

Subpart E_Enforcement of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Conducted by the Department of the Interior

Authority: 29 U.S.C. 794.

Source: 52 FR 6553, Mar. 5, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

Sec. 17.501 Purpose.

The purpose of this **part** is to effectuate section 119 of the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services, and Developmental Disabilities Amendments of 1978, which amended section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of handicap in programs or activities conducted by Executive agencies or the U.S. Postal Service.

Sec. 17.502 Application.

This **part** applies to all programs and activities conducted and/or administered and/or maintained by the agency

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except for programs or activities conducted outside the United States that do not involve handicapped persons in the United States.

Sec. 17.503 Definitions.

For purposes of this **part**, the term--
Agency means Department of the Interior.

Auxiliary aids means services or devices that enable persons with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, programs or activities conducted by the agency. For example, auxiliary aids useful for persons with impaired vision include readers, Brailled materials, audio recordings, and other similar services and devices. Auxiliary aids useful for persons with impaired hearing include telephone handset amplifiers, telephones compatible with hearing aids, telecommunication devices for deaf persons (TDD's), interpreters, notetakers, written materials, and other similar services and devices.

Complete complaint means a written statement that contains the complainant's name and address and describe the agency's actions in sufficient detail to inform the agency of the nature and date of the alleged violation of section 504. It shall be signed by the complainant or by someone authorized to do so on his or her behalf. Complainant or behalf of classes or third parties shall describe or identify (by name, if possible) the alleged victims of discrimination.

Facility means all or any portion of buildings, structures, equipment, roads, walks, parking lots, outdoor recreation and program spaces, park sites, developed sites, rolling stock or other conveyances, or other real or personal property.

Handicapped person means any person who has a physical, mental, or sensory impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. As used in this definition, the phrase:

(1) Physical, mental, or sensory impairment includes--

(i) Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: Neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genitourinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or

(ii) Any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. The term "physical, mental or sensory impairment" includes, but is not limited to, such diseases and conditions as orthopedic, visual, speech, and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, mental retardation, emotional illness, drug addiction, and alcoholism.

(2) Major life activities includes functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

(3) Has a record of such impairment means has a history of, or has been misclassified as having, a mental, physical, or sensory impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

(4) Is regarded as having an impairment means--

(i) Has a physical, mental, or sensory impairment that does not substantially limit major life activities but is treated by the agency as constituting such a limitation;

(ii) Has a physical, mental, or sensory impairment that substantially limits major life activities only as a result of the attitudes of others toward such impairment; or

(iii) Has none of the impairments defined in paragraph (1) of this definition but is treated by the agency as having such an impairment.

Historic preservation programs means programs conducted by the agency that have preservation of historic properties as a primary purpose.

Historic properties means those properties that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or properties designated as historic under a statute of the appropriate state or local government body.

Qualified handicapped person means--

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(1) With respect to preschool, elementary, or secondary education services provided by the agency, a handicapped person who is a member of a class of persons otherwise entitled by statute, regulation, or agency policy to receive education services from the agency.

(2) With respect to any other agency program or activity under which a person is required to perform services or to achieve a level of accomplishment, a handicapped person who meets the essential eligibility requirements and who can achieve the purpose of the program or activity without modifications in the program or activity that the agency can demonstrate would result in a fundamental alteration in its nature; or

(3) With respect to any other program or activity, a handicapped person who meets the essential eligibility requirements for participation in, or receipt of benefits from that program or activity.

(4) Qualified handicapped person is defined for purposes of

employment in 29 CFR 1613.702(f), which is made applicable to this **part** by Sec. 17.540.

Section 504 means section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Pub. L. 93-112, 87 Stat. 394 (29 U.S.C. 794)), as amended by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-516, 88 Stat. 1617), and the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services, and Developmental Disabilities Amendments of 1978 (Pub. L. 95-602, 92 Stat. 2955). As used

in this **part**, section 504 applies only to programs or activities conducted by Executive agencies and not to federally assisted programs.

Substantial impairment means a significant loss of the integrity of finished materials, design quality, or special character resulting from a permanent alteration.

Sec. Sec. 17.504-17.509 [Reserved]

Sec. 17.510 Self-evaluation.

(a) The agency shall, within one year of the effective date of this **part**, evaluate, with the assistance of interested persons, including handicapped persons or organizations representing handicapped persons, its current policies and practices, and the effects thereof, that do not

or may not meet the requirements of this **part**, and, to the extent modification of any such policies and practices is required, the agency shall proceed to make the necessary modifications.

(b) The agency shall, for at least three years following completion of the evaluation required under paragraph (a) of this section, maintain

on file and make available for public inspection--

(1) A list of the interested persons consulted;

(2) A description of areas examined and any problems identified; and

(3) A description of any modifications made.

Sec. 17.511 Notice.

The agency shall make available to employees, applicants, participants, beneficiaries, and other interested persons such information regarding the provisions of this **part** and its applicability to the programs or activities conducted by the agency, and make such information available to them in such manner as the agency head finds necessary to apprise such persons of the protections against discrimination assured them by section 504 and this regulation.

Sec. Sec. 17.512-17.529 [Reserved]

Sec. 17.530 General prohibitions against discrimination.

(a) No qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by the agency.

(b)(1) The agency, in providing any aid, benefit, or service, may not, directly or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, on the basis of handicap--

(i) Deny a qualified handicapped person the opportunity to

participate in or benefit from the aid, benefit, or service;

(ii) Afford a qualified handicapped person an opportunity to participate in or benefit from the aid, benefit or service that is not equal to that afforded others;

(iii) Provide a qualified handicapped person with an aid, benefit, or service

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that is not as effective in affording equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement as that provided to others;

(iv) Provide different or separate aid, benefits, or services to handicapped persons or to any class of handicapped persons than is provided to others unless such action is necessary to provide qualified handicapped persons with aid, benefits, or services that are as effective as those provided to others;

(v) Deny a qualified handicapped person the opportunity to participate as a member of planning or advisory boards; or

(vi) Otherwise limit a qualified handicapped person in the enjoyment

of any right, privilege, advantage, or opportunity enjoyed by others receiving the aid, benefit, or service.

(2) The agency may not deny a qualified handicapped person the opportunity to participate in programs or activities that are not separate or different, despite the existence of permissibly separate or different programs or activities.

(3) The agency may not, directly or through contractual or other arrangements, utilize criteria or methods of administration the purpose or effect of which would--

(i) Subject qualified handicapped persons to discrimination on the basis of handicap; or

(ii) Defeat or substantially impair accomplishment of the objectives

of a program or activity with respect to handicapped persons.

(4) The agency may not, in determining the site or location of a facility, make selections the purpose or effect of which would--

(i) Exclude handicapped persons from, deny them the benefits of, or otherwise subject them to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by the agency; or

(ii) Defeat or substantially impair the accomplishment of the objectives of a program or activity with respect to handicapped persons.

(5) The agency, in the selection of procurement contractors, may not

use criteria that subject qualified handicapped persons to discrimination on the basis of handicap.

(6) The agency may not administer a licensing or certification program in a manner that subjects qualified handicapped persons to discrimination on the basis of handicap, nor may the agency establish requirements for the programs or activities of licensees or certified entities that subject qualified handicapped persons to discrimination on

the basis of handicap. However, the programs or activities of entities that are licensed or certified by the agency are not, themselves, covered by this **part**.

(c) The exclusion of nonhandicapped persons from the benefits of a program limited by Federal statute or Executive order to handicapped

persons or the exclusion of a specific class of handicapped persons from a program limited by Federal statute or Executive order to a different class of handicapped persons is not prohibited by this **part**.

(d) The agency shall administer programs or activities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified handicapped persons.

Sec. Sec. 17.531-17.539 [Reserved]

Sec. 17.540 Employment.

No qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap, be subjected to discrimination in employment under any program or activity conducted by the agency. The definitions, requirements and procedures of section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 791), as established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 29 CFR **part** 1613, shall apply to employment in federally conducted programs or activities.

Sec. Sec. 17.541-17.548 [Reserved]

Sec. 17.549 Program accessibility: Discrimination prohibited.

Except as otherwise provided in Sec. 17.550, no qualified handicapped person shall, because the agency's facilities are inaccessible to or unusable by handicapped persons, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by the agency.

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Sec. 17.550 Program accessibility: Existing facilities.

(a) General. The agency shall operate each program or activity so that the program or activity, when viewed in its entirety, is readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons. This paragraph does not--

(1) Necessarily require the agency to make each of its existing facilities or every **part** of a facility accessible to and usable by handicapped persons;

(2) In the case of historic preservation programs, require the agency to take any action that would result in a substantial impairment of significant historic features of an historic property; or

(3) Require the agency to take any action that it can demonstrate would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a program or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens. In those circumstances where agency personnel believe that the proposed action would fundamentally alter the program or activity or would result in undue financial and administrative burdens, the agency has the burden of

proving that compliance with Sec. 17.550(a) would result in such an alteration or burdens. The decision that compliance would result in such

alteration or burdens must be made by the agency head or his or her

designee after considering all agency resources available for use in the funding and operation of the conducted program or activity, and must be accompanied by a written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion. If an action would result in such an alteration or such burdens, the agency shall take any other action that would not result in such an alteration or such burdens but would nevertheless ensure that handicapped persons receive the benefits and services of the program or activity.

(b) Methods--(1) General. The agency may comply with the requirements of this section through such means as redesign of equipment, reassignment of services to accessible locations, assignment of aides to beneficiaries, home visits, delivery of services at alternate accessible sites, alteration of existing facilities and construction of new facilities, use of accessible rolling stock, or any other methods that result in making its programs or activities readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons. The agency is not required to make structural changes in existing facilities where other methods are effective in achieving compliance with this section. The agency, in making alterations to existing buildings, shall meet accessibility requirements to the extent compelled by the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4151-4157) and any regulations implementing it. In choosing among available methods for meeting the requirements of this section, the agency shall give priority to those methods that offer programs and activities to qualified handicapped persons in the most integrated setting appropriate.

(2) Historic preservation programs. In meeting the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section in historic preservation programs, the agency shall give priority to methods that provide physical access to handicapped persons. In cases where a physical alteration to an historic property is not required because of paragraph (a)(2) or (a)(3) of this section, alternative methods of achieving program accessibility include--

(i) Using audio-visual materials and devices to depict those portions of an historic property that cannot otherwise be made accessible.

(ii) Assigning persons to guide handicapped persons into or through portions of historic properties that cannot otherwise be made accessible; or

(iii) Adopting other innovative methods.

(3) Recreation programs. In meeting the requirements of paragraph (a) in recreation programs, the agency shall provide that the program or activity, when viewed in its entirety, is readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons. When it is not reasonable to alter natural and physical features, accessibility may be achieved by alternative methods as noted in paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(c) Time period for compliance. The agency shall comply with the obligations established under this section within sixty (60) days of the effective date of this **part** except that where

structural changes in facilities are necessary, such changes shall be made within three years of the effective date of this **part**, but in any event as expeditiously as possible.

(d) Transition plan. In the event that structural changes to facilities are necessary to achieve program accessibility, the agency shall develop, within six months of the effective date of this **part**, a transition plan setting forth the steps necessary to complete such changes. The plan shall be developed with the assistance of interested persons, including handicapped persons or organizations representing handicapped persons. A copy of the transition plan shall be made available for public inspection. The plan shall, at a minimum--

(1) Identify physical obstacles in the agency's facilities that limit the accessibility of its programs or activities to handicapped persons;

(2) Describe in detail the methods that will be used to make the facilities accessible;

(3) Specify the schedule for taking the steps necessary to achieve compliance with this section and, if the time period of the transition plan is longer than one year, identify steps that will be taken during each year of the transition period;

(4) Indicate the official responsible for implementation of the plan; and

(5) Identify the persons or groups with whose assistance the plan was prepared.

Sec. 17.551 Program accessibility: New construction and alterations.

Each building or **part** of a building that is constructed or altered by, on behalf of, or for the use of the agency shall be designed, constructed, or altered so as to be readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons. The definitions, requirements, and standards of the Architectural Barriers Act (42 U.S.C. 4151-4157) as established in 41 CFR 101-19.600 to 101-19.607 apply to buildings covered by this section.

Sec. Sec. 17.552-17.559 [Reserved]

Sec. 17.560 Communications.

(a) The agency shall take appropriate steps to ensure effective communication with applicants, participants, personnel of other Federal entities, and members of the public.

(1) The agency shall furnish appropriate auxiliary aids where necessary to afford a handicapped person an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a program or activity conducted by the agency.

(i) In determining what type of auxiliary aid is necessary, the agency shall give primary consideration to the requests of the handicapped person.

(ii) The agency need not provide individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, attendant services, or other devices of a personal nature.

(2) Where the agency communicate with applicants and beneficiaries by telephone, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDD's) or equally effective telecommunication systems shall be used.

(b) The agency shall ensure that interested persons, including persons with impaired vision or hearing, can obtain information as to

the existence and location of accessible services, activities, and facilities.

(c) The agency shall provide signage at a primary entrance to each of its inaccessible facilities, directing users to a location at which they can obtain information about accessible facilities. The international symbol for accessibility shall be used at each primary entrance of an accessible facility.

(d) This section does not require the agency to take any action that it can demonstrate would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a program or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens. In those circumstances where agency personnel believe that the proposed action would fundamentally alter the program or activity or would result in undue financial and administrative burdens, the agency has the burden of proving that compliance with Sec. 17.560 would result in such alteration or burdens. The decision that compliance would result in such alteration or burdens must be made by the agency head or his or her designee after considering all agency

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resources available for use in the funding and operation of the conducted program or activity, and must be accompanied by a written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion. If an action required to comply with this section would result in such alteration or such burdens, the agency shall take any other action that would not result in such an alteration or such burdens but would nevertheless ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, handicapped persons receive the benefits and services of the program or activity.

Sec. Sec. 17.561-17.569 [Reserved]

Sec. 17.570 Compliance procedures.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, this section applies to all allegations of discrimination on the basis of handicap in programs or activities conducted by the agency.

(b) The agency shall process complaints alleging violations of section 504 with respect to employment according to the procedures established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 29 CFR **part** 1613 pursuant to section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 791).

(c) Responsibility for implementation and operation of this section shall be vested in the Director of the Office for Equal Opportunity. Complaints filed pursuant to this section shall be delivered or mailed to the Director, Office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240. If any agency official other than the Director of the Office for Equal Opportunity receives a complaint, he or she shall immediately forward the complaint to the agency's Director of the Office for Equal Opportunity.

(d)(1) The agency shall accept and investigate all complete complaints for which it has jurisdiction. All complete complaints must be filed within 180 days of the alleged act of discrimination. The

agency may extend this time period for good cause.

(2) If the agency Director for the Office of Equal Opportunity receives a complaint that is not complete, he or she shall notify the complainant, within thirty (30) days of receipt of the incomplete complaint, that additional information is needed. If the complainant fails to complete and submit the requested information within thirty (30) days of receipt of this notice the agency Director of the Office for Equal Opportunity shall dismiss the complaint without prejudice.

(3) The agency Director of the Office for Equal Opportunity may require agency employees to cooperate and participate in the investigation and resolution of complaints. Employees who are required to cooperate and participate in any investigation under this section shall do so as **part** of their official duties.

(e) If the agency receives a complaint over which it does not have jurisdiction, it shall promptly notify the complainant and shall refer the complaint to the appropriate government entity.

(f) The agency shall notify the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board upon receipt of any complaint alleging that a building or facility that is subject to the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4151-4157), or section 502 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 792), is not readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons.

(g) Within 180 days of the receipt of a complete complaint for which

it has jurisdiction, the agency shall notify the complainant of the results of the investigation in a letter containing--

- (1) Findings of fact and conclusions of law;
- (2) A description of a remedy for each violation found; and
- (3) A notice of the right to appeal.

(h) Appeals of the findings of fact and conclusions of law or remedies must be filed by the complainant within ninety (90) days of receipt from the agency of the letter required by Sec. 17.570(g). The agency may extend this time for good cause.

(i) Timely appeals shall be accepted and processed by the Under Secretary.

(j) The agency shall notify the complainant of the results of the appeal within sixty (60) days of the receipt of the request. If the agency determines that it needs additional information from the complainant, it shall have sixty (60) days from the date it receives

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the additional information to make its determination on the appeal.

(k) The time limits cited in paragraphs (g) and (j) of this may be extended for an individual case when the Under Secretary determines that there is good cause, based on the particular circumstances of that case, for the extension.

(l) The agency may delegate its authority for conducting complaint investigations to other Federal agencies, except that the authority for making the final determination may not be delegated.