

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

If your company is a hotel, theater, restaurant, hospital, doctor's office, dentist's office, or any other place open to the public, it is considered a place of "public accommodation."

As such, it is required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to be accessible to people with disabilities.

How "reasonable" the accommodations are depends upon the cost of the accommodation and whether the cost would result in undue hardship to the company considering the cost of accommodation compared to the resources and size of the company. "Undue hardship" is usually decided on a case-by-case basis and companies are expected and encouraged to make every effort to identify options to provide accommodations. In general, most accommodations are not expensive and are easily achievable.

If your company has fifteen (15) or more employees, then your company is required to provide reasonable accommodations to Deaf and hard of hearing employees, customers, patients, or consumers. Any service provided by your company needs to be accessible. Depending upon services provided, this could mean TTYs, visual fire alarms, *qualified* sign language interpreters, or other types of accommodations. The ADA also applies to all areas of employment, including job interviews.

Note that the ADA specifies "**qualified**" interpreters. Thus, a person who happens to know a few signs or even one who signs fluently but has no training or experience as an interpreter, is not considered a qualified interpreter.