

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Fact Sheet

Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability. The Act was established to promote equal opportunities for persons living with disabilities into all aspects of daily life, such as employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local governments, and telecommunications.

Understanding What “Disability” Means Under the ADA

To be covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act as a person living with a disability, one must identify themselves with one of the following definitions:

- A person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- A person with a record of such a physical or mental impairment; or
- A person who is regarded as having such impairment.

ADA’s Four Components

ADA was constructed into four major “Titles” each centered on a systemic category of accessibility. Below each Title are highlights of the protections afforded to persons with disabilities.

- **Title I – Employment:** Employers may not discriminate against an individual with a disability in hiring or promotion if the person is otherwise qualified for the position. Employers can ask about one’s ability to perform a job, but cannot inquire if someone has a disability.

Employers must provide “reasonable accommodation,” such as job restructuring and modification of equipment when necessary.

- **Title II – Public Services:** State and local governments must remove communication and physical barriers that restrict people with disabilities from using their services and activities. Public entities must make every effort to integrate the disabled into their existing and future services, programs, and activities, and be able to communicate “with all of the public (telephone contacts, office walk-ins, or interviews), provide for the public’s use of the facilities, and allow access to programs that provide State or local government services or benefits.”
- **Title III – Public Accommodations:** Restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors’ offices, pharmacies, retail stores, museums, libraries, parks, private schools, and day care centers may not discriminate on the basis of disability. Private clubs and religious organizations are exempt. Auxiliary aids and services must be provided to individuals with hearing or vision impairments.
- **Title IV – Telecommunications:** Telephone companies must provide telecommunications relay services for hearing-impaired and speech-impaired individuals 24 hours per day.

For more information
visit www.ada.gov

