

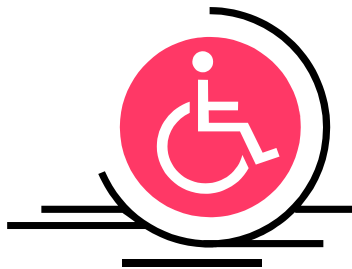
There's No Excuse for Being Inaccessible

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has been around for almost 20 years now, but there is still a lot of misunderstanding surrounding the act. Many people are familiar with ADA only because they see buses accessible to wheel chairs or see commercials on TV for hearing assistive devices. As business owners, it is your responsibility to be familiar with ADA and to make efforts to comply. ADA affects all businesses that supply goods and/or services to the public.

The following items came from a video produced by the U.S. Department of Justice entitled "Ten Small Business Excuses." This video is available along with a wealth of other information at www.ada.gov.

Excuse 1) "I don't have any disabled customers." With the aging of American citizens, it is estimated that one out of five has a disability. If you do not believe you have customers with disabilities, it is either because you are not noticing important facts about your

customers or you have not made your business accessible to people with disabilities. Remember, disabilities include much more than being restricted to a wheel chair.



Excuse 2) "My building was built before the ADA. I am grandfathered in." Not true. Buildings may be grandfathered in on building code requirements, such as sprinkler systems or seismic design, but the ADA is a civil rights act and there is no grandfathering. There are limitations on the requirements though in that accessibility must be "readily achievable" which means easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense. Examples include simple ramping of a few steps or the installation of grab bars.

Excuse 3) "I'm in a new building" Being in a new

building may take care of many of the expensive access requirements such as elevators, but you need to be aware of your personal operating policies. An aisle that is blocked or cluttered with merchandise is as much of a barrier as stairs. Also make sure that your employees are able to assist your customers. This may include writing notes to a hearing impaired person, leading a visually impaired person or handing down an item from a top shelf to a height challenged person.

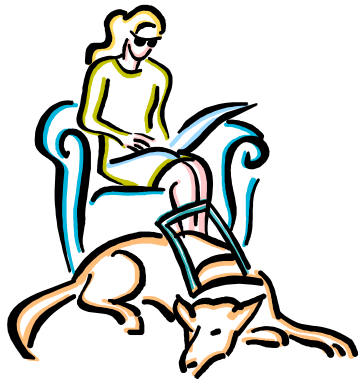
Excuse 4) "I can't afford it." As said previously, businesses are only expected to do those items that are readily achievable. Do what you can now and plan to do more in the future. Take advantage of tax credits and deductions. Most of all – do something!

Excuse 5) "My landlord says no." Both the tenant and the landlord have a responsibility. The landlord and the tenant may decide by lease who will actually make the changes and provide the aids and

services, but both remain legally responsible.

Excuse 6) “People with disabilities make me feel uncomfortable.” Most disabled people just wish to be treated like other customers. Say hello and ask if you can help them the same as you do everyone else. Treat everyone with dignity and respect. You may find that you have been missing out on some wonderful customers.

Excuse 7) “I don’t know where to get information.” This one is easy. Call 1-800-514-0301 for phone or 1-800-514-0383 TTY (telecommunications device for the deaf), or log into www.ada.gov.



Excuse 8) “The Health Department won’t allow animals.” Service animals are allowed anywhere customers are allowed.

Service animals are animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities such as guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, or performing other special tasks. Service animals are working animals, not pets.

Excuse 9) “Compliance never ends.” Your business is not required to do anything that causes significant difficulty or expense. You do not need to have braille on all your labels, just have someone available to read the label to a sight impaired individual. You do not have to have an employee skilled in sign language, but be ready to communicate with a hearing impaired customer through writing notes. Make compliance easy on everyone.

Excuse 10) “Nobody else complies.” Don’t take a chance. A complaint can land you and your business in an expensive court action. Comply because it is the law and comply because it is the right thing to do. There is a huge market out there ready and willing to spend money

with you. Win over their business!

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