

A quick guide to federal laws covering people with disabilities

By Cindy Powell

The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968

requires that buildings designed, constructed or altered with Federal funds, or leased by a Federal agency (with the exception of the U.S. Postal Service) comply with Federal architectural accessibility standards.

The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984

requires that Federal elections polling places be physically accessible to people with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

protects people with disabilities from discrimination in employment, state and local government, private businesses, transportation and telecommunications. In addition to the ADA, other Federal civil rights laws ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

protects people with disabilities from discrimination by federally funded programs, contractors and subcontractors in employment, program accessibility, construction, effective communication and information technology.

The Fair Housing Act of 1988

protects people with disabilities from discrimination in private and government housing.

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993

also known as the "Motor Voter Act," mandates that state-funded programs provide all applicants with voter registration forms, and if needed, to assist applicants in completing and submitting the forms.

The Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act of 1997

authorizes the attorney general to investigate and initiate civil law suits where widespread deficiencies jeopardize the health and safety of residents in institutions.

The Air Carrier Access Act of 1986

prohibits discrimination by air carriers that provide regular scheduled fee-based public services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990

(formerly known as Public Law 94-142 or the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975) requires that public schools provide children with disabilities with a free individualized appropriate education in the least restrictive environment.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996

mandates that telecommunications manufacturers and providers ensure that equipment and services are accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.

The Help America Vote Act of 2002

mandates training election workers and volunteers regarding accessible polling places and private, independent voting for voters with disabilities.

- ▶ Cindy Powell is a training and development specialist at Carmel Community Living Corporation. Carmel has provided high quality community based services to Coloradoans with disabilities and their families since 1969.

"A Guide to Disabilities Rights Laws" provides overviews of these civil rights laws. This free guide is available at www.ada.gov or by phoning the ADA Information Line at 1-800-514-0301 (Voice) or 1-800-514-0383 (TTY).