



Expanding Your Market



Americans with Disabilities Act
ADA Business Connection

“It took the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent statutes to make plain this nation’s opposition to racism, sexism and discrimination based on a person’s age. It will take the Americans with Disabilities Act to set the record straight as to where we stand on discrimination based on disability.”

Senator Lowell
Weicker, Jr.

Joint Congressional
Hearing on the ADA
September 27, 1988

Building a Diverse Customer Base

The Americans with Disabilities Act Comprehensive Civil Rights Legislation

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. While some businesses may think of the ADA as merely a building code or an employment law, the ADA is, in fact, one of America’s most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation. The ADA bases much of its structure and enforcement remedies and procedures on the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Nondiscrimination in Public Accommodations

Title III of the ADA extends to people with disabilities the same protections that Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 extends to people discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin. Both laws guarantee the right to **“...full enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations of any place of public accommodation...”** The ADA not only covers the same public accommodations as the Civil Rights Act, such as hotels, restaurants, theaters, stadiums, and gas stations, but also an expanded range of others, including retail stores, private schools, and doctors’ offices.

Rights in Everyday Life

In everyday commerce, then, the ADA and the 1964 Civil Rights Act enable Americans to participate without discrimination in typical daily activities that include going to the movies, traveling and staying in hotels, eating out in restaurants, and attending museums, concerts, and sporting events.

The ADA protects the civil rights of people with disabilities and helps businesses develop a diverse customer base from a market of more than 50 million Americans.



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The Look of Disability Discrimination

Discrimination against people with disabilities can take many different forms. Under the ADA, civil rights violations may look like this:

- Restaurant staff refuses to seat a family with a daughter who has cerebral palsy because they say she will make other diners uncomfortable.
- A taxi driver slows to pick up three riders until he sees that one of them uses a service animal. The driver swerves and speeds away.
- A trendy new clothes shop is built with steps to its only entrance, the equivalent of a sign telling people who use wheelchairs that they are not welcomed.
- A hospital refuses to provide a sign language interpreter when one of its physicians is ready to explain upcoming surgery to a deaf patient who uses sign language.
- A museum's information desk staff tells a father who is blind that he cannot join a walk-in tour with his two sons. Instead, he must take a separate tour for blind people, which requires making reservations two weeks in advance.

The ADA's Benefits to Businesses

It is clearly in the interest of businesses to make their facilities and services accessible to customers with disabilities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2002 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), there are 51.2 million Americans with disabilities in the United States. The U.S. Department of Labor states that people with disabilities have \$175 billion annually in discretionary spending power.

People with disabilities are of all ages, are members of all racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, and live in communities large and small throughout the country. According to the SIPP, 19.8% of Black Americans reported that they have disabilities while 19.0% of Whites, 13.8% of Hispanics/Latinos, and 11.5% of Asian/Pacific Islanders self-identified as having disabilities. The ADA protects the civil rights of all Americans.

For more information about the ADA and business, visit the Department of Justice ADA Business Connection at www.ada.gov. Or, call the toll-free ADA Information Line: 800-514-0301 (voice) • 800-514-0383 (TTY)

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