

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/23-years-of-the-ada>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H. W. Bush, just had its 23rd anniversary. The ADA was the culmination of a decades-long fight to end discrimination that prevented people with disabilities from fully participating in community life.

Like the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s, which prohibited discrimination against minorities and women, the ADA was passed to right a wrong, and to provide a framework to remove societal barriers. The ADA makes it possible for people with disabilities to live and work in the community and enjoy educational and recreational activities.

By addressing architectural, transportation, and communication accessibility, the provisions of the ADA have changed the face of American society in numerous concrete ways. Curb cuts, kneeling buses and automatic door openers are now commonplace. Americans with disabilities have greater access to goods and services from businesses, state, and local governments, as well as in their local communities. Using a wheelchair, being Deaf, or having an intellectual disability no longer means living in an institution or being unable to go to school, watch a ball game, or eat out with friends.

But the ADA is more than bricks and mortar. The act requires modifications to policies, procedures, and practices that limit participation for someone with a disability. Workers with disabilities are able to discuss their accommodation needs knowing that they are legally protected. Inclusion of children with disabilities in classrooms has increased public awareness, sensitivity, and respect. Changes on campuses have enabled more adults with disabilities to go to college.

The ADA's impact is ongoing and responsive to new needs that may arise in social settings. For example, a no pets policy in a domestic violence shelter may need to be modified to ensure that victims with guide dogs are welcome; webinars or other technology may need to include captioning so as not to exclude Deaf clients; policies that strictly limit attendance at a meeting may need to be adjusted so as not to exclude someone who has a personal care attendant.

As people with disabilities become more active in the community and as the number of individuals who need accommodations because of injuries or conditions acquired through crime, war, or aging increases, the ADA continues to provide guidance and support for business owners, government agencies, service providers, and people with disabilities.

For more about the ADA visit the [ADA National Network](#) for information, guidance, and training, or the [DOJ ADA website](#).

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