

# ADA COMPLIANCE INFORMATION



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990 and is a civil rights law designated to secure the rights and freedoms to which disabled citizens are entitled. It prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

Prior to the ADA, the few laws intended to support the Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities were limited in scope and applied only to entities receiving Federal funding. This included hospitals that accepted Medicare and colleges that received Federal funds. At the time it didn't include tax appointments, retail stores, meetings with lawyers, most medical practices, or countless other private business entities. The ADA brought these overlooked places into the fold so that essentially everywhere you go, Deaf individuals have the right to communication access.

Under the ADA, businesses are required to provide equal access to goods and services for individuals with disabilities, including those who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing. Effective communication is essential for Deaf individuals to fully participate in and benefit from the services offered by your business. To ensure ADA compliance and provide a positive experience for Deaf customers, the following means and guidelines should be considered:

1. **Communication Accessibility:** Ensure that your staff members are trained to effectively communicate with Deaf customers. This may include learning basic sign language greetings, understanding how to use pen and paper for written communication, and being aware of alternative communication methods.
2. **Sign Language Interpreters:** When requested, provide qualified sign language interpreters for Deaf customers in situations where effective communication is essential, such as consultations, meetings, or transactions involving complex information. Remember that providing interpreters is not only a legal requirement under the ADA but also an important step towards creating an inclusive environment.
3. **Accessible Information:** Make sure that all printed materials, signage, and digital content are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including Deaf customers. This may involve providing captions for videos, using clear and simple language in written materials, and ensuring that information is available in alternative formats upon request.
4. **Assistive Technology:** Consider investing in assistive technology devices, such as hearing loop systems or video relay services, to enhance communication accessibility for Deaf customers. These technologies can help facilitate real-time communication and ensure equal access to your services.
5. **Staff Training and Awareness:** Educate your staff members about the ADA requirements, Deaf Culture, and the importance of providing accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Training should include information on effective communication strategies, recognizing and addressing the needs of Deaf customers, and understanding the role of assistive technology in enhancing accessibility.

By taking proactive steps to ensure ADA compliance and accommodate the needs of Deaf customers, your business not only meets its legal obligations but also demonstrates a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and customer satisfaction.