

# Reasonable Accommodations

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## Definition

Reasonable accommodations are any equipment, actions, or procedures that help a patient with a disability access the same services as other patients. Health care facilities are required to provide reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

## Examples of reasonable accommodations include:

- ▶ Adjustable-height exam tables
- ▶ Assistive devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, Hoyer lifts
- ▶ Interpreters and translators
- ▶ Allowing a patient to wait in a quiet area instead of the waiting room to avoid overstimulation
- ▶ Scheduling appointments at times of day when a patient is less symptomatic
- ▶ Allowing a service animal into the exam room with a patient
- ▶ Ensuring that a patient has access to communication devices, such as adapted telephones for people with hearing loss ("TDD" phones)

## Avoiding Pitfalls

Under the ADA, your hospital must provide accommodations not only to patients, but also to their family members, partners, spouses, and anyone else accompanying them.

## Impact on Patient Care

Offering the appropriate accommodations is crucial to ensuring a high-quality patient experience. Health professionals should suggest accommodations if a patient seems to be having difficulty navigating, communicating, or otherwise accessing hospital services.

## Tips for Offering Accommodations

- ▶ If a patient seems to be having trouble reading a printout, ask: "Would you like to see a large-print version of that?"
- ▶ If a patient seems to be having trouble hearing, ask: "Would you like a hearing amplifier? It might make it easier for us to talk."
- ▶ If a patient seems to be having trouble understanding English, find out what language they speak at home and locate an interpreter.
- ▶ If a patient appears anxious or upset by their environment, politely ask if there's anything you can do to make it better.

## Clinical Scenario

Maria has trouble gripping thin objects like pencils and silverware. To meet Maria's needs at mealtime, the occupational therapist provides a special fork and knife with large round handles that are easier to grasp. He knows that Maria is capable of feeding herself if given the proper utensils.

## Resources

### ADA Homepage (U.S. Department of Justice)

[www.ada.gov/](http://www.ada.gov/)

### Access to Medical Care for People with Mobility Disabilities (PDF)

<http://1.usa.gov/UooqNB>

### Disability Law Center of Massachusetts

[www.dlc-ma.org](http://www.dlc-ma.org)

### Job Accommodation Network

[www.askjan.org/media/atoz.htm](http://www.askjan.org/media/atoz.htm)

### Resource Sheet No. 1

Inclusive Health Care was developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Boston Children's Hospital. We have decades of experience in workforce training and specialized consultation related to disability inclusion.

