

A Message from
**Illinois Attorney General
LISA MADIGAN**



In the United States, individuals with disabilities have an estimated \$175 billion in discretionary spending. Nevertheless, they are frequently excluded from everyday commercial activities such as shopping, going to the movies, or dining out. If your business is not accessible, you may miss out on

opportunities to market and sell your goods and services to the approximately 2 million people with disabilities in Illinois. More importantly, serving people with disabilities creates an inclusive and respectful environment for all.

Under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all public accommodations in Illinois must provide auxiliary aids and services and modify their policies when necessary to accommodate customers with disabilities. In addition, the ADA and Environmental Barriers Act require that businesses in Illinois maintain physical environments accessible to people with disabilities. Virtually every business in Illinois is a public accommodation, including but not limited to restaurants, bars, stores, hotels, theaters, gyms, hospitals, and day care centers.

The Attorney General's Disability Rights Bureau enforces disability laws and helps businesses comply with these laws through technical assistance and training. We have created this brochure to help your business ensure that individuals with disabilities are able to fully benefit from your goods and services. Thank you for doing your part to make businesses in Illinois friendly to people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Lisa Madigan
Attorney General



LISA MADIGAN
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Disability Rights Bureau provides technical assistance and training to businesses and public accommodations. If you need assistance, please contact us.

DISABILITY RIGHTS BUREAU

CHICAGO

100 West Randolph Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601
1-312-814-5684
TTY: 1-800-964-3013

SPRINGFIELD

500 South Second Street
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For more information on service animals, accessible parking and tax incentives, please visit

www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov

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This material is available in alternate format upon request.

*Ensuring Accessibility
for Customers with
Disabilities:
A Guide for Illinois
Businesses and other
Public Accommodations*



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ATTORNEY GENERAL
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MODIFYING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Public accommodations must make reasonable modifications to policies and procedures to serve customers with disabilities unless doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of their goods and services. Most modifications require only minor adjustments, such as:

- Allowing a second person in a dressing room
- Accepting a means of identification other than a driver's license
- Providing delivery service
- Allowing food, drinks, or medicine where it is otherwise prohibited
- Permitting the use of a service animal if your business has a "no pet" policy

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

There are many small yet meaningful ways in which you can assist customers with disabilities who frequent your establishment. The first step is to ask the customer what would be most helpful to him or her. Some examples of assistance you might provide to customers with disabilities include:

- Guiding someone who is blind or has low vision down the aisles of a store
- Retrieving items for someone in a wheelchair
- Reading product labels or a menu to someone who is blind or has low vision
- Describing items to someone who is blind or has low vision
- Slowly explaining the meaning of a product or service to someone with a cognitive disability

COMMUNICATING WITH CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

You may need to communicate with customers with disabilities differently than with those without disabilities. Sometimes a change in communication is as simple as writing notes, text messages or e-mails back and forth with a person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing. But for more complex transactions, such as closing a loan or reviewing a tax return, you may need to provide a qualified sign language interpreter or documents in Braille at your expense.

A public accommodation must also accommodate people with disabilities who use teletypewriters (TTYs), and a range of relay services and other technologies. If you hear, "Hello. This is the relay service..." when you pick up the phone, you are about to talk through a telecommunications relay service provider to a person who is Deaf, Hard of Hearing or has a speech disability. Your business must provide equal access to people with disabilities who use such services to communicate.

Other examples of auxiliary aids and services include assistive listening devices, real time captioning, sign language interpreters, qualified readers, screen readers, recorded texts, magnifiers, and large print materials. A business may not apply a surcharge or request an extra deposit for providing an auxiliary aid or service to a customer with a disability.

TAX BENEFITS

The IRS provides tax benefits for improvements that make your business more accessible and to employers who hire people with disabilities. To determine your eligibility, consult the IRS's website at www.irs.gov.

ENSURING PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

Customers with disabilities will not be able to transact business with you if they cannot navigate your facilities. You are responsible for ensuring that your business is accessible to people with disabilities, even if you lease your space.

New construction and alterations

Buildings constructed after May 1, 1988, must comply with the requirements of the Illinois Accessibility Code (IAC). In addition, any element or space of a building altered after May 1, 1988, must meet IAC standards.

Barrier removal

Buildings constructed before May 1, 1988, that have not been altered are subject to the barrier removal requirements of the ADA. This means that public accommodations must remove physical barriers to the extent it is readily achievable. Examples of readily achievable barrier removal include installing an entrance ramp, widening a doorway, installing accessible door hardware, repositioning shelves, and moving display racks or furniture.

Parking

Your business must provide a certain number of accessible parking spaces based on the total number of spaces available to employees and visitors. These accessible spaces must be located on the shortest route to an accessible entrance and have appropriate markings and signage. In addition, you must keep accessible parking spaces clear of snow, ice, shopping carts, and other objects.

For more information on physical accessibility, consult the Illinois Capital Development Board's website at www.illinois.gov/cdb.