



A member of the ADA National Network

What Is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that protects a person from being treated unfairly just because they have a disability. This means the ADA protects people with disabilities from discrimination. Under the ADA, people with disabilities have the same rights and chances as everyone else at work, when using state and local government services, and when buying items and services from places open to everyone. This information sheet talks about who is protected by the ADA and the 5 parts that are called titles of the ADA.

Who Is Protected by the ADA?

The ADA says you have a disability if your body or brain works differently than most people. So, you have a disability if it is harder or impossible for you do things like hear, see, speak, think, walk, or breathe. Sometimes you can see a person's disability. They may use a wheelchair or use a white cane when they walk. But a person can also have a disability you can't see. They may have autism, diabetes, cancer, learning problems, or they can be deaf or hard of hearing.

The ADA also protects people from discrimination because they:

- Used to have a disability (even if they don't anymore),
- Never had a disability, but someone thinks they do, or
- Are close to someone that has a disability like their child, parent, or person they're married to.

What Rights Does Title I of the ADA Give a Person with a Disability?

Title I of the ADA protects people with disabilities from being treated unfairly because they have a disability when applying for a job and at work. The ADA helps make sure people with disabilities are treated the same as people without disabilities at work in hiring, firing, training, pay, promotions, benefits, and leave. Under the ADA, leave means taking time off from work when a person's disability gets worse, or they get sick.

If a person needs help to be able to apply for a job, or to do part of their job because of their disability, the ADA says that person can ask the employer for a reasonable accommodation. A reasonable accommodation is a change to how a person does a job, the place where a person works, or the way things are usually done. After they ask the employer for a reasonable accommodation, the employer and the person with a disability can talk about what accommodation would help the person apply for the job or do the job.

What Rights Does Title II of the ADA Give a Person with a Disability?

Title II of the ADA protects people with disabilities when they use services run by state and local governments. These services include things like public transportation (examples are buses, trains, and subways), libraries, public schools, public beaches, public parks, services that help people with low incomes, county courthouses, state prisons, and state and local government websites. A person with a disability must be able to go inside any place and use any service run by state and local governments.

Almost always, a state or local government must provide help to a person with a disability so they can easily use state and local government services. This is called a reasonable modification. A reasonable modification can be things like letting someone with diabetes eat food in the library when no one else can eat there or bring a service animal with them even when no pets are allowed. State and local governments also must give people who are deaf or blind a way to communicate. This is called effective communication. Examples of effective communication can be things like having technology at a library so a person who can't see can read a book. It could also be having a sign language interpreter in court or at a government meeting so a person who is deaf can share what they're thinking and know what's going on.

What Rights Does Title III of the ADA Give a Person with a Disability?

Title III of the ADA protects people with disabilities when they want to buy things from, go into, or use the services of a business that is open to everyone. It also protects people with disabilities when they want to go into or use the services of a private organization that is not run by the government and is open to everyone. These places include stores, hotels, restaurants, doctor's offices, hospitals, private schools, day care centers, gyms, sports stadiums, and movie theaters. The ADA says people with disabilities must be able to do the same things as everyone else and go to the same places.

Under Title III of the ADA, these places almost always have to make changes to the way they normally do things if a person with a disability can't easily buy things from them or use their services. They must provide reasonable modifications and effective communication just like state and local governments do under Title II of the ADA. For example, a store must leave enough room so a person who uses a wheelchair can get around and help the person if they can't reach something. A theater or stadium must have special seating that's easy to get to for people who have a hard time walking because of a disability. A doctor's office or hospital must provide a sign language interpreter for someone who is deaf and needs to know and ask questions about how they should take care of themselves.

What Rights Does Title IV of the ADA Give a Person with a Disability?

Title IV of the ADA says telephone and internet companies must have services that help people who have a hard time hearing or talking to make phone calls. People with these disabilities can ask for special phones and services so they can talk on the phone by typing or using video calls.

What Rights Does Title V of the ADA Give a Person with a Disability?

Title V of the ADA protects people with disabilities if someone tries to bother, pressure, or scare them because they are asking for their ADA rights. An employer can't fire or punish a person for asking for their ADA rights.

Who Can I Ask if I Have Questions or Want More Information About the ADA?

The Pacific ADA Center answers questions and provides information about the ADA. Call 800-949-4232 or send an email to adatech@adapacific.org. You can also look at the Pacific ADA Center website at <https://www.adapacific.org>.