



**Utah Parent Center**  
Special needs, extraordinary potential

## Summary of the Americans with Disabilities Act's Protections

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Have you ever broken a bone, had a cast, or needed to use crutches, a brace, or a sling? What was it like for you? What kind of help did you receive from friends, family, and teachers? Maybe people opened doors for you, helped you copy down your homework, or provided you with extra time to complete assignments. Temporary conditions such as broken bones are short term and generally heal over time. A disability, on the other hand, is constant and life-long.

A person qualifies as having a disability un the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) if they meet at least one of the following three conditions:

1. A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., such as walking, talking, breathing, seeing, reading, learning, working, etc.):
2. A record of such impairment (e.g. people with a history of cancer or mental illness);  
or
3. Being regarded as having such an impairment (e.g. such as a person with a disfiguring facial scar, or a person rumored to be HIV positive, etc.).

When a person with a disability exits high school, he or she moves from a system of entitlement to a system of eligibility. Once the person enters, college, adult education or the work of work, the only way he or she can receive the accommodations is if he or she asks for them. That is why it's so important for a person with a disability to understand him or herself, and his or her disability, and be able to communicate effectively his or her accommodation needs.

It is also important for people with disabilities to understand the laws that protect them in case they do decide to disclose their disability. The purpose of the ADA is to extend to people with disabilities civil rights protections similar to those already available to people on the basis of race, color, national origin, and religion through the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Basically, the ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in five general areas:

- Private sector employment
- Activities of states and local governments
- Places of public accommodation
- Transportation
- Telecommunication services

Prior to the passage of the ADA in 1990, it was legal for businesses to discriminate against people with disabilities in these situations. The ADA was enacted because people felt there needed to be a law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities.

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