

# Empowerment in Action:

*A Plain Language Guide to Advocacy For People with Disabilities*



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# Empowerment in Action: A Plain Language Guide to Advocacy For People with Disabilities

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## Introduction



Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. People with disabilities have legal rights to access services, jobs, education, and community life. But sometimes, those rights are not respected. That is when advocacy is important.

Advocacy means speaking up for your own rights or helping others. This guide will help you learn how to advocate for yourself or others using simple steps, helpful tools, and real-life examples.

### Objectives

1. Empower Individuals: Help people with disabilities learn how to speak up or communicate what they need and want.
2. Promote Accessibility: Help make places, information, and services easier for everyone to use by finding and fixing things that make it hard for people with disabilities to take part.
3. Enhance Awareness: Share information about disability rights and how to use advocacy to make change.

### Disability Rights

#### What Are Disability Rights?

Disability rights are **laws and rules that protect people with disabilities**. These rights help make sure everyone is treated fairly and has equal access to things like:

- **Jobs**
- **School**
- **Public Places (like stores, parks, and libraries)**
- **Transportation**
- **Health Care**
- **Government Services**

## Your Rights Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** is a law that protects people with disabilities. It says:

- You cannot be treated unfairly because of your disability. You have the right to ask for reasonable accommodations or supports.
- Places must be accessible (for example, with ramps, elevators, or large print).
- You can get help communicating (like sign language interpreters or written materials).
- You have the right to participate fully in public life.



### ADA Title I: Employment

#### What it means:

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a **law that protects people with disabilities at work**.

It says that:

- **Employers cannot treat you unfairly** because of your disability.
- Employers must give **equal chances** to people with disabilities when hiring, training, promoting, and paying workers.
- If you need help to do your job, like special equipment or a flexible schedule, your employer must try to give you a **reasonable accommodation**, or support unless it's too hard or expensive for them.
- Employers **can't ask questions about your disability** before they offer you a job.
- You are protected if you **stand up for your rights** or help someone else stand up for theirs.

### Who does this law apply to?

Businesses with **15 or more employees**, as well as **government agencies and unions**.

The goal is to make sure that people with disabilities can **get jobs and keep jobs** just like everyone else.

### What Is a Reasonable Accommodation?

A **reasonable accommodation** is a change or support that helps you do your job. Examples include:

- Extra time on a test
- A quieter workspace
- A sign language interpreter
- Written information in large print or Braille
- Time off for medical appointments



## ADA Title II: Public Services (Government Programs and Services)

### What it means:

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) says that **state and local governments** must make sure that **people with disabilities** can

use **public services**, programs, and activities.

This includes things like:

- Public schools
- Public transportation
- City and county buildings
- Parks and recreation programs
- Voting and public meetings

### What it requires:

- **No discrimination** against people with disabilities
- Make services and programs **accessible** (for example: ramps, sign language interpreters, documents in Braille or plain language)
- **Reasonable modifications** to rules and policies, if needed



## ADA Title III: Public Accommodations (Businesses and Nonprofits)

### What it means:

Title III says that **businesses and nonprofits** that are open to the public

must make sure that **people with disabilities can get in and use their services.**

This includes places like:

- Stores and restaurants
- Hotels and movie theaters
- Doctors' offices and hospitals
- Museums, libraries, and gyms
- Private schools and daycares

### What it requires:

- **No discrimination** against people with disabilities
- Make buildings and services **physically accessible** (like ramps and accessible restrooms)
- Provide **effective communication** (like communication help or help reading forms)
- **Remove barriers** when it's easy to do (called "readily achievable")



### Reasonable Accommodations & Modifications

Reasonable accommodations and modifications are **changes to rules, policies, or ways of doing things** that help a person with a disability take part in a program, service, or activity.

**These changes are required under the ADA** (especially Titles II and III), unless making the change would cause serious problems for the organization (called an "undue burden" or a "fundamental change").

## Examples of Reasonable Accommodations:

### Government Services (Title II – State/Local Programs)

- A city office moves a public meeting to an accessible location so someone using a wheelchair can attend.
- A public school changes the pick-up/drop-off location for a student with a mobility issue.
- A recreation center allows a person to register for a class in person instead of online because the website is not accessible.
- A courtroom gives someone with a disability extra time to understand and respond during a hearing.

### Public Places (Title III – Businesses, Nonprofits)

- A grocery store allows a person with a disability to wait in line while sitting in a chair they bring from home.
- A movie theater lets someone with a disability buy tickets at the counter instead of using a touch screen.
- A hotel provides a room close to the elevator for a guest who has trouble walking.
- A restaurant reads the menu out loud to a customer who is blind.

### What They Are NOT:

- They are **not special treatment**.
- They are fair changes to help everyone have equal access.

You have the **right to ask** for these supports. The person or business must try to work with you unless it is too difficult or expensive for them.

**“NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US.”**



## Step-by-Step Advocacy Strategies

Advocacy means **speaking up for yourself** or others to be treated fairly. You do not need to be an expert; you need to know your rights and tell your story. Here are some steps to help you advocate.

### Step 1: Know Your Rights

If you have a disability, the law gives you rights to help make sure you are treated fairly. These rights help you take part in your community, go to school or work, and live your life with respect.

### Important Laws That Protect Your Rights:

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

This law says programs that get money from the federal government must include and support people with disabilities.

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

This law gives students with disabilities the right to a free, appropriate public education with support that meets their needs.

### *Fair Housing Act (FHA)*

This law says you have equal access to housing if you have a disability as well as other identities.

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

This law helps make sure places, programs, and services are accessible and fair for people with disabilities.

### **Your Rights Under the ADA**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that protects the civil rights of people with disabilities. It helps make sure you can take part in your community just like everyone else.

### **You Have the Right To:**

#### **1. Be Treated Fairly**

No one should **discriminate against you** because of your disability.

This includes work, school, transportation, businesses, and government programs.

#### **2. Get Reasonable Accommodations and Reasonable Modifications**

You can ask for **changes or support** that help you take part in work, services, or activities.

This includes modifying rules, providing interpreters, or making spaces more accessible.

### 3. Access Public Places

Businesses (like stores, hotels, and restaurants) must be **open and accessible** to people with disabilities.

### 4. Access Government Services

State and local government programs (like schools, buses, and parks) must also be **accessible**.

### 5. Use a Service Animal

If you have a disability, you can bring your **service dog** into most public places.

### 6. Speak Up Without Fear

It's **against the law** for someone to **punish or threaten you** for using your ADA rights.



#### You Can Ask For:

Braille or large print materials

A ramp or accessible entrance

A sign language interpreter

Extra time to complete a task or form

Help understanding or filling out paperwork

## Real Stories From Advocates Using Their Rights

### *Jamal's First Job*

Jamal has a learning disability. When he got his first job at a grocery store, he had trouble remembering the steps to use the cash register. Jamal knew his rights under the ADA, so he talked to his manager. He asked for a checklist with the steps written out in plain language.

That checklist was a **reasonable accommodation**, a small change that helped him do his job well. The manager agreed, and Jamal was able to keep his job and feel proud of his work.

### *Sam and His Apartment*

Sam uses a wheelchair and wants to rent an apartment. When he went to see an apartment he liked, he could not see it because it was on the second floor.

Sam knew his rights under the **Fair Housing Act**, which says people with disabilities must have equal access to housing. He politely told the landlord that he would like to request an apartment on the first floor.

The landlord agreed after learning more about the laws and once a first-floor unit became available, Sam moved in and felt safe and welcome.

Knowing his rights helped Sam stand up for fair housing.

### *Alexis at the Doctor*

Alexis is Deaf and uses American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. When she made a doctor's appointment, the office told her they did not provide interpreters and asked her to bring a friend to help.

Alexis knew that, under the ADA, medical offices must provide communication access. She told them she needed a professional ASL interpreter to fully understand her care.

After she explained her rights, the office arranged for an interpreter for all her visits.

Knowing her rights under the ADA helped Alexis get clear and equal medical care.

**TIP: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT. KNOWING YOUR BASIC RIGHTS CAN HELP A LOT.**



## **Step 2: Think About What You Need**

Before you can speak up for yourself, it helps to stop and think about your situation. This step helps you to think

clearly about your needs and how to ask for them.

Ask yourself:

- What is the problem?
- What is making things hard for me?
- Is something unfair, confusing, or blocking me from doing what I need to do?
- What would help fix it?
- What would make this easier or fairer?
- Is there a tool, change, or support that would help?
- Who has the power to help?
- Is it a teacher? A boss? A doctor? A landlord?
- Who can say “yes” to your request?

### ***Story: Maria’s New Desk***

Maria works at a local government office as a data entry clerk. She has arthritis, which makes it hard for her to sit for long periods or use a regular keyboard and mouse.

She asked herself:

**What is the problem?**

“I have a hard time sitting for a long time and using a mouse and keyboard.”

**What would help?**

“If I could take short breaks, have an accessible keyboard and mouse, and an ergonomic chair, I can be more productive.”

**Who can help?**

“The supervisor or the human resources (HR) person.”

Maria talks to her supervisor and says,

“I’m having pain in my hands and back. Is there something we can do to make my workstation more comfortable?”

Her supervisor listens and works with Human Resources to find a solution. They provide:

- An ergonomic chair with better back support.
- A keyboard with larger keys and an accessible mouse that’s easier to grip.
- More frequent short breaks so Maria can stretch.

This helps Maria do her job more comfortably and safely.

By thinking through her needs, Maria was able to ask for the right support.

Questions to Help You Decide:

- What is the problem?
- What would help fix it?
- Who has the power to help?



### **Step 3: Speak Up – Use Your Voice and Message**

Advocating means sharing what you need and asking for help. Here are some ways to speak up and share information.

#### **Talk to the right person.**

Find the person who can help with your problem. This might

be a manager, teacher, doctor, or someone in charge.

#### **Write a letter or email.**

Write down your concerns so that you can explain things more clearly. A letter or email creates a record of your request.

#### **Make a phone call.**

Calling can be quicker and lets you ask questions right away.

#### **Bring someone with you for support.**

Having a friend, family member, or advocate with you can help you feel stronger and make sure your message is clear.

When you speak up, use calm and clear words to explain:

- What you need.  
Be clear about what will help you.
- Why it matters.  
Explain how it affects you and why it is important.
- What you would like to happen next.  
Say what you want the person to do or what outcome you hope for.

**SPEAKING UP AND SHARING YOUR MESSAGE IS YOUR RIGHT, AND YOUR IDEAS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

***Ebony's Bus Stop***

Ebony uses an Other Powered-Driven Mobility Device and lives in an apartment near a busy road. The nearest bus stop does not have a ramp or a bench, and it is hard for her to wait safely. She felt nervous but decided to speak up.

First, she called the city's transportation office.

She calmly explained: "I have a disability under the ADA and use a wheelchair and rely on the bus to get to work. The stop near my home is not safe for me. I would like a ramp and a place to sit while I wait."

They listened, and later, the city installed a small ramp and added a bench.

Ebony said, "I did not think my message would matter, but it did. Now I can get to work safely, and I feel proud I spoke up."

Your message is powerful. Just like Ebony, you can make change happen by speaking up for yourself or others!



## Step 4: Ask For Reasonable Accommodations or Modifications

If you are a person with a disability and need support to do your job, go to school, use a public service, or take part in an activity, you have the right to ask for reasonable accommodations or modifications.

### How to Ask

You do not need to use fancy words. Just say what you need and explain that it is because of your disability.

You can ask in person, by phone, in writing, or by email.

#### *Example Phrases:*

“Because of my disability, I need some changes so I can do my job better.”

“Can I have more time to finish this form? I have a disability that makes it hard to write quickly.”

“I need to bring my service dog with me because of my disability.”

“Can I get written instructions? It helps me because I have trouble remembering things.”

#### *What Happens Next?*

The person or organization should talk with you to figure out a good solution (this is called an “interactive process”).

The ADA says your employer doesn't have to give you the exact accommodation you ask for. They can choose another option, as long as it works just as well for you and helps you do your job.

- Example: James uses a wheelchair and asked his employer to install an automatic door opener for the break room. Instead, the employer chose to move the break room to a location with a wide doorway and no heavy door.
- Even though this was a different solution than James requested, it made the break room just as easy for him to access.
- Under the ADA, this works because the accommodation is equally effective.
- Another Example: Aisha is Deaf and asked her employer to hire a sign language interpreter for weekly team meetings. Her employer decided instead to use real-time captioning (CART) on a large screen during the meetings.
- Even though this was a different accommodation than Aisha requested, the captions allowed her to fully follow the conversation and participate.
- Under the ADA, this is fine because the accommodation was equally effective.

Here is a list of advocacy phrases people with disabilities can use when speaking up for their rights under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and other disability rights laws. These phrases can be used in person, on the phone, in emails, or in letters.

### *Phrases to Start the Conversation*

"I have a disability under the ADA, and I would like to talk about how to get the support I need."

"I would like to request a reasonable accommodation."

“Can we talk about making this space/service more accessible?”

“I want to make sure I am getting equal access, as protected by the ADA.”

“I have the right to access and participate fully, just like everyone else.”

### *Phrases to Explain What You Need*

“This is a barrier for me. What can we do to fix it?”

“This change would help me fully use your service/attend/work/participate.”

“The ADA says I can ask for reasonable accommodations. You do not need to use the words ‘reasonable accommodations’ or ‘reasonable modifications.’ Here is what I need...”

“I am requesting [name the accommodation/modification] because it allows me to do [task/activity].”

“Without this support, I cannot access this like other people can.”

### *Phrases For Written Requests or Emails*

“I am making this request under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).”

“This is a formal request for accommodation.”

“Please let me know if you need documentation or more information.”

“I would appreciate a written response to my request.”

### *Phrases to Use If Your Request Is Denied*

“Can you explain why my request was denied?”

“I would like for this decision to be reviewed.”

“I believe this may be a violation of my rights under the ADA.”

“Who can I speak to about filing a complaint?”

“I may need to get help from a disability rights organization.”

### ***Phrases For Problem-Solving***

“What are my options if this accommodation is not possible?”

“Can we find another solution that meets my needs?”

“I would like to work together to fix this access issue.”

“I am open to talking about other ways to make this work.”

## **Real Stories From Advocates + Advocacy Phrases**

### ***Lena’s College Test***

Lena has ADHD and finds it hard to focus during long exams. She asked her college’s disability services office for extra time and a quiet room.

*“At first, I felt nervous, but I reminded myself, ‘I have a disability, and I would like to talk about how to get the support I need.’ I am not asking for anything unfair — just what I need to succeed like everyone else.”*

She also used a phrase like:

“I am requesting extra time and a quiet space as accommodations under the ADA because they help me focus and show what I know.”

### ***Carlos at Work***

Carlos has chronic pain and fatigue. Standing all day made things worse. He asked his boss for a stool and short stretch breaks.

“I did not have to go into details. I said, ‘This change would help me do my job with a reasonable accommodation under the ADA.’ I also said, ‘I am open to talking about other ways to make this work.’ That helped my boss understand I was serious, but flexible.”

Carlos showed that asking for accommodations does not have to be complicated.

### *Amina’s Doctor Visit*

Amina is Deaf and uses American Sign Language. She wrote a short note asking for a sign language interpreter at her next doctor visit.

“I wrote, ‘I am making this request under the ADA. I need an ASL interpreter as an accommodation or support to understand my care and make decisions about my health.’ They arranged it, and I felt respected and in control.”

Amina used clear legal language while keeping her tone polite.

### *Devon’s Public Library*

Devon uses a wheelchair. He saw that a library event was planned in an upstairs room with no elevator. He emailed the organizer.

“I said, ‘This is a barrier for me. What can we do to fix it?’ and ‘The ADA says I can ask for reasonable accommodations and modifications. Can the event be moved to an accessible room?’ They thanked me and moved it. Now others can go too.”

Devon’s email helped improve access for everyone by speaking up clearly and kindly.

## You Deserve Access!

You have the right to ask for what you need to fully take part in school, work, and community life. Asking for accommodations shows self-determination, confidence, and advocacy.

If you are unsure how to ask, practice what you are going to say ahead of time. You are not alone, and your needs matter.



### Step 5: Keep Going

Sometimes when you speak up, the answer is “no” or nothing happens right away. That can feel frustrating but do not give up. You still have power and choices!

You can:

**Ask again**

Maybe the person did not understand or needs more information. Try explaining it in a different way or ask someone to help you explain it.

### **Get help from a disability rights group**

These groups can give advice, write letters, or speak up with you. You do not have to do it alone.

### **File a complaint if your rights were violated**

If you were treated unfairly or denied access, you can file a complaint with the government or an agency. That is your right under the law.

## Real Stories From People Who Kept Going

### *Nina's Job Application*

"I have a speech disability and use a communication device. I applied for a job, and when they saw my device, they told me I would not 'fit in' at the front desk. I felt hurt, but I knew that was not fair. I called a disability group, and they helped me file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The company had to go through training, and I found a job where I am respected."

### *Samir and the Driver*

"I use a service animal. One day, a rideshare driver refused to let me in the car. I explained the law, but they still said no and drove off. I reported it through the app and also filed a complaint. The company followed up and gave the driver a warning. I kept going because it was not just about me. It is about every person with a service animal."

### *Brenda's Apartment Fix*

"My apartment door was hard to open when I use my wheelchair. I asked the landlord to fix it, but months passed. I kept calling. I wrote letters. Finally, I got help from a disability law center, and they sent a letter. The landlord fixed the door, added an automatic opener, and apologized. I am glad I did not stop asking."

## Remember

Advocacy is not always easy. You may feel angry, tired, or ignored. That does not mean your message does not matter. Every time you speak up, you create change.

You have the right to keep going, and you are part of a bigger movement for access, justice, and respect.



## Step 6: Where and How to Use Your Advocacy Skills

### Advocacy at Work (Employment)

Goal: Get support or make changes to help you do your job.

#### *Steps:*

Know your rights under the ADA. You have a right to

reasonable accommodations.

Think about what makes work hard (e.g., standing too long, bright lights, noisy spaces).

Ask for what you need (e.g., a chair, breaks, flexible hours).

#### *Sample Words:*

“I am requesting an accommodation under the ADA.”

“Using a stool would help me manage my pain and still do my job.”

“Can we meet and talk about how to support my needs at work?”

### Advocacy in School (Education)

Goal: Get accommodations/supports to help you learn, take tests, or attend class.

#### *Steps:*

Contact the school’s disability office (college) or IEP/504 team (K–12).

Explain how your disability affects learning or participation.

Request supports like note-takers, extra time, or quiet rooms.

***Sample Words:***

“I need extra time on tests because of my disability.”

“I am asking for a quiet room so I can focus better.”

“Can we meet to talk about my IEP/504 plan?”

**Advocacy in Healthcare**

Goal: Get accessible healthcare.

***Steps:***

Tell your doctor, counselor, therapist, or provider what you need to communicate or access care.

Request ASL interpreters, clear explanations, or assistive technology.

If they say no, ask to speak to someone in charge.

***Sample Words:***

“I need an ASL interpreter at my appointments.”

“I need a longer visit to go over everything carefully.”

“I use a wheelchair—do you have an accessible exam table?”

**Advocacy with Public Services or Government**

Goal: Access government offices, voting, transportation, or public meetings.

***Steps:***

Let them know the barrier you are facing.

Request reasonable changes or accessible alternatives.

Use your right to file a complaint if needed.

***Sample Words:***

“The stairs are a barrier. Can this be moved to an accessible location?”

“I need information in large print to understand it.”

“I am asking for accommodations or modifications under the ADA so I can take part.”

**Advocacy in Businesses and Stores**

Goal: Access stores, businesses, and spaces open to the public.

***Steps:***

Speak to a manager if something is not accessible.

Explain what you need (e.g., a ramp, help reaching items, communication support).

Stay calm and explain that equal access is a right.

***Sample Words:***

“The entrance does not have a ramp. Can someone assist or offer another way in?”

“I am blind, can you read the menu or provide it in large print?”

“I would like to speak to someone about ADA access.”



## Advocacy Examples

Here are some advocacy examples you can use for different situations—asking for accommodations, writing to an official, or speaking up about your rights. Each template is simple, clear, and easy to customize.

### Request For Accommodations Example

Subject: Request for Accommodation

Hello [Name],

My name is [Your Name]. I have a disability under the ADA, and I need some changes to help me do my work/studies/live better.

The change I need is: [Describe your accommodation clearly, e.g., “a ramp to enter the building,” “extra time on tests,” or “a quieter workspace.”]

This change will help me because: [Explain briefly how it helps you.]

Please let me know if you need more information or paperwork from me.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Contact Info]

## **Advocacy Letter to an Employer or School**

Subject: Request for Support and Accommodations

Dear [Name or Title],

I am writing to let you know about my disability under the ADA and ask for support to help me succeed.

I would like to ask for the following accommodations: [List what you need].

These changes will allow me to do my best work and be a full participant.

I am happy to provide any medical or other information you need.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Contact Information]

## **Concern Letter Example**

Subject: Concern About Disability Rights

Hello [Name or Organization],

I want to tell you about a problem I had. I asked for [accommodation or service under the ADA], but it was not provided.

This made it hard for me because [explain briefly].

I believe this is a violation of my rights under the law.

Please help fix this problem as soon as possible.

Thank you,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Info]

### **Speaking Up in Person or on the Phone**

Hi, my name is [Your Name]. I have a disability under the ADA and I need some help.

I am asking for [what you need]. This will help me [explain why].

Can you please help me with this?

Thank you!

### **Follow-Up Message Template**

Subject: Following Up on My Request

Hello [Name],

I am writing to follow up on my request for [accommodation or support under the ADA]. I have not heard back and wanted to check the status.

Please let me know if you need more information from me.

Thank you for your time and help.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Info]



## Advocacy Checklists

Here are Advocacy Checklists to help you step-by-step when advocating for your rights or needs. They are simple and easy to follow for different advocacy situations.

### Advocacy Checklist: Asking For Accommodations

- Know your rights (learn about your rights under laws like the ADA).
- Identify the problem or barrier you face.
- Think about the changes or accommodations that would help you.
- Write down your request clearly and simply.
- Gather any paperwork or proof you might need (like a doctor's note).
- Send your request to the right person (employer, school, service provider).
- Keep a copy of your request for your records.
- Follow up if you do not get a response after 1–2 weeks.

- If your request is denied, ask why and what else you can do.
- Get help from a disability rights group, if needed.
- Keep notes of all conversations and responses.

### **Advocacy Checklist: Speaking Up in Person or by Phone**

- Prepare a list of what you want to say before you call or talk.
- Introduce yourself clearly.
- Explain your situation and what you need.
- Ask questions if you do not understand something.
- Stay calm and polite, even if it is frustrating.
- Take notes during the conversation (who you talked to, date, what was said).
- Ask about the next steps.
- Follow up if you do not hear back.

### **Advocacy Checklist: Writing a Letter or Email For Help**

- Start with a clear subject line.
- Say who you are and why you are writing.
- Describe the problem or need in simple language.
- Explain what you want or need (your request).
- Offer to provide more information, if needed.

- Thank the reader for their time and help.
- Check for spelling and clear language before sending.
- Keep a copy of your letter or email.
- Send them to the right person or office.
- Follow up if you do not get a reply.

### **Advocacy Checklist: What to Do if Your Rights Are Denied**

- Ask for a clear explanation of why your request was denied.
- Review your rights again to be sure of your options.
- Contact a disability rights organization for advice or help.
- Think about filing a formal complaint, if needed.
- Keep records of all your requests and responses.
- Stay persistent and keep asking for what you need.




### **Resources and Contacts**


These organizations can help you learn more about your rights, ask for accommodations, or get support if something goes wrong.

## Disability Rights Help


### Disability Rights South Carolina (or your state's Protection and Advocacy agency)

- Every state has a Protection & Advocacy agency
- Free help with disability rights, discrimination, and access
-  Find your [Protection & Advocacy agency](#) (web: [ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies](http://ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies))

### National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

- Supports Protection & Advocacy agencies across the U.S.
-  [www.ndrn.org](http://www.ndrn.org)

### ADA National Network

- Free information on your rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Help with access at work, in schools, and in public places
- 1-800-949-4232 (voice/relay)
-  [www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

### Southeast ADA Center (Region 4)


Provides free, confidential assistance on ADA rights in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) and part of the ADA National Network.

- Toll-free (connects to your region): 18009494232 (voice/relay)


- Regional line (Voice & Español): 4045419001 (M–F, 9 am–5 pm ET)
- Email: [adasoutheast@syr.edu](mailto:adasoutheast@syr.edu)

## Legal Help


### South Carolina Human Affairs Commission (SCHAC)

- Address:  
1026 Sumter Street, Suite 101  
Columbia, SC 29201
- Phone (voice): (803) 7377800  
Relay (TTY): 711  
Fax: (803) 7377835
-  <https://schac.sc.gov/>  
Email: [information@schac.sc.gov](mailto:information@schac.sc.gov)
- Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM–5:00 PM

### U.S. Department of Justice – Civil Rights Division


- File a complaint if your rights under the ADA are violated
-  [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)

### Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

- Handles job discrimination complaints
- 1-800-669-4000
-  [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

## Advocacy and Support

### Center For Independent Living (CILs)

- Peer support, advocacy, and independent living skills
- Find your local center:  [www.ilru.org](http://www.ilru.org)

## Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) offers free, expert, and confidential advice on job accommodations, ADA compliance, and disability-related employment issues.

### Services Offered


- One-on-one help with deciding how to ask for accommodations
- Guidance on legal rights under the ADA and other employment laws
- Accommodation ideas tailored to job tasks and disability types
- Free publications, webcasts, and searchable tools on solutions and best practices

### Contact Information


- Toll-free (Voice): 18005267234 (also known as 1800ADAWORK)
- TTY: 18777819403
- Email: [jan@askjan.org](mailto:jan@askjan.org)
- Live chat (for employers): Available on their website
- Website: AskJAN.org

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, typically 9 am – 6 pm Eastern Time


## Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

- Run by and for autistic people
-  [www.autisticadvocacy.org](http://www.autisticadvocacy.org)


## Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)

- National group led by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
-  [www.sabeusa.org](http://www.sabeusa.org)

## The Arc of the United States

- Support and advocacy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
-  [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

## National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

- Advocacy and legal help for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people
-  [www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org)



## Conclusion:

You Have the Power to Speak Up and Share Your Message!

Advocacy means **knowing your rights, using your message, and asking for what you need.** Whether you are at work, school, the doctor's office, or in your community, you deserve to be treated with

fairness and respect.

You do not have to do it alone. There are tools, people, and organizations ready to help you speak up and be heard.

Remember:

Your message matters.

Your rights are protected.

You are not asking for special treatment, just equal access.

You can keep going, even if the answer is “no” at first.

Advocacy is not about being loud. It is about being clear, strong, and true to yourself.

You are your own best advocate, and your story can lead to change not only for you but also for others.



## **Disclaimer:**

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