your sentences, 3 or 4

At ___, the barrier was ___. We could ask ___.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 5 minutes.

Does your map mark at least three stages of the trip?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does it describe the blocked ramp correctly?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does it ask the city one question?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Did you check your question against what Sami wants?	☐ Yes	☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No location or time.	☐ General description.	☐ Specific location, time and observation.	☐ Specific observation plus what remains unknown.
Reasoning	☐ Declares a violation.	☐ Mixes observation and conclusion.	☐ Separates observation from legal question.	☐ Connects observation to program access and asks the right office.
Audience & purpose	☐ Threatening or vague.	☐ Polite but no clear request.	☐ Specific, answerable request to the right office.	☐ Request plus how to report future issues.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Tone only.	☐ Adds specifics and removes the legal conclusion.	☐ Explains how each change helps the city act and respects Sami.

Check your work, continued

One change I made

I changed ___ because ___.

Notes

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 8 minutes.

1 **Which barrier on Sami's trip would a photo miss?**

2 **What is the difference between recording a barrier and making Sami the content?**

3 **Construction is temporary, but the detour affects people now. What should a city do to keep routes usable during repairs?**

My take

I think Sami and Mateo should ___ because ___.

The evidence that changed my first guess is ___.

One question I still have is ___.

Talk about this case at home

Case 10: Whose job is it to fix the blocked route?

In this case, construction blocks a curb ramp on a young woman's route to a city workshop, and the detour points to stairs. Your student studied what one video can show, then wrote a question for the city office responsible for access.

Questions to talk about

1. Who in our town takes care of sidewalks and curb ramps?
2. What details make a report to the city easy to act on?
3. Why should you ask someone before you post a video of them?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.

See the case online.