

# ADVOCACY WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDERS

Officers in law enforcement and victim service providers are people who help carry out laws and work to help people. Police officers and deputy sheriffs are people in law enforcement. Victim advocates work with law enforcement to help victims or survivors get the help that they need. People with disabilities may need the help of law enforcement or victim service provider if they are a victim or survivor of a crime, violence, or assault. People with disabilities may need to request reasonable accommodations or supports to get the help they need to advocate for their needs and rights.

Law enforcement officers meet individuals with disabilities at least 50-80% of the time.

This fact sheet will help you:

- Understand laws that protect your rights from discrimination as a person with a disability

- Tips for interacting with law enforcement officers

- Report violations of your rights as a person with a disability

## ***The Americans with Disabilities Act***

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law that says people with disabilities are to be treated the same as people without disabilities. The ADA has five sections, called “titles”, that protect people with disabilities in different settings:

- Title I: Employment

- Title II: State and Local Government

- Title III: Public Accommodations

- Title IV: Communication (such as relay telecommunications access)

- Title V: Miscellaneous Section

Title II is the part of the ADA that protects your rights during meetings with police, victim service providers, and other law enforcement officers.

Another law that protects the rights of people with disabilities is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The rights of people with disabilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are the same as those under the ADA. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the right of people with disabilities to participate in programs and services that are paid for with federal money. When a program or service is funded with state and federal money, your rights are protected by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act at the same time.

## ***If you are Deaf or Hard of Hearing***

If you are deaf or hard of hearing and have trouble communicating with law enforcement or victim service providers, the ADA says that you can share how you best communicate. The ADA states that law enforcement and victim service providers must communicate with you so that you understand what is being said.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, there are other ways to communicate. Some examples are:

- A TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf)

- Orally with gestures and visual aids

- Written notes

## ***Tips for Working with Law Enforcement and Victim Service Providers***

Tell them you are a person with a disability and may need reasonable accommodations and supports to work with them to help you.

Carry a pocket-sized card with information about you and your disability.

The card can help you if you are not able to communicate in a stressful situation or cannot use your physical voice.

The card can help law enforcement and victim service providers understand that you have a disability and what your needs and wants are. It can also let individuals know who you would like to contact and what accommodations and supports you may need.

## ***Reporting Disability Rights Violations***

If you think your rights as a person with a disability were violated, you may file a complaint. Typically, complaints can be filed over the phone or by filling out a form. Sometimes, you may be able to file a complaint anonymously.

If you have decided to file a complaint against a law enforcement officer, try having the following information ready:

The officer's name

The officer's vehicle number if possible

A description of what the officer looked like

The name and contact information for anyone else who saw what happened

Where the event took place

Date and time the incident took place

## ***Reporting to the Department of Justice (DOJ)***

You may also report violations to the U.S. Department of Justice (the DOJ). The DOJ enforces Title II of the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. You can file an ADA complaint alleging disability discrimination against a State or local government by mail or e-mail.

To learn more about filing an ADA complaint, visit [www.ada.gov/filing\\_complaint.htm](http://www.ada.gov/filing_complaint.htm).

To file an ADA complaint, fill out this form fax it to (202) 307-1197 or mail the form to:

US Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Civil Rights Division  
Disability Rights Section – 1425 NYAV  
Washington, D.C. 20530

You may also file a complaint by e-mail at [ADA.complaint@usdoj.gov](mailto:ADA.complaint@usdoj.gov).

If you have questions about filing an ADA complaint, please call 800-514-0301 (voice) or 800-514-0383 (TTY).