

## Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act Fact Sheet



# FACT SHEET

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services • Office for Civil Rights • Washington, D.C. 20201 • (202) 619-0403

### YOUR RIGHTS UNDER SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT

#### What Is Section 504?

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a national law that protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability.** The nondiscrimination requirements of the law apply to employers and organizations that receive financial assistance from any Federal department or agency, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). These organizations and employers include many hospitals, nursing homes, mental health centers and human service programs.

Section 504 forbids organizations and employers from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services. It defines the rights of individuals with disabilities to participate in, and have access to, program benefits and services.

#### Who Is Protected from Discrimination?

Section 504 protects *qualified individuals with disabilities*. Under this law, *individuals with disabilities* are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. People who have a history of, or who are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, are also covered. Major life activities include caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning. Some examples of impairments which may substantially limit major life activities, even with the help of medication or aids/devices, are: AIDS, alcoholism, blindness or visual impairment, cancer, deafness or hearing impairment, diabetes, drug addiction, heart disease, and mental illness.

In addition to meeting the above definition, for purposes of receiving services, education or training, *qualified individuals with disabilities* are persons who meet normal and essential eligibility requirements.

For purposes of employment, *qualified individuals with disabilities* are persons who, with reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the job for which they have applied or have been hired to perform. (Complaints alleging employment discrimination on the basis of disability against a single individual will be referred to the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for processing.)

**Reasonable accommodation** means an employer is required to take reasonable steps to accommodate your disability unless it would cause the employer undue hardship.

Click on the title or the image above to link to this resource.