

The ADA and Accommodations

Key Facts

Accessibility of hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, and healthcare programs is essential in providing healthcare to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Due to a variety of physical and communication barriers, individuals with I/DD are less likely to get routine preventive medical care than people without disabilities. Providing accommodations offers people with disabilities greater opportunities for equal and accessible healthcare services.



ADA

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law that helps remove or reduce barriers for people with disabilities. The ADA requires access to healthcare services and the facilities where they are provided.

Title II and Title III of ADA require that medical care providers ensure individuals with disabilities:

- Full and equal access to their healthcare services, facilities, and diagnostic equipment
- Aids and services to ensure effective communication.

What a Physically Accessible Facility Looks Like:

- Accessible parking spaces, curb ramps, or loading zones at building entrance and stair-free route to building entrance.
- Doorways and hallways wide enough to ensure safe and accessible passage by people using mobility aids.
- Restrooms have adequate space for maneuvering wheelchairs around toilets, grab bars mounted behind toilets, and accessible lavatories.
- Drinking fountains, telephones, and service counters are low enough to be usable by a person who uses a wheelchair or is of short stature.
- No objects protrude into routes of travel that could pose a hazard.
- Signage with braille and raised tactile text characters.

Accommodations

Sometimes, accommodations may be needed so a person with I/DD can effectively interact and communicate with their provider. Here are some examples that may be useful:



Written

- ❖ Use plain language in all materials and instructions.
- ❖ Provide written information instead of audio information.
- ❖ Provide or request pre-filled forms or pre-printed labels to help have forms filled out.
- ❖ Use emails or text instead of phone calls.
- ❖ Provide information in large print or braille.

Verbal / Sound

- ❖ Use white noise machines to reduce distractions.
- ❖ Talking on the phone instead of using emails
- ❖ Ask someone to read the questions.
- ❖ Ask for plain language when explaining things.

Time and Environment Accommodation

- ❖ Allowing extra time to complete tasks.
- ❖ Modified or longer breaks.
- ❖ A checklist to stay on task or schedule.
- ❖ Request a longer appointment.
- ❖ Provide low stimulus rooms.

If you or someone you are supporting are not given the accommodation you need or you feel you are being treated unfairly because of a disability, you can:

1. Ask to speak with an ADA Coordinator, Disability Access Coordinator, or a patient advocate. Let them know what accommodations you need.
2. Contact Disability Rights Iowa or your state’s Protection and Advocacy System.

Related Fact Sheets:

- #2 Supporting Self Advocacy
- #3 Supporting Going to the Doctor
- #4 Helping Communications with the Doctor

This fact sheet was edited in April 2024. It contains general information only and does not address individual circumstances.

This fact sheet is adapted from materials developed by NSW Council for Intellectual Disabilities (2009), Australia. Its components are supported in part by Grant/Cooperative Agreement #5 U27 DD000014 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Disability and Health Branch. The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official reviews of the CDC.