



# National Network

Information, Guidance and  
Training on the Americans with  
Disabilities Act

Call us toll-free  
1-800-949-4232 V/TTY  
Find your regional center  
at [www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

For the most current and accessible version, please visit  
<https://adainfo.us/what-is-ada>

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## What Is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination. This means the ADA protects people with disabilities from being treated unfairly just because they have a disability. 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 businesses open to everyone. This information sheet talks about who is protected by the ADA and the five parts, or “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, and that makes it harder or impossible for you to do things like hear, see, speak, think, walk, or breathe. Sometimes, you can see a person’s disability. They may use a wheelchair or a white cane when they walk. But a person can also have a disability you cannot see. They may have autism, diabetes, cancer, or learning difficulties.

The ADA also protects people from discrimination because they:

- Had a disability in the past (even if they do not have a disability anymore).
- Never had a disability, but someone thinks they do.
- Are close to someone who has a disability, like their child, parent, friend, or person they are married to.



# What Is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

## What rights do I have under Title I of the ADA?

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 they need to because of their disability.

If a person needs help 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 or do the job.

## What rights do I have under Title II of the ADA?

Title II of the ADA protects people with disabilities when they use programs or services run by state and local governments. These programs and services include public transportation (like buses, trains, and subways), libraries, public schools, public parks, and services that help people with low incomes. ADA Title II programs and services also include 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.

In most cases, a state or local government must change the way it does things to help a person with a disability 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 when no pets are allowed.

State and local governments also must give people who have trouble hearing, seeing, or talking 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



## **What Is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?**

could also be having a sign language interpreter in court or at a government meeting, if the person asks for the interpreter, so a person who is Deaf can share what they are thinking and know what is going on.

### **What rights do I have under Title III of the ADA?**

Title III of the ADA protects people with disabilities when they want to buy things from, enter, or use the services of a business or a private organization that is open to everyone. These places include disability services centers, stores, hotels, restaurants, doctors' offices, hospitals, private schools, daycare 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 need to make changes to the way they usually do things if a person with a disability cannot 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. The store workers also must help a person with a disability if they cannot reach something. A theater or stadium must have 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 if they request one, so the Deaf person can understand what is happening with their health.

### **What rights do I have under Title IV of the ADA?**

Title IV of the ADA says telephone 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.

Title IV also requires closed captioning of some public service announcements on television. Closed captions are displayed only when the person watching the TV turns them on.



## What Is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

### What rights do I have under Title V of the ADA?

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. For example, an employer cannot fire or punish a person with a disability for asking for their ADA rights.

### Who can I ask if I have questions or want more information about the ADA?

The ADA National Network answers questions and provides information about the ADA. Contact us toll-free, voice or TTY, at 1-800-949-4232 or [email](#) us to speak with one of our ADA Specialists.

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



<http://www.adapacific.org>

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