

The Americans with Disabilities Act for Caregivers

What is the ADA?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that protects people with disabilities in several areas including employment, local and state government, community places (stores, hotels, health care facilities, and more), transportation, and telecommunications.

The ADA and Dental Care

A dental practice is considered a place of public accommodation under Title 3 of the ADA. This requires that dental practices (a dentist office, oral surgery center, etc.) pay attention to physical accessibility, provide modifications to procedures and practices to accommodate people with disability, and ensure that communication with a person with disability (or a caregiver if that is needed) is “effective.” The U.S. Department of Justice is the federal agency that enforces this part of the ADA.

Accessible Facilities

A dental practice has obligations to provide access in their physical facilities which might include the parking area, the entrance into the building, the waiting room areas, restrooms if they are made available, and examination areas.

Reasonable Modifications

A dental practice has obligations to modify any procedures, policies, or practices to make them accessible to people with disabilities. An example might be that if they have a policy that only the patient is allowed to go into the examination room, an accommodation might include allowing a caregiver to accompany the person.

Effective Communication

A dental practice has obligations to make sure their communication is effective depending on the person’s disability. This might be accomplished by providing what’s called “auxiliary aids and services” such as sign language interpreters, large print materials, or more. The accommodation of providing aids and services would also apply to caregivers. For instance, a Deaf caregiver might request a sign language interpreter so they would be able to participate in the care of the person they are supporting at the dental practice. There should be no charge for these services for the person with a disability or the caregiver.

Resources

- **The ADA and Caregivers**
Website: adata.org/factsheet/ada-and-caregivers
- **An Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act**
Website: adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview
- **Health Care and the Americans with Disabilities Act**
Website: adata.org/factsheet/health-care-and-ada
- **Effective Communication**
Website: adata.org/factsheet/communication

ADA Help

Free ADA Help: (800) 949-4232

The Great Lakes ADA Center operates a free “help” line during normal business hours. If you need help in understanding your rights or how to file a complaint under the ADA, you can call and ask. It is a confidential service.

You can also call the Center for Health Equity at **(812) 856-5251** and ask for ADA-Indiana.