

# YOUR RIGHTS AS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. It also applies to the United States Congress.

To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual with a disability. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

## ADA Title I: Employment

Title I requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide qualified individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others. For example, it prohibits discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, pay, social activities, and other privileges of employment. It restricts questions that can be asked about an applicant's disability before a job offer is made, and it requires that employers make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities, unless it results in undue hardship. Religious entities with 15 or more employees are covered under title I.

Title I complaints must be filed with the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) within 180 days of the date of discrimination, or 300 days if the charge is filed with a designated State or local fair employment practice agency. Individuals may file a lawsuit in Federal court only after they receive a "right-to-sue" letter from the EEOC.

Charges of employment discrimination on the basis of disability may be filed at any U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission field office. Field offices are located in 50 cities throughout the U.S. and are listed in most telephone directories under "U.S. Government." For the appropriate EEOC field office in your geographic area, contact:

(800) 669-4000 (voice)

(800) 669-6820 (TTY)

[www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

Publications and information on EEOC-enforced laws may be obtained by calling:

(800) 669-3362 (voice)

(800) 800-3302 (TTY)

For information on how to accommodate a specific individual with a disability, contact the Job Accommodation Network at:

(800) 526-7234 (voice/TTY)

[www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)

## ADA Title II: State and Local Government Activities

Title II covers all activities of State and local governments regardless of the government entity's size or receipt of Federal funding. Title II requires that State and local governments give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities (e.g. public education, employment, transportation, recreation, health care, social services, courts, voting, and town meetings).

State and local governments are required to follow specific architectural standards in the new construction and alteration of their buildings. They also must relocate programs or otherwise provide access in inaccessible older buildings, and communicate effectively with people who have hearing, vision, or speech disabilities. Public entities are not required to take actions that would result in undue financial and administrative burdens. They are required to make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures where necessary to avoid discrimination, unless they can demonstrate that doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity being provided.

Complaints of title II violations may be filed with the Department of Justice within 180 days of the date of discrimination. In certain situations, cases may be referred to a mediation program sponsored by the Department. The Department may bring a lawsuit where it has investigated a matter and has been unable to resolve violations. For more information, contact:

U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Disability Rights Section - NYAV

Washington, D.C. 20530

[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)

or [ada.gov](http://ada.gov)

(800) 514-0301 (voice)

(800) 514-0383 (TTY)

Title II may also be enforced through private lawsuits in Federal court. It is not necessary to file a complaint with the Department of Justice (DOJ) or any other Federal agency, or to receive a "right-to-sue" letter, before going to court.

## ADA Title II: Public Transportation

The transportation provisions of title II cover public transportation services, such as city buses and public rail transit (e.g. subways, commuter rails, Amtrak). Public transportation authorities may not discriminate against people with disabilities in the provision of their services. They must comply with requirements for accessibility in newly purchased vehicles, make good faith efforts to purchase or lease accessible used buses, remanufacture buses in an accessible manner, and, unless it would result in an undue burden, provide paratransit where they operate fixed-route bus or rail systems. Paratransit

is a service where individuals who are unable to use the regular transit system independently (because of a physical or mental impairment) are picked up and dropped off at their destinations. Questions and complaints about public transportation should be directed to:

Office of Civil Rights  
Federal Transit Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Room 9102  
Washington, D.C. 20590  
[www.fta.dot.gov/office/civ.htm](http://www.fta.dot.gov/office/civ.htm)  
(888) 446-4511 (voice/relay)

### **ADA Title III: Public Accommodations**

Title III covers businesses and nonprofit service providers that are public accommodations, privately operated entities offering certain types of courses and examinations, privately operated transportation, and commercial facilities. Public accommodations are private entities who own, lease, lease to, or operate facilities such as restaurants, retail stores, hotels, movie theaters, private schools, convention centers, doctors' offices, homeless shelters, transportation depots, zoos, funeral homes, day care centers, and recreation facilities including sports stadiums and fitness clubs. Transportation services provided by private entities are also covered by title III.

Public accommodations must comply with basic nondiscrimination requirements that prohibit exclusion, segregation, and unequal treatment. They also must comply with specific requirements related to architectural standards for new and altered buildings; reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures; effective communication with people with hearing, vision, or speech disabilities; and other access requirements. Additionally, public accommodations must remove barriers in existing buildings where it is easy to do so without much difficulty or expense, given the public accommodation's resources.

Courses and examinations related to professional, educational, or trade-related applications, licensing, certifications, or credentialing must be provided in a place and manner accessible to people with disabilities, or alternative accessible arrangements must be offered.

Commercial facilities, such as factories and warehouses, must comply with the ADA's architectural standards for new construction and alterations.

Complaints of title III violations may be filed with the Department of Justice. In certain situations, cases may be referred to a mediation program sponsored by the Department. The Department is authorized to bring a lawsuit where there is a pattern or practice of discrimination in violation of title III, or where an act of discrimination raises an issue of general public importance. Title III may also be enforced through private lawsuits. It is not necessary to file a complaint with the Department of Justice (or any Federal agency), or to receive a "right-to-sue" letter, before going to court. For more information, contact:  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Disability Rights Section - NYAV  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)  
or [ada.gov](http://ada.gov)  
(800) 514-0301 (voice)  
(800) 514-0383 (TTY)

### **ADA Title IV: Telecommunications Relay Services**

Title IV addresses telephone and television access for people with hearing and speech disabilities. It requires common carriers (telephone companies) to establish interstate and intrastate telecommunications relay services (TRS) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TRS enables callers with hearing and speech disabilities who use telecommunications devices for the deaf (TDDs), which are also known as teletypewriters (TTYs), and callers who use voice telephones to communicate with each other through a third party communications assistant. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has set minimum standards for TRS services. Title IV also requires closed captioning of Federally funded public service announcements. For more information about TRS, contact the FCC at:

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
[www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro)  
(888) 225-5322 (Voice)  
(888) 835-5322 (TTY)

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (formerly called P.L. 94-142 or the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975) requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs.

IDEA requires public school systems to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for each child. The specific special education and related services outlined in each IEP reflect the individualized needs of each student.

IDEA also mandates that particular procedures be followed in the development of the IEP. Each student's IEP must be developed by a team of knowledgeable persons and must be at least reviewed annually. The team includes the child's teacher; the parents, subject to certain limited exceptions; the child, if determined appropriate; an agency representative who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education; and other individuals at the parents' or agency's discretion.

If parents disagree with the proposed IEP, they can request a due process hearing and a review from the State educational agency if applicable in that state. They also can appeal the State agency's decision to State or Federal court. For more information, contact:

Office of Special Education and  
Rehabilitative Services  
U.S. Department of Education  
330 C Street, S.W. (Room 3086)  
Washington, D.C. 20202  
[www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP)  
(202) 205-5507 (voice/TTY)

## Rehabilitation Act

The Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by Federal agencies, in programs receiving Federal financial assistance, in Federal employment, and in the employment practices of Federal contractors. The standards for determining employment discrimination under the Rehabilitation Act are the same as those used in title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### Section 501

Section 501 requires affirmative action and nondiscrimination in employment by Federal agencies of the executive branch. To obtain more information or to file a complaint, employees should contact their agency's Equal Employment Opportunity Office.

### Section 503

Section 503 requires affirmative action and prohibits employment discrimination by Federal government contractors and subcontractors with contracts of more than \$10,000. For more information on section 503, contact::

Office of Federal Contract  
Compliance Programs  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room C-3325  
Washington, D.C. 20210  
[www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/ofcp\\_org.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/ofcp_org.htm)  
(202) 693-0106 (voice/relay)

### Section 504

Section 504 states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency or the United States Postal Service.

Each Federal agency has its own set of section 504 regulations that apply to its own programs. Agencies that provide Federal financial assistance also have section 504 regulations covering entities that receive Federal aid. Requirements common to these regulations include reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities; program accessibility; effective communication with people who have hearing or vision disabilities; and accessible new construction and alterations. Each agency is responsible for enforcing its own regulations. Section 504 may also be enforced through private lawsuits. It is not necessary to file a complaint with a Federal agency or to receive a "right-to-sue" letter before going to court.

For information on how to file 504 complaints with the appropriate agency, contact:

U.S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Disability Rights Section - NYAV  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)  
(800) 514-0301 (voice)  
(800) 514-0383 (TTY)

## Section 508

Section 508 establishes requirements for electronic and information technology developed, maintained, procured, or used by the Federal government. Section 508 requires Federal electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public.

An accessible information technology system is one that can be operated in a variety of ways and does not rely on a single sense or ability of the user. For example, a system that provides output only in visual format may not be accessible to people with visual impairments and a system that provides output only in audio format may not be accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some individuals with disabilities may need accessibility-related software or peripheral devices in order to use systems that comply with Section 508. For more information on section 508, contact:

U.S. General Services Administration  
Center for IT Accommodation (CITA)  
1800 F Street, N.W.,  
Room 1234, MC:MKC  
Washington, DC 20405-0001  
[www.itpolicy.gsa.gov/cita](http://www.itpolicy.gsa.gov/cita)  
(202) 501-4906 (voice)  
(202) 501-2010 (TTY)

U.S. Architectural and Transportation  
Barriers Compliance Board  
1331 F Street, N.W. Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20004-1111  
[www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov)  
800-872-2253 (voice)  
800-993-2822 (TTY)

### General Sources of Disability Rights Information

ADA Information Line  
(800) 514-0301 (voice)  
(800) 514-0383 (TTY)

[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)  
or [ada.gov](http://ada.gov)

Regional Disability and Business  
Technical Assistance Centers  
(800) 949-4232 (voice/TTY)  
[www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

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