

An Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in many areas of public life. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections).

Title I - Employment

- Helps people with disabilities access the same employment opportunities and benefits available to people without disabilities
- Applies to state and local governments and private employers with 15 or more employees
- Limits medical examinations and inquiries by employers
- Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants or employees
 - Reasonable accommodations are changes that facilitate equal opportunities without causing the employer “undue hardship” (too much difficulty or expense)
- Regulated and enforced by the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

Title II - Public Services: State and Local Government

- Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by “public entities,” which are state and local government agencies
- Requires
 - Self-evaluation to ensure access to programs, services, and activities
 - Planning to improve physical access in existing buildings and facilities
 - Making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures where necessary to effectively include people with disabilities in programs and activities
 - Communicating effectively with people with hearing, vision, and speech disabilities
- Regulated and enforced by the [U.S. Department of Justice](#)

Title III - Public Accommodations and Services Operated by Private Entities

- Prohibits places of public accommodation from discriminating against individuals with disabilities
 - Public accommodations include private businesses like hotels, restaurants, retail stores, doctors' offices, golf courses, private schools, day care centers, fitness facilities, sports stadiums, movie theaters, and so on
- Sets the minimum standards for accessibility for alterations and new construction of commercial facilities and privately owned places of public accommodation
 - Requires public accommodations to remove barriers in existing buildings where it is easy to do so without much difficulty or expense
- Directs businesses to make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures when needed to effectively serve people with disabilities

- Requires that businesses take steps necessary to communicate effectively with customers with vision, hearing, and speech disabilities
- Regulated and enforced by the [U.S. Department of Justice](#)

Title IV - Telecommunications

- Requires telephone and Internet companies to provide a nationwide system of telecommunications relay services that allow individuals with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate over the telephone
- Requires closed captioning of federally funded public service announcements
- Regulated by the [Federal Communications Commission](#)

Title V - Miscellaneous Provisions

- Contains a variety of provisions related to the ADA as a whole, including prohibitions against retaliation and coercion
- Provides a list of certain conditions that are not considered disabilities

Transportation

- Public transportation offered by a state or local government is covered by Title II of the ADA; this may include bus systems and passenger rail (train) services such as rapid rail (subways), light rail, commuter rail, and Amtrak
- Transportation offered by private companies is covered by Title III; this may include taxis and limousines, airport or hotel shuttles, and intercity bus companies
- The [U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration](#) issues regulations and provides guidance

For More ADA Information

The [ADA National Network](#) provides information, guidance and training on the ADA, tailored to meet the needs of businesses, government agencies, and individuals at local, regional, and national levels. Call 800-949-4232 to reach regional ADA Centers.

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