

# FOR RENTERS WITH DISABILITIES



## WHO QUALIFIES AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY?

A person with a disability is defined as any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life functions, (2) has a record of such impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such impairment.

## WHAT IS FAIR HOUSING?

The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents of legal custodians, pregnant women, and people securing custody of children under the age of 18), and handicap (disability). Additional protection for persons with disabilities is provided by the ADA.

## WHAT IS THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT — THE ADA?

The ADA stands for the Americans with Disabilities Act. It was passed in 1990 by president George Bush in order to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. This Act was passed in an effort to mainstream people with disabilities and allow them the same opportunities offered people fully able by discouraging discrimination in four major areas: employment, public services, public accommodations and services operated by private entities, and telecommunications.

## HOW DOES THE ADA APPLY TO ME?

If you have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities or have a record of such, your landlord may not:

- Refuse to let you make reasonable modifications to your dwelling or common use areas, at your expense, if necessary for you to use housing. (Where reasonable, the landlord may permit changes only if you agree to restore the property to its original condition when you move.)
- Refuse to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices or services if necessary for you to use the housing. (For example: An apartment complex that offers unassigned parking must honor a request from a mobility impaired tenant to have a reserved space near his/her apartment if he or she so chooses.)

In addition there are requirements for all new buildings under the ADA that are ready for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, and have an elevator in four or more units.

- Public areas must be accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Doors and hallways must be wide enough for wheelchairs.
- All units must have an accessible route into and through the unit, accessible light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls, reinforcements in the bathroom walls to allow the later installation of grab bars, and kitchen and bathrooms that can be used by people in wheelchairs.
- If the building with four or more units does not have an elevator, the aforementioned standards apply to ground floor units.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MY RIGHTS?

Disability Support Services  
[www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS)  
301-314-7682

Graduate Student Legal Aid  
[www.union.umd.edu/gradlegalaid](http://www.union.umd.edu/gradlegalaid)  
301-405-5807

Undergraduate Student Legal Aid  
[www.studentorg.umd.edu/legalaid/](http://www.studentorg.umd.edu/legalaid/)  
301-314-7756

Prince George's County Landlord-Tenant Relations  
301-699-2789

Montgomery County Landlord Tenant Relations  
240-777-3600

Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.  
[www.bni-maryland.org](http://www.bni-maryland.org)  
410-243-6007

Fair Housing Accessibility First  
[www.fairhousingfirst.org/](http://www.fairhousingfirst.org/)  
1-888-341-7781

*Information obtained from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Maryland Commission on Human Relations.*