



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC RECOGNIZES THE 14th ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) today joins with other government agencies and the American people to observe the 14th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), adopted July 26, 1990.

According to the Department of Commerce, one in five Americans is disabled and one in ten is severely disabled. Some 50 million people have some type of long lasting condition or disability.

The ADA has enormously improved the lives of people with disabilities. Of special importance to the FCC, Title IV of the ADA ensures convenient and affordable access to telecommunications to the 27 million Americans with hearing or speech disabilities.

In acknowledging the improvements in accessibility in the last 14 years, FCC Chairman Michael K. Powell said, “We at the FCC are delighted to be part of this important celebration. I am proud of the work the FCC has done to ensure access for everyone to telecommunications goods and services. I am also proud of the way the FCC has made it easier for people with disabilities to participate in the FCC rulemaking process.”

Some of the actions taken by the FCC to increase access by persons with disabilities:

- The Commission modified its rules under the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988 to ensure that persons who are hard of hearing or deaf will be able to better communicate using wireless devices.
- It overhauled Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS), which enable individuals with hearing or speech disabilities to utilize the telephone system and communicate with others.
- The FCC required all telecommunications carriers in the U.S., wireline, wireless, and payphone providers, to offer 711 TRS dialing to ensure that TRS users will be able to initiate a call from any telephone, anywhere in the United States, by dialing three numbers.

- In 2002, the FCC identified Internet Protocol relay service as a recognizable TRS service, allowing people who have difficulty hearing or speaking to communicate with anyone in the world through an Internet connection rather than a TTY and a telephone.
- The FCC has diligently reminded broadcast outlets and multi-channel video program distributors of their obligation to provide captioning for emergency information.
- The FCC has implemented Section 255 of the Telecom Act, which requires telecommunications equipment and services to be accessible to and usable by, persons with disabilities, when readily achievable.
- The FCC has many representatives of the disability community on its Consumer Advisory Committee, which meets regularly and makes recommendations to the Commission.
- The Commission has met frequently with public and private groups and individuals to seek to provide better services for individuals with disabilities. One example is the “Solutions Summit” the Commission sponsored on May 7, 2004, which addressed policy issues that arise as communication services move to IP-based platforms, and focused on the increasing use of Internet technologies by individuals with disabilities. The summit included speakers from many different sectors including education, government, and private industry, and produced invaluable input. A similar meeting was held to discuss issues relating to homeland security and the disability community.
- The FCC produced the “Section 504 Handbook,” a comprehensive collection of guidelines, information, and procedures to ensure that the Commission is accessible to individuals with disabilities. The content of the handbook is designed to assist Commission personnel in their efforts to provide such accessibility. It is also available on-line and the information is available for any group planning a public meeting.

Since the passage of the ADA, the FCC has made steady progress to improve the ability of persons with disabilities to benefit from existing and new communications technologies so that we may all enjoy the telecommunications revolution.

Copies of this press release in accessible formats are available to persons with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), by sending an email to fcc504@fcc.gov or by calling the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530 (voice), 202-418-0432 (TTY).

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