

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
Disability Rights Section

How to File a Title III Complaint

This is in response to your request for information on how to file a complaint under title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Title III prohibits discrimination based on disability in public accommodations. Private entities covered by title III include places of lodging, establishments serving food and drink, places of exhibition or entertainment, places of public gathering, sales or rental establishments, service establishments, stations used for specified public transportation, places of public display or collection, places of recreation, places of education, social service center establishments, and places of exercise or recreation. Title III also covers commercial facilities (such as warehouses, factories, and office buildings), private transportation services, and licensing and testing practices.

If you feel you or another person have been discriminated against by an entity covered by title III, send a letter to the Department of Justice, at the address below, including the following information:

- Your full name, address, and telephone number, and the name of the party discriminated against;
- The name of the business, organization, or institution that you believe has discriminated;
- A description of the act or acts of discrimination, the date or dates of the discriminatory acts, and the name or names of the individuals who you believe discriminated; and
- Other information that you believe necessary to support your complaint. Please send copies of relevant documents. Do **not** send original documents. (Retain them.)

Sign and send the letter to the address below:

U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Civil Rights Division
Disability Rights - NYAVE
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Disability Rights Section will consider your complaint and inform you of its action. The office will investigate the complaint and determine whether to begin litigation. We will not necessarily make a determination on each complaint about whether or not there is an ADA violation. If we believe there is a pattern or practice of discrimination, or the complaint raises an issue of general public importance, we may attempt to negotiate a settlement of the matter or we may bring an action in U.S. District Court. Any such action would be taken on behalf of the United States. We do not act as an attorney for, or representative of, the complainant.

You also have the option of filing your own case in U.S. District Court.

Depending on the nature of your complaint, other information would also be helpful to our investigation:

1. Small businesses have limited protection from lawsuits. Except with respect to new construction and alterations, no lawsuit can be filed concerning acts or omissions that occur before --

1) July 26, 1992, by businesses with 25 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$1,000,000 or less.

2) January 26, 1993, by businesses with 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less.

2. The name or names of the individuals or entities who have an ownership and/or managerial interest in each facility or business that is the subject of your complaint, with phone numbers and addresses, including zip codes, if you have them.

3. Information specifying whether the facility is owned and/or operated by a private entity or a state or local government.

4. The nature of the activity or service provided by the business.

5. If you are alleging failure to remove architectural barriers, a description, including as much detail as possible, of the barriers. If possible, please provide pictures, videotapes, diagrams, or other illustrations that accurately set forth the alleged violation.

6. Any suggestions for remedying the alleged violations of the ADA.

7. Information about whether you have filed a related complaint with a U.S. Attorney's Office, or any other Federal, State, or local agency, or any court, or whether you intend to file such a complaint.

Privacy Act Statement

The authority for collecting this information is contained in 42 U.S.C. 12188(b). We need this information in order to investigate your complaint. The personal information will be used primarily for authorized civil rights compliance and enforcement activities conducted by the Department of Justice. The Department will not disclose the name of, or other identifying information about, an individual unless it is necessary for enforcement activities against an entity alleged to have violated federal law, or unless such information is required to be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, or as is allowed through the publication of a routine use in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a. To further the Department's enforcement activities, information we have about you may be given to appropriate Federal, State, or local agencies. Additional disclosures of information may be made: to Members of Congress or staff; to volunteer student workers within the Department of Justice so that they may perform their duties; to the news media when release is made consistent with the Freedom of Information Act and 28 C.F.R. 40.2; and to the National Archives and Records Administration and General Services Administration to perform records management inspection functions in accordance with their statutory responsibilities. Furnishing of the requested information is voluntary except that the failure to provide such information may result in our being unable to process your complaint.
