

A Guide to Understanding The Americans With Disabilities Act: Questions and Answers for Members of the Public

The Connecticut Judicial Branch has long been 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 has been designed to assist members of the public with reliable, easy to find ADA-related 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](#).

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

A: Yes. Every Judicial Branch facility has an accessible entrance. If the accessible entrance is not through the front of the building, please visit the [court directions](#) page on the Branch's website to find out where it is located. If you don't have Internet access, please contact the Clerk's office.

Q: 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 ten (10) days notice.

Q: 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.

Q: 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 are available on the Judicial Branch website.

Q: Is the Request for Accommodation form available in alternative formats?

A: Yes. The form can be made available in other formats such as Braille, large print, and audio.

Q: 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.

Q: 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.

Q: 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.

Q: 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(s) you are facing, thus providing you with the most appropriate reasonable accommodation.

Q: Do I need to prove that I have a disability?

A: No, most requests for an accommodation do not require proof. In some cases, however, it may be necessary to provide additional information in order 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.

Q: 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 utilized to determine if an accommodation is needed and identify the most appropriate reasonable accommodation.

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

A: Yes. The Judicial Branch can make available assistive listening devices, sign language interpreters, printed material in alternate formats, and real time transcription services, when appropriate. For a complete list of available [equipment and services](#),

please visit the Judicial Branch’s website, or contact a person at the facility that you will be visiting.

Q: 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](#) to obtain information on more resources.

Q: Can I request services of a personal nature?

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

Q: 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.

Q: 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.

Q: 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.

Q: 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 ten (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.

Q: Can I file a complaint if I am unhappy with the Judge’s decision on the merits of my case?

A: No. The ADA Complaint process is not the appropriate way to challenge a Judge’s decision.

Q: Is there a separate cost for any of these services?

A: No. As required under the ADA, it is the Judicial Branch’s responsibility to provide a reasonable accommodation at no cost to all qualified individuals.

Q: 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, having a record of, or being perceived as* having a “physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.”

Q: 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 you may complete the JD-JA-030 form by following this link <https://www.jud2.ct.gov/juryforms/JA030Disability.aspx>

Q: Is the Judicial Branch making any efforts to improve access for people with disabilities?

A: Yes, 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.

Q: 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