

## **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in:

1. Employment. A person has the right to reasonable accommodations in order to complete a job.
2. State and local Government. For example, access to voting, community recreation programs, and libraries.
3. Public accommodations and commercial facilities. For example, restaurants, retail stores, movie theaters, hotels, zoos, sports stadiums.
4. Transportation. For example, accessible buses, paratransit systems.
5. Telecommunications. For example, telephone relay service 24/7 and closed-captioned television programs.

Access for the ADA does not simply mean physical access; it means programmatic and service access. That is, things have to be understandable and usable.

## **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (formerly called P.L. 94-142 or the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975) requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. It also entitles students to support services and devices needed to facilitate their education in classrooms alongside students who are not identified as having disabilities, e.g. assistive listening systems, talking computers, speech synthesizers, or a school aid.

IDEA says

- services must be based on the student's needs (not what the school has in place),
- the student has the right to be involved in developing her/his Individualized Education Program (IEP). Necessary accommodations must be made to meaningfully elicit the student's input.

- The school must gain the student's and parents' input into the IEP at least once a year, and that the student and parent can ask for changes in the IEP at any time during the year.
- The student and parent have the right to bring anyone to the IEP meeting like a friend or advocate
- the student and parent can seek outside help if they disagree with the school about services and cannot resolve the disagreement on their own.

IDEA also requires transition planning to start at age 14, or younger if appropriate. The point of transition planning is to help a student gain the skills and connect with the community supports needed to move into the adult world. It is to be directed by the student's interests, preferences, skills and support needs, and looks at postsecondary education, vocational training, employment, independent living and community participation. Again, anyone the student or parent feels would be helpful can participate in transition planning, such as the local minister or employer or someone from a Center for Independent Living.

### **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

It says that qualified individuals with disabilities cannot be excluded from, denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance. This lesson is that persons with disabilities have the right to get help in finding, doing, or keeping a job.