

Following is a brief discussion of some of the federal civil rights laws that have been passed to ensure that people with disabilities have the benefits of full citizenship. Addresses and phone numbers are also provided for obtaining additional information.

### ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications.

*Following is a brief discussion of the highlights for the ADA.*

**ADA Title I: Employment.** Requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide qualified individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others.

**ADA Title II: State and Local Government Activities/Public Transportation:** Covers all activities of State and local governments regardless of the government entity's size or receipt of Federal funding. Title II requires that State and local governments give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities (e.g. public education, employment, transportation, recreation, health care, social services, courts, voting, and town meetings). The transportation provisions of title II cover public transportation services, such as city buses and public rail transit (e.g. subways, commuter rails, Amtrak).

**ADA Title III: Public Accommodations.** Covers businesses and nonprofit service providers that are public accommodations, privately operated entities offering certain types of courses and examinations, privately operated transportation, and commercial facilities.

**ADA Title IV: Telecommunications Relay Services.** Addresses telephone and television access for people with hearing and speech disabilities.

To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual with a disability. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. In addition, the use and side effects of mitigating measures must be considered. Mitigating measures eliminate or reduce the symptoms the impairment so they are no longer substantially limiting (e.g. medications, a prosthesis, or a hearing aid). The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

### **For more information, contact:**

#### **Disability Rights Section/Civil Rights Division**

U.S. Department of Justice

P.O. Box 66738

Washington, D.C. 20035-6738

(800) 514-0301 (voice) (800) 514-0383 (TTY)  
[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)

### **Southeast Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center**

490 Tenth Street  
Atlanta, GA 30318  
(800) 949-4232 (V/TTY)  
[www.sedbtac.org](http://www.sedbtac.org)

### **Fair Housing Act**

The Fair Housing Act, as amended in 1988, prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, and national origin. Its coverage includes private housing, housing that receives federal financial assistance, and state and local government housing. It is unlawful to discriminate in any aspect of selling or renting housing or to deny a dwelling to a buyer or renter because of the disability of that individual, an individual associated with the buyer or renter, or an individual who intends to live in the residence. Other covered activities include financing, zoning practices, new construction design, and advertising.

The Fair Housing Act requires owners of housing facilities to make reasonable exceptions in their policies and operations to afford people with disabilities equal housing opportunities. For example, a landlord with a “no pets” policy may be required to grant an exception to this rule and allow an individual who is blind to keep a guide dog in the residence. The Fair Housing Act requires landlords to allow tenants with disabilities to make reasonable access-related modifications to the private living space as well as to common-use spaces. (The Landlord is not required to pay for the changes.) The Act requires new multi-family housing with four or more units be designed and built to allow access for persons with disabilities.

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### **For more information or to file a complaint, contact:**

#### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

Program Compliance and Disability Rights Support Division  
Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity  
451 Seventh St., SW, Room 5241  
Washington, DC 20410  
(800) 927-9275 (Voice, TTY) (800) 669-9777 (hearing impaired)  
[www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/index.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/index.cfm)

### **Air Carrier Access Act**

The Air Carrier Access Act prohibits discrimination in air transportation by air carriers against qualified individuals with physical or mental impairments. It applies only to air carriers that provide regularly scheduled services for hire to the public. Requirements address a wide range of

issues including boarding assistance and certain accessibility features in newly built aircraft and new or altered airport facilities.

**There are two sources for more information about this Act:**

**U.S. Department of Transportation**

Aviation Consumer Protection Division

Office of Aviation Enforcement & Proceedings

400 Seventh St., SW, Room 4107

Washington, DC 20590

(202) 366-2220 (Voice) (202) 755-7687 (TTY)

(800) 778-4838 (disability-related air travel problems)

(800) 455-9880 (TTY, disability-related problems)

**[www.dot.gov/airconsumer](http://www.dot.gov/airconsumer)**

**Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act**

The Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA) authorizes the U.S. attorney general to investigate conditions of confinement at state and local government institutions such as prisons, jails, pretrial detention centers, juvenile correctional facilities, publicly operated nursing homes, and institutions for people with psychiatric or developmental disabilities. Its purpose is to allow the attorney general to uncover and correct widespread deficiencies that seriously jeopardize the health and safety of residents of institutions. The attorney general does not have authority under CRIPA to investigate isolated incidents or to represent individual institutionalized persons.

**For more information, contact:**

**U.S. Department of Justice**

Special Litigation Section

Civil Rights Division

950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20530

(202) 514-6255 (Voice/TTY) (877) 218-5228 (toll-free)

**[www.usdoj.gov/crt/split](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/split)**

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (formerly called P.L. 94-142 or the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free, appropriate public education in the least- restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs.

IDEA requires public school systems to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each child. The specific special education and related services outlined in each IEP reflect the individualized needs of each student. IDEA also mandates that particular procedures be followed in the development of the IEP.

**To find out more about IDEA, contact:**

**U.S. Department of Education**

Office of Special Education Programs

400 Maryland Ave., S.W.

Washington, DC 20202-7100

(202) 245-7459 (Voice)

**<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html?src=mr>**

**Rehabilitation Act**

The Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors. The standards for determining employment discrimination under the Rehabilitation Act are the same as those used in Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Sections 501 and 503 of the Rehabilitation Act require affirmative action and nondiscrimination in employment by federal agencies of the executive branch and by federal government contractors and subcontractors with contracts of more than \$10,000.

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**For questions about Section 503, contact:**

**Regional office:**

U.S. Department of Labor

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs

Atlanta Federal Center

61 Forsyth St., SW, Room 7B75

Atlanta, GA 30303

(866) 376-3227(toll-free)

National office: (202) 693-0106 (voice/relay)

**[www.dol.gov/esa/ofccp/index.htm](http://www.dol.gov/esa/ofccp/index.htm)**

Section 504 states that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under” any program or activity that either receives federal financial assistance or is conducted by an executive agency or the U.S. Postal Service. Each federal agency has its own set of section 504 regulations that apply to its own programs.

**For questions about Section 504, contact:**

**Disability Rights Section**

Civil Rights Division

U. S. Dept. of Justice

P.O. Box 66738

Washington, DC 20035-6738

ADA Internet site: **[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)**

(800) 514-0301 (Voice) (800) 514-0383 (TTY)

Section 508 establishes requirements for electronic and information technology developed, maintained, procured, or used by the Federal government. Section 508 requires Federal electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public.

An accessible information technology system is one that can be operated in a variety of ways and does not rely on a single sense or ability of the user. For example, a system that provides output only in visual format may not be accessible to people with visual impairments and a system that provides output only in audio format may not be accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some individuals with disabilities may need accessibility-related software or peripheral devices in order to use systems that comply with Section 508.