

# A Guide to Understanding The Americans With Disabilities Act

## Questions and Answers for Members of the Public



The [Connecticut Judicial Branch](#) is committed to carrying out the objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). [Title II of the ADA](#) requires public entities, such as the Connecticut Judicial Branch, to accommodate individuals with disabilities by providing equal access to their services, programs, and activities. This brochure is designed to assist members of the public with reliable, easy to find ADA information. *Please note that words that are underlined are "hyperlinked" to online versions of forms and other available information.*

Under the ADA, one has a disability if one has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, if one has a history of such an impairment, or is perceived to have an impairment. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

In this brochure, you will find answers to common questions about the ADA and the courts. If you have other questions, you may speak to your local ADA contact person.

### **1: I will be visiting a Judicial Branch building. Will there be an accessible entrance?**

**A:** Yes. Every Judicial Branch facility has an accessible entrance. Please visit the court [Directions page](#) on the Branch's website, [jud.ct.gov](http://jud.ct.gov), to find out where it is located. If you don't have Internet access, please contact the Clerk's office.

### **2: May I request an accommodation before I come to court?**

**A:** Yes. While a request for an accommodation can be made at any time, it is best to make the request as far in advance as one can. If possible, you should give a minimum of 10 days' notice.

### **3: I will be visiting a courthouse, but I do not have a court case. Can I still make a request for an accommodation?**

**A:** Yes. Anyone with a disability can make a request, whether that person is an attorney, a party to a case, a juror, or a member of the public who simply wants to observe court proceedings.

### **4: How do I make a request for accommodation?**

**A:** A request can be made in many different ways. You can fill out the [Request for Accommodation By Persons With Disabilities](#) form that is on the Judicial Branch website, or you can call the court Clerk's office or [Court Service Center](#) in the facility that you will be visiting. In addition, you may call or write a contact person at each facility who can assist you by answering specific questions about access to services and by processing requests for accommodations. [The list of Contact people and their email addresses](#) is on the Judicial Branch website.

### **5: Are ADA-related forms and information available in alternative formats?**

**A:** Yes. The information can be made available in other formats such as Braille, large print, and audio. However, this is done by request only and may take some time. Ask your local Contact person.

### **6: Can I get help filling out the form?**

**A:** Yes. Feel free to ask the local contact person or any other court personnel to help you fill out the form. However, they are unable to provide you legal advice.

### **7: What is the role of the ADA Contact person?**

**A:** An ADA Contact Person is available at each Judicial Branch facility to ensure that members of the public have an individual at each location who can provide specific information about accommodations available at that location. The Contact person is not qualified, nor authorized, to act as an ADA attorney, expert, advocate, or ADA compliance officer.

### **8: What information should I include on my Request for Accommodation form?**

**A:** The accommodation request must include the full name, address and contact information of the person making the request. If known, the request should state the date of the proceeding, the docket number, and whether it is a civil or criminal matter.

### **9: Do I have to tell you the nature of my disability?**

**A:** Yes, the request should state the nature of the disability that makes an accommodation necessary and include a suggestion as to what would be a reasonable accommodation for the disability. Providing this information will allow the person reviewing your request to better understand the limitation or limitations you are facing, and provide you the most appropriate reasonable accommodation.



**10: Do I need to prove that I have a disability?**

**A:** Most requests for an accommodation do not require proof. In some cases, however, it may be necessary to provide additional information for the Judicial Branch to determine whether you are a “qualified” person with a disability under the ADA and/or to help identify the most appropriate reasonable accommodation.

**11: If I provide information about my disability, is it confidential?**

**A:** Yes. The Judicial Branch is committed to preserving confidentiality. The information will only be used to determine if an accommodation is needed and identify the most appropriate reasonable accommodation.

**12: Can I request specific equipment or services to assist me?**

**A:** Yes. The Judicial Branch can make assistive listening devices, sign language interpreters, printed material in alternate formats, and real time transcription services available *when appropriate*. For [a list of some available equipment and services](#), please visit the Judicial Branch’s website, or contact a person at the facility that you will be visiting.

**13: Can I request that an attorney be provided for my court case?**

**A:** No. The ADA does *not* require the Judicial Branch to provide a lawyer as an accommodation. However, we invite you to visit or call any of our Court Service Centers or a Public Information Desk for information on more resources. Additionally, you can find resources on the [Judicial Branch Law Libraries website](#).

**14: Can I request services or devices of a personal nature?**

**A:** No. The ADA does not require the Judicial Branch to provide services or devices of a personal nature, such as wheelchairs or other mobility devices, or legal representation, secretarial services, and transportation.

**15: How long will it take for my request to be reviewed?**

**A:** All requests are reviewed immediately. However, in some instances, a request will require further consideration. You will be notified of the decision *as soon as possible*.

**16: Can my request be denied?**

**A:** Yes. Although the Judicial Branch is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal access to the courts, some requests may be denied.

**17: Why would my request be denied?**

**A:** The ADA does not require that an accommodation be provided to someone who is not a “qualified” person with a disability. In addition, the ADA does not require actions that would cause a “fundamental alteration of a program or service” or would present an “undue financial or administrative burden.” Additionally, the individual’s physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity must be directly related to the accommodation being sought.

**18: If my request is denied, can I appeal the denial?**

**A:** Yes. If your request for an accommodation is denied, or if you do not agree with the accommodation offered, you can file a grievance/complaint. The grievance must be filed no later than 10 days after the denial has been made on your request. For additional information about

[the grievance process](#) and to find [the grievance/complaint form](#), please visit the Judicial Branch website or ask for assistance at the courthouse.

**19: I don’t like the Judge’s ruling in my case. Can I file an ADA complaint?**

**A:** No. The ADA Complaint process is used only when a request for accommodation has been denied. It is not the correct way to challenge a Judge’s decision.

**20: Is there a cost for any of these services?**

**A:** No. It is the Judicial Branch’s responsibility to provide a reasonable accommodation at no cost to all qualified individuals.

**21: If I receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), does that guarantee that my request for an accommodation will be granted?**

**A:** No. The definition of disability under the Social Security Administration is *not* the same as the definition of disability under the ADA. The Social Security Administration defines disability in terms of “inability to perform substantial gainful activity,” by which it means “work paying minimum wage or better.” The ADA defines it as having a record of or being perceived as having a “physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.”

**22: I have a disability and have been summoned for jury service. How do I make a request for an accommodation?**

**A:** If you have been summoned for jury service and need a reasonable accommodation, you may call Jury Administration at 1-800-842-8175, or 711 if you have a hearing or speech disability, or you may complete the [Juror Accommodation Form](#), JD-JA-030.

**23: What is the Judicial Branch doing to improve access for people with disabilities?**

**A:** The Judicial Branch recognizes the importance access plays in our court system and the ADA initiative is always ongoing. An [Advisory Board on the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) was created in 2011 to oversee the ongoing implementation of the recommendations approved by the Office of the Chief Court Administrator and to offer new recommendations as appropriate.

**24: Who do I contact if I have any suggestions for improvement?**

**A:** You may call the Superior Court Operations Division Coordinator at 860-706-5310 or you may email your suggestions to [ADA.Program@jud.ct.gov](mailto:ADA.Program@jud.ct.gov). Please limit suggestions to general observations about programs or processes. Suggestions relating to specific cases will not be considered.



[www.jud.ct.gov](http://www.jud.ct.gov)