

GOVERNMENT SERVICES MUST BE ACCESSIBLE, TOO



If you are a person with a disability, you have the right to participate in your city, county and state governments. Government agencies must have accessible facilities, services, programs and activities. When government offices hold public meetings, they must choose an accessible location, so everyone may attend, including people with disabilities.

What Do Governments Have To Do?



Provide access to enter and use buildings – This means that people with disabilities should be able to enter and use government offices, public health clinics, parks, courts, and other facilities. So, if someone uses a wheelchair –

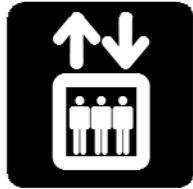
- is there a curb ramp (also known as “curb cut”) to get onto sidewalks?
- are the doors wide enough to get through them?
- are telephones and water fountains low enough to be used?



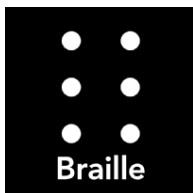
Provide accommodations – Local governments must make “reasonable accommodations” so that people with disabilities can use all services and programs. Here are some examples:

- **Parking** – When there is a parking lot for the public at a government building, some of the parking spaces must be accessible. This means they must be close to the building entrance, with special signs, and with extra space next to the vehicle so someone with a walker or wheelchair can get out easily and safely. To be able to use these parking spaces, people must have a special license plate or a placard to hang on the rear view mirror.
- **Restrooms** – If there are public restrooms, they must include accessible toilet stalls. This means they are big enough to allow a wheelchair user to get in, and have grab bars the person can use to transfer from the wheelchair to the toilet.
- **Service animals** – People with disabilities must be allowed to bring their service animals into government buildings. Service animals may work as a guide for someone who is blind, alert someone who is Deaf to alarms or honking horns, or assist someone with muscle weakness to push doors open.





- **Accessible buses** – If the local government runs the bus service, the buses must be accessible to people with disabilities, which means having enough room for wheelchairs or walkers, and having a ramp or lift into the bus. Because blind people might miss a bus because they cannot see the route numbers, bus drivers must stop and tell the blind person their route number.
- **Lower counters** – Government offices with reception counters for information or services must have a lower section of the counter. This allows wheelchair users to have good eye contact and easy communication with the person behind the counter.
- **Elevators** – A broken elevator in a government building must be fixed as soon as possible, so that someone with a mobility disability can reach upper floors.



Provide “equally effective communication” – This means that governments must make sure their communications with people with disabilities are as effective as its communications with others. Government offices are required to provide appropriate aids and services where necessary to ensure effective communication. Here are some examples:

- **TTYs** – Government agencies must use TTY Relay Services to talk on the telephone with people who are Deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities.
- **Sign language interpreters** – For some services, programs or activities, the government office must provide a sign language interpreter for a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Alternate formats** – Government offices and agencies must provide written materials in other formats for people who have low vision or are blind, such as large print, Braille, tape recording, or computer disk.

What To Do If Discrimination Happens

Civil rights offices investigate discrimination complaints for free. If a government agency failed to provide access to a person with a disability, the person can contact a civil rights agency about filing a grievance.