

What is the Americans with Disabilities Act?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law. The ADA says that people with disabilities are entitled to equal rights in employment, public services, and access to public accommodations. The act was created to remove barriers that often limit basic opportunities and choices.

Does the ADA apply to me as a child care provider?

Yes, "public accommodations" include family child care homes, preschools, child care centers and group homes. If you provide child care as a business in a home or center you cannot refuse to serve a child just because he or she has a disability. The ADA says you must make "reasonable accommodation" to serve children with disabilities. "Reasonable accommodation" means adaptations that are not excessively expensive and that do not cause you to make fundamental changes in your setting or program.

How can I make sure I comply with the ADA?

Here are some things you can do to assure that you are in compliance with the ADA:

- Take time to talk to parents who call about child care for a child with special needs. Discuss how well you could meet the child's needs and find out if the child requires adaptations or accommodations.
- Make your decision whether or not you are able to serve a child on an individual basis. If you are not sure that you can safely or appropriately care for a child, decide after talking with parents about their child's specific needs and invite the family and child to tour your program to get more information about how you can work together in the best interest of you and the child.
- Evaluate your policies and procedures. Make sure they don't screen out children with disabilities.
- Be ready to make simple changes in activities that allow all children to participate.
- Have the same rates for all children. Under the ADA you cannot charge more to care for a child who has a disability. This also means that you cannot exclude or charge more for a child not independently toileting.
- Be sure to ask about the information and support parents or professionals serving the child may be able to offer.

How can I get more information on the ADA?

A more detailed set of questions and answers about childcare and the ADA is available at www.ada.gov, search for child care, there are a number of documents on this topic.

Inclusive Partners is a statewide program that helps preserve access to child care settings for children with specialized needs by supporting child care providers in their work. Check out their website at www.inclusivepartners.org. For more specific questions, call 971/673-2286.