



National Network

Information, Guidance and Training on the
Americans with Disabilities Act

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ACCESSIBLE MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT

A number of research publications and federal reports document physical access barriers involving medical diagnostic equipment. This factsheet aims to inform health care providers about the laws and technical criteria that apply to accessible medical diagnostic equipment (MDE), in order to improve accessibility of MDE.



Affordable Care Act and Section 510 of the Rehabilitation Act

The “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act” (ACA) added an amendment to Section 510 of the Rehabilitation Act which authorized the U.S. Access Board to develop accessibility standards for medical diagnostic equipment (MDE) in consultation with the Food and Drug Administration. The standards address independent access to, and use of, MDE by people with disabilities to the maximum extent possible. The proposed standards for MDE apply to equipment that includes examination tables, examination chairs

(including chairs used for eye examinations or procedures, and dental examinations or procedures), weight scales, mammography equipment, x-ray machines, and other radiological equipment commonly used for diagnostic purposes by health professionals.

Department of Justice, the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require health care providers to provide individuals with disabilities full and equal access to their health care services and facilities.

The Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services recently published a guidance document for health care providers regarding their responsibilities to make their services and facilities accessible to individuals with mobility disabilities. See [Access to Medical Care for Individuals with Mobility Disabilities](#) in Resources. This guidance document includes information on accessible examination rooms and the clear floor space needed adjacent to medical equipment for individuals who use mobility devices to approach the equipment for transfer; accessible medical equipment (e.g., examination tables and chairs, mammography equipment, weight scales); patient lifts and other methods for transferring individuals from their mobility devices to medical equipment; and training health care personnel.



Proposed Standards for Accessible Medical Diagnostic Equipment

The Proposed Standards establish minimum technical criteria that will allow patients with disabilities independent entry to, use of, and exit from medical diagnostic equipment to the maximum extent possible. For example, sections M301 and M302 of the Proposed Standards address design and operational features that will allow a patient with a disability to independently transfer onto examination chairs and tables.



Note that the proposed standards do not specify the minimum number of types of accessible medical equipment required in different types of health care facilities. In addition, these proposed standards are not yet enforceable as federal regulations. Refer to the [Proposed Standards for Accessible Medical Diagnostic Equipment](#) (see Resources).

Technical Criteria



Chapter M3 of the Proposed Standards provides technical criteria for accessible diagnostic equipment based on the patient positions that the equipment is designed to support, including equipment used by patients:

- in a supine, prone, or side-lying position (section M301); equipment used in a seated position (section M302)
- while seated in a wheelchair (section M303)
- in a standing position (section M304)

Chapter M3 also include technical criteria for equipment supports (section M305), for instructions or other information communicated to patients through the equipment (section M306), and for operable parts used by patients (section M307). Where equipment is designed to support more than one patient position, the equipment would have to meet the technical criteria for each position supported.

For more information on technical criteria of Proposed Standards, see Resources below or call the ADA National Network at 1-800-949-4232.

Equipment Features Needed for Patient Support in Supine, Prone, or Side-Lying, Seated, Seated in Wheelchair or Standing Positions

Patient Positions Equipment Designed to Support	Equipment Features Addressed by the Technical Criteria	Examples of Types of Equipment that Apply to Patient Position
M301 - Diagnostic Equipment Used by Patients in Supine, Prone, or Side-Lying Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer surface, including height, size, and transfer sides • Transfer supports, stirrups, and head and back support • Lift compatibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination tables • Examination chairs designed to recline and be used as examination tables
M302 - Diagnostic Equipment Used by Patients in a Seated Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer surface, including height, size, and transfer sides • Transfer supports, armrests, and head and back support • Lift compatibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination chairs • Imaging equipment designed for use with a seat • Weight scales designed for use with a seat
M303 - Seated in a wheelchair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair space, including orientation, width, depth, knee and toe clearance, and surface slope • Changes in level at entry to wheelchair space, including ramps • Components capable of examining body parts of patients seated in a wheelchair, including height of breast platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaging equipment designed for wheelchair use • Weight scales designed for wheelchair use
M304 - Standing position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slip resistant standing surface • Standing supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaging equipment designed for use in standing position • Weight scales designed for use in standing position

Resources

1. U.S. Access Board - Proposed Standards for Accessible Medical Diagnostic Equipment: <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/health-care/about-this-rulemaking/proposed-standards/text-of-the-proposed-standards>
2. U.S. Access Board – Health Care: <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/health-care>



3. U.S. Department of Justice - Access to Medical Care for Individuals With Mobility Disabilities: http://www.ada.gov/medcare_ta.htm
4. Example Applications of Proposed Standards: <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/health-care/about-this-rulemaking/background/example-applications-of-proposed-standards>
5. The Barrier Free Healthcare Initiative: <http://thebarrierfreehealthcareinitiative.org/>

Content was developed by Northwest ADA Center, and is based on professional consensus of ADA experts and the ADA National Network.

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