



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Fact Sheet

ADA is...

A federal civil rights law passed in 1990. It prohibits disability discrimination by the state and federal government, including in schools. It also applies to private schools and workplaces, and to any space that offers goods and services to the public. ADA covers people of all ages.

ADA protects people who...

Have a disability. This means any physical or mental condition that substantially limits a major life activity, which can include reading, learning or concentrating.

The law is very broad

- It covers almost all conditions. That includes learning and attention issues like dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and ADHD, and conditions that often co-occur, like anxiety.
- It also covers people who are discriminated against because they're *perceived* to have a disability even if they don't.

ADA requires the government, schools, businesses and public spaces to...

Provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities so they can have equal access to these different areas of life. Accommodations can be anything from text in audio format to a wheelchair ramp.

However, an accommodation isn't required if it causes an undue hardship or a fundamental alteration to what a school, program or business is offering.

Public K–12 schools

ADA applies to public schools. But the special education law IDEA and the disability law Section 504 may provide more protection for both students and parents.

Private schools and colleges

ADA and Section 504 offer similar protections here. But ADA also applies to private schools that don't get federal funding, like trade schools.

Workplaces

The law applies to businesses with 15 or more employees. However, it doesn't guarantee a job for people with disabilities. An employee must be qualified for the position.

Public spaces

ADA covers any space that offers goods or services to the public, like stores, hotels and museums. That includes websites. It doesn't apply to religious organizations or private clubs.

What to do when there's disability discrimination

If someone believes they've been discriminated against because of a disability, they can file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (workplace), the U.S. Department of Education (school) or the U.S. Department of Justice (public space). They also have the option to file a lawsuit in court.