

Reflections on Benefits of the ADA Law

By [Bonnie Bartos](#) posted 01-14-2019 14:37



*To Justin Dart. Without your drive, your 'believing' and your leadership this day would not have been possible. With respect & friendship
GWB*

Reflections on Benefits of the ADA Law

The Greatest Legacy to the United States Population from former President George Herbert Walker Bush was the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). At some point in your life, you a family member will benefit from this legislative act. All of the healthy, non-disabled individuals in our country can be viewed as TABS or Temporarily Able-Bodied Structures/Souls. A large portion of the able-bodied population may experience some form of disabling illness or injury during their lifetime. Whether it is a short-term or permanent disability, all of these individuals have the opportunity to live fulfilling lives with greater protection from discrimination due to the ADA.

President George H. W. Bush signed the ADA Bill on June 26, 1990, which converted the bill into a law that allowed open or equal access to public areas and transportation. The ADA Law also prohibits discrimination of the disabled in housing and employment. The most significant two words in this law may be "equal access". While most people view the structural changes to streets and buildings as a result of this law, these modifications benefit the able-bodied individuals as well as the disabled. Curb cuts placed in sidewalks to allow easier mobility of individuals in wheelchairs or individuals who use walkers. They also help parents or childcare providers easily ambulate with strollers. Curb cuts help shipping personnel deliver materials to stores and offices.

The ADA also bars discrimination of the disabled in housing and employment. Before the

enactment of the ADA Law, people with disabilities had difficulty finding work and property to rent or buy. Open access via this law created avenues for the development of small businesses focused on the specific needs of those with disabilities. Many of the services and materials that began after the passage of the ADA law benefit those without disabilities. Some, though not all, of these adaptive changes appear in the following list below. Please comment if there is an adaptive service, or product of interest to that does not appear on this list. Benefits to the healthy population follow the description of the items intended use.

Disability Adaptive Services, Structural Changes, and Products:

- Curb-cuts in sidewalks allows improved walkway access for wheelchair or walker users. These modifications also benefit shipping delivery workers, families with strollers, and travelers with luggage.
- Visual and auditory signaling for crosswalk signs assist people with hearing or vision loss. The signaling systems are also of use in helping teach children about street safety.
- Braille markings on drive-up and regular ATMs - no, these were not created with anticipation of blind or visually impaired drivers. These are present for visually impaired passengers or braille-users independent access to ATMs.
- Wider stalls and grip-bars in many public restrooms to allow access by wheelchair or walker users. The larger stalls are also beneficial for people with larger body habitus who cannot fit into the standard stall, parents taking small children to the restroom and travelers who do not want to leave their luggage unattended while using the facilities.
- Wheelchair ramps at businesses and public buildings improve access for wheelchair and walker users. They also benefit stroke victims with hemiparesis or weakness on one side of the body as they don't have to struggle with steps. Ramps also reduce the difficulty of access for shipping delivery companies and easy access for anyone with strollers or wheeled bags.
- Adapted Telephones with amplified volume options, large-screen icons, and clear image display allow people with vision or hearing loss the ability to use current communication devices and access family or internet. Phone captioning services also convert speech to text so that Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals can access more businesses. These changes allow those with normal hearing to increase the call volume to override background noise and improve communication results for those who do not realize or won't admit that they have hearing loss.
- Direct Access Solutions' Short Stature Accessibility Kits – these kits contain a step stool, adapted door-safety latch, grab-bar providing extended reach, closet rod adapter, and a push-pull extension device for use with adjustments of curtain placement or small-item movement. These kits are available in all Microtel Inns & Suites.
- Wider doors and hallways in businesses and healthcare facilities improve access by wheelchair and walker users. These changes in structural building codes benefit families with strollers, anyone using a cart to move items around, and shipping delivery.
- Text-to-voice communication devices or software help individuals who lost the ability to speak naturally independently deliver their statements. These products also help with language acquisition for children with developmental delays. Screen-readers also help people with visual impairment access printed or online material as the software reads the articles or information. This technology is similar to the programming used in video games and dictation/transcription programs for medical or business use.
- Strobed fire and carbon monoxide alarms to alert those with hearing impairment of potential dangers. These alarm modifications are useful for non-disabled individuals trying to escape from a smoke-filled area because the strobes illuminate the room, stairs, or hallway.
- Adapted playgrounds allow improved access for physical activity of individuals with physical or sensory disabilities such as mobility impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and balance disturbance. These equipment modifications result in improvement of play equipment for non-

disabled children as well as those with special needs. Softer playground surface material also helps reduce the severity of injuries from falls.

- Modified or Lever or Bar-form Door Handles improve independence and access for those with arthritis, limb weakness, or mobility impairment. These handles ease access for people carrying, pushing, or pulling items.
- Electric Door Openers ease access for people in wheelchairs or walker users to homes and businesses. These door openers also help people with strollers, shipping or mail delivery workers, or those who want to limit contact with door grips or handles (especially during flu season – tap them with your elbow, and you have access).
- Adapted busses and trains – entry platform adjustments and wheelchair accessibility modifications help wheelchair users retain independence in transportation. These modifications, as well as high seats and grab-bars, also help the elderly.
- Adapted personal vehicles suited to the driver's or passenger's specific needs, whether that includes hand-controls, pedal extensions, wheelchair lifts or modified controls. These vehicles reduce the reliance on others for transportation and improve employability due to reliable and useful transportation access.
- American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter Access for Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and individuals with communication disorders for meetings, medical appointments, emergency broadcasts, and social events. Infants without hearing loss benefit from being taught basic ASL signs. Words such as milk, more, Mom, Dad, water, food, help, and bathroom are easy to form by little fingers. The early expression of needs results in happier, more contented infants.

Are there any adaptive materials or structural changes that do not appear on the list? Comment on any that come to mind and mention their use for the disabled and non-disabled community.

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