

Housing Advocacy & *Moving Back into the Community*

Housing Advocacy

Locating an apartment that's accessible, comfortable and affordable is challenging for individuals with a disability and or homeless apartment hunters and their network of support. But with a clear idea of what's needed in an apartment, disAbility Resource Center will be there to explain your housing options.

If you or a loved one are homeless and or disabled, you'll want to keep in mind all the details of what accessible means and be prepared with the right questions during your apartment search. Our goal is to assist all our consumers to remain independent and live the best life they can.

Issues with cost

Cost can be one of the biggest barriers to finding a good apartment. Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Income is almost never enough on its own to cover rent of an apartment. Even if you have earned income to go with it, you're still probably going to have some trouble making all the numbers add up. Section 8 vouchers or HUD Subsidy may be available to help offset some of the cost of housing.

[HUD webpage about ADA and the Fair Housing Act](#)

Your rights

The Americans with Disabilities Act doesn't, for the most part, apply to residential housing. But it will apply to leasing offices, showrooms, and places where housing is rented and requires owners to make areas like the laundry room, community center, and mail facilities accessible as well as restaurants, libraries, hospitals, offices, warehouses. It will apply to public spaces in a building, so the leasing office or club rooms in an apartment building will have to follow the ADA.

What does apply to apartments is the Fair Housing Act. This extends the same rights as discrimination based on race, sex, familial status, and religion. They can't refuse to negotiate with you, refuse to rent an apartment to you, say that an available unit is unavailable, or set unfairly different terms than they would for other tenants. In addition, the Fair Housing Act prohibits renting an inaccessible unit to someone with a disability or refusing reasonable requests to make modifications that make it more accessible.

What it doesn't do is require the landlord or property manager to pay for those modifications. So, even if you find the perfect apartment that requires just a couple modifications, you'll have to negotiate with the landlord, and probably end up paying for it yourself.

Section 504 of the Rehab Act of 1973 was one of the very first laws that prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity conducted by the Federal Government or receives

federal assistance. This includes public housing, HUD subsidized housing, transitional housing for the homeless which receives federal funding, and supportive housing programs for the elderly or persons with disabilities receiving federal funding.

Location

In addition to ensuring that your accessible apartment is right for you on the inside, you'll also want to make sure that it works when you leave home for any number of reasons.

- ✓ Can you easily get to common areas?
- ✓ Can you reach a grocery store or nearby stores and services?
- ✓ How congested are streets and sidewalks?
- ✓ Do crosswalks have appropriate lights and crossing sounds for safety?
- ✓ Is there a public transportation stop nearby?
- ✓ Do pharmacies and restaurants deliver here?

Ask the Right Questions when Apartment Hunting

When looking for apartments, prepare a list of questions. Knowing these specific details will help you remember your potential needs and make decisions. Here are a few things to look for:

- ✓ Are the doors at least 32 inches wide?
- ✓ Are doors opened by handles or knobs?
- ✓ Are there ramps where you'd need them?
- ✓ Can you reach light switches and thermostats?
- ✓ Are flooring surfaces easy enough to walk or roll across?
- ✓ Is the tub or shower big enough? Do they have grab bars?
- ✓ Is there a dedicated parking space for handicap access?
- ✓ How low are the counters in the apartment?
- ✓ How wide are the hallways, both in the apartment and public areas?