

LEGAL RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

INTRODUCTION TO STATE AND FEDERAL DISABILITY RIGHTS LAWS



CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

PUBLIC RIGHTS DIVISION

CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT SECTION | *DISABILITY RIGHTS BUREAU*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to State and Federal Disability Rights Laws	1
I. Definitions of Disability	1
A. Federal Definition of Disability.....	1
B. California State Definition of Disability.....	1
II. Federal Law	2
A. Americans with Disabilities Act.....	2
B. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Sections 501- 504 and 508).....	4
1. Sections 501 and 503.....	4
2. Section 502	4
3. Section 504	4
4. Section 508	5
C. Fair Housing Amendments Act	5
D. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	5
E. Air Carrier Access Act	5
F. Architectural Barriers Act.....	5
G. Telecommunications Act of 1996.....	6
H. National Voter Registration Act of 1993.....	6
I. Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984	6
III. California State Law	6
A. Fair Employment and Housing Act.....	6
B. Unruh Civil Rights Act	7
C. Disabled Persons Act	7
D. Government Code section 11135.....	7
E. Ralph Civil Rights Act of 1976	8
F. California Education Code	8
G. Lanterman-Petris-Short Act	8
H. Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act	8

INTRODUCTION TO STATE AND FEDERAL DISABILITY RIGHTS LAWS

This publication prepared by the Disability Rights Bureau in the Civil Rights Enforcement Section of the California Department of Justice is intended as a public service to provide an overview of major California state and federal laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities. State and federal laws should be examined together for a complete picture of the laws that apply to a person's disability rights in a specific situation. If an individual believes that their rights have been violated under any of the laws described in this publication, they may have options to file complaints with a state or federal government agency or in court. Please be aware that these complaints may have strict timeframes for filing and other requirements. It is best for an individual wishing to file a lawsuit to consult with a lawyer as soon as possible.

This publication is for informational purposes only, and is based on the law at the time of publication. Laws regularly change and are subject to differing interpretations. The facts of each and every case may also result in differing applications of the law. Accordingly, the information in this publication must not be considered definitive, exhaustive, or legal advice for any purpose, and does not create an attorney-client relationship with the California Department of Justice. When consulting this publication, check for any updates in the law that may be applicable in any given situation.

I. DEFINITIONS OF DISABILITY

A. Federal Definition of Disability

Federal law defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment” that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of a person; a record of such an “impairment”; or being perceived by others as having such an “impairment.” (42 U.S.C. § 12102; 28 C.F.R. § 35.108; 28 C.F.R. § 36.105.) “Major life activities” are the kind of activities a person does every day. Examples of major life activities include the ability to care for oneself, perform manual tasks, concentrate, communicate, learn, interact with others, and work. (42 U.S.C. § 12102(2); 28 C.F.R. § 35.108(c); 28 C.F.R. § 36.105(c).) It also includes the operation of major bodily functions, like circulation, reproduction, and individual organs. (*Ibid.*)

There are many different kinds of disabilities covered under federal law. Some examples of a “physical” or “mental” disability under federal law include:

Mental health disability, orthopedic, visual, speech, and hearing disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, intellectual disability, emotional illness, dyslexia and other learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection (whether symptomatic or asymptomatic), tuberculosis, drug addiction, and alcoholism.

(28 C.F.R. § 35.108(b); 28 C.F.R. § 36.105(b).)

B. California State Definition of Disability

The California state definition of disability is broader than the federal definition. California's definition of disability only requires that the disability pose a “limitation” on a “major life activity,” whereas the federal definition requires the higher burden of the disability posing a “substantial limitation” upon “major life activities.” (Gov. Code, § 12926; Gov. Code, § 12926.1; 42 U.S.C. § 12102; 28 C.F.R. § 35.108; 28 C.F.R. § 36.105.) California defines “major life activities” broadly and includes physical activities, mental activities, social activities, and work. (Gov. Code, § 12926; Gov. Code, § 12926.1.) California's definition of disability also includes separate definitions for both “physical” and “mental” disabilities.

There are many different kinds of disabilities covered under California law. Some examples of “physical disability” include:

- (1) Having any physiological disease, disorder, condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss that does both of the following:
 - (a) Affects one or more of the following body systems: neurological, immunological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.
 - (b) Limits a major life activity.
- (2) Any other health impairment...that requires special education or related services.

(Gov. Code, § 12926; Gov. Code, § 12926.1.)

Some examples of “mental disability” include:

- (1) Having any mental or psychological disability, such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, or specific learning disabilities, that limits a major life activity.
- (2) Any other mental or psychological disability that requires special education or related services.

(*Ibid.*)

California’s definition of disability also includes:

- (1) Having a record or history of the physical or mental health disability, which is known to the employer or other entity covered by this part.
- (2) Being regarded or treated by the employer or other entity covered by this part as having, or having had, any physical or mental health disability that makes achievement of a major life activity difficult; or
- (3) Being regarded or treated by the employer or other entity covered by this part as having, or having had, a physical or mental health disability that has no present disabling effect, but that may become a disability.

(*Ibid.*)

II. FEDERAL LAW

A. Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits disability-based discrimination in many areas of everyday life including employment, programs, services, and activities of state and local governments, businesses that are open to the public, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.) The ADA also prohibits discrimination based on an individual’s relationship or association with a person with a known disability. (42 U.S.C. § 12112(a), (b)(4); 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(g); 28 C.F.R. § 36.205.) The ADA is divided into five different sections, which are called titles.

Title I of the ADA requires employers that have 15 or more employees, including state/local governments, employment agencies, and labor unions, to provide equal access to employment-related opportunities including recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, pay, social activities, and termination. (See 42 U.S.C. §§ 12111, 12112(a); 29 C.F.R. § 1630.4.) Title I requirements include reasonable accommodations for

employees with disabilities, nondiscrimination in recruitment and testing, and protection against retaliation and harassment. (See 42 U.S.C. §§ 12112, 12203; 29 C.F.R. § 1630.12.) The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for issuing regulations under Title I that explain the rights of people with disabilities and requirements for employers. (42 U.S.C. § 12116; 29 C.F.R. § 1630.1.) For more information on Title I of the ADA, see the EEOC’s [Disability-Related Resources](#).

Title II of the ADA requires that public entities provide people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities. (42 U.S.C. § 12132; 28 C.F.R. § 35.130.) A public entity is any state or local government, department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a state or local government, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, and any commuter authority. (42 U.S.C. § 12131(1); 28 C.F.R. § 35.104.) It also includes public transit. (See 42 U.S.C. § 12141 et seq.) Title II requirements include reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, program accessibility, effective communication, admission of service animals, and accessible new construction and alterations. (28 C.F.R. §§ 35.130, 35.136, 35.149, 35.151, 35.160.) The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) is responsible for issuing regulations under Title II that explain the rights of people with disabilities and requirements for public entities. (42 U.S.C. § 12134; 28 C.F.R. § 35.101.) The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is also responsible for issuing regulations that apply to public transit. (42 U.S.C. § 12149.) For more information about Title II of the ADA, see the USDOJ’s guidance on [State and Local Governments](#).

Title III of the ADA requires that businesses open to the public and other “public accommodations” provide people with disabilities equal opportunity to access the goods and services they offer. (42 U.S.C. § 12182; 28 C.F.R. § 36.201.) The term “public accommodation” includes any business that provides goods or services to the public, such as restaurants, hotels, retail stores, movie theaters, private schools (including housing), theaters, doctors’ offices and hospitals, day care centers, gyms, and organizations offering courses or examinations. (42 U.S.C. § 12181(7); 28 C.F.R. § 36.104; [Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) U.S. Dep’t of Justice [as of Sept. 12, 2023].) It also includes privately operated transit, such as taxis, intercity and charter buses, hotel shuttles, and airport shuttles. (42 U.S.C. § 12184; [Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) U.S. Dep’t of Justice [as of Sept. 12, 2023].) Title III requirements include reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, maintenance of accessible features, removal of barriers, effective communication, admission of service animals, and accessible new construction and alterations. (28 C.F.R. §§ 36.211, 36.302, 36.303, 36.304, 36.401 et seq.) The USDOJ is responsible for issuing regulations under Title III that explain the rights of people with disabilities and requirements for public accommodations. (42 U.S.C. § 12186; 28 C.F.R. § 36.101.) The USDOT is also responsible for issuing regulations that apply to privately operated transit. (42 U.S.C. § 12186.) For more information about Title III of the ADA, see the USDOJ’s guidance on [Businesses That Are Open to the Public](#).

Title IV of the ADA requires that common carriers make interstate and intrastate telecommunications relay services (TRS) available, to the extent possible and in the most efficient manner, to people with hearing and speech disabilities in the United States. (47 U.S.C. § 225.) These services provide people with disabilities the ability to communicate by telephone in a manner that is functionally equivalent to telephone services used by people without disabilities. (See [Telecommunications Relay Services \(TRS\)](#) Federal Communications Commission [as of Sept. 12, 2023].) The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is responsible for setting mandatory minimum standards with respect to TRS. (47 C.F.R. § 64.604.) For example, TRS providers must ensure that these services are available at all times and that communications assistants are sufficiently trained to meet the communication needs of people with hearing and speech disabilities. (*Ibid.*)

Title V of the ADA includes other requirements about how to implement the ADA, including protections against retaliation and coercion for individuals who exercise their rights under the ADA. (42 U.S.C. §§ 12201, 12203.)

For more information on the ADA generally, see [Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) by the USDOJ.

B. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Sections 501- 504 and 508)

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act) is the earliest federal law that explicitly prohibits disability-based discrimination in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors. (See 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.)

This publication focuses on Sections 501-504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which describe key rights for people with disabilities under the act.

1. Sections 501 and 503

Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits disability-based discrimination by federal agencies. (29 U.S.C. § 791.) Section 501 also requires that executive branch agencies take affirmative action in the hiring, placing, and advancing of people with disabilities. (*Ibid.*) Section 503 prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against people with disabilities and requires employers to take affirmative actions to recruit, hire, promote, and retain people with disabilities. (29 U.S.C. § 793.) These sections established an Interagency Committee on Employees, which periodically assesses the adequacy of hiring, placement, and advancement practices regarding individuals with disabilities. (29 U.S.C. § 791(a).)

2. Section 502

Section 502 of the Rehabilitation Act created the Access Board, originally named the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board. Section 502 lays out the duties of the board under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), which includes: ensuring compliance with standards issued under the ABA, developing and maintaining guidelines upon which standards are based, and promoting access throughout all segments of society. (29 U.S.C. § 792.)

3. Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides that no qualified person with a disability shall be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, or under any program or activity conducted by any executive agency, or by the United States Postal Service. (29 U.S.C. § 794.) Various federal agencies have implemented regulations pursuant to Section 504. (29 U.S.C. § 794(a).) For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has regulations that prohibit discrimination in housing, that require effective communication with applicants, beneficiaries, and members of the public, and that require facilities to be accessible by people with disabilities. (24 C.F.R. §§ 8.4, 8.6, 8.20.) The Department of Education has regulations that require recipients that operate public elementary schools or secondary education programs or activities to provide regular or special education and related aids and services to students with disabilities. (34 C.F.R. § 104.33.) And the Department of Labor's Section 504 regulations require reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. (29 C.F.R. § 32.13.)

4. Section 508

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to persons with disabilities. (29 U.S.C. § 794d.) Section 508 applies to all federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. (*Ibid.*) Federal agencies must also give employees with disabilities and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access that is available to others. (*Ibid.*)

C. Fair Housing Amendments Act

In 1988, the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) was signed into law to amend Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (also known as the Fair Housing Act of 1968) to add disability to the list of protected categories in the original Fair Housing Act. The FHAA prohibits disability-based discrimination in every stage of housing from the housing search to living in a dwelling to moving out or eviction. Under the FHAA, sellers and landlords cannot discriminate in the sale or rental of a property because of a person's disability. (42 U.S.C. § 3604.) Sellers and landlords cannot discriminate based on disability with respect to the terms, conditions, or privileges of living on the bought or rented property. (*Ibid.*) Additionally, a tenant with disabilities has a right to reasonable accommodations and reasonable modifications. (*Ibid.*) For more information on the Fair Housing Amendments Act, see HUD's guidance on [Housing Discrimination under the Fair Housing Act](#).

D. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governs the education of students with disabilities in K-12 schools. (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.) The IDEA requires that states that receive federal funds provide a "free, appropriate, public education" to all children with a disability between the ages of 3 and 21. (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400(d), 1412(a)(1)(A).) The IDEA requires schools to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible. (34 C.F.R. § 300.114.) The IDEA also governs the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for students with disabilities, which includes making eligibility determinations and implementation of these programs. (20 U.S.C. § 1414; 34 C.F.R. § 300.320.) Finally, the IDEA governs the disciplinary process for students with disabilities and establishes procedural safeguards for these students. (20 U.S.C. § 1415(k).) For more information on the IDEA, see the U.S. Department of Education's [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act website](#).

E. Air Carrier Access Act

The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) prohibits disability-based discrimination in all air transportation by domestic carriers and all flights to or from the United States by foreign air carriers. (49 U.S.C. § 41705; 14 C.F.R. § 382.7.) The ACAA regulations outline specific requirements for air carriers including, but not limited to, standards for accessible airport facilities as well as requiring provision of boarding and deplaning assistance. (14 C.F.R. §§ 382.51-382.57, 382.95.) For more information, see the USDOT's guidance on [Traveling with a Disability](#).

F. Architectural Barriers Act

The ABA sets standards for design, construction, and alteration to ensure buildings and facilities are accessible and usable by people with disabilities. (42 U.S.C. § 4151 et seq.) The ABA applies to buildings that are designed, constructed, altered, or leased with federal funds or by federal agencies. (See 42 U.S.C. § 4151.) This includes federal facilities such as post offices, courthouses, and national parks as well as non-federal facilities such as certain public housing and mass transit systems. (See [About the U.S. Access Board: Architectural Barriers Act \(ABA\) of 1968](#) U.S. Access Board [as of Sept. 12, 2023].) The standards cover a variety of facility elements including entrances, restrooms, and signs. (*Ibid.*) The Administrator

of General Services, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Defense, and the United States Postal Service establish the standards required by the ABA. (42 U.S.C. §§ 4152-4154a.) For more information, see the U.S. Access Board’s guidance on [ABA accessibility standards](#).

G. Telecommunications Act of 1996

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires that telecommunications providers ensure that their services are accessible and usable by people with disabilities, if readily achievable. (47 U.S.C. § 255(c).) It also requires that manufacturers of telecommunications equipment ensure that their equipment is designed, developed, and fabricated to be accessible and usable by people with disabilities, if readily achievable. (47 U.S.C. § 255(b).) These services and equipment include telephones, cell-phones, pagers, fax machines, and computers with modems. (See [About the U.S. Access Board: Telecommunications Act of 1996 \(Section 255\)](#) U.S. Access Board [as of Sept. 12, 2023].) For more information, see the FCC’s [website on the act](#).

H. National Voter Registration Act of 1993

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) was enacted to establish procedures that would increase the number of eligible citizens who register to vote in elections for federal office and to make it possible for states and local governments to provide more opportunities to enhance the participation of eligible voters. (52 U.S.C. § 20501.) For example, under the NVRA, states must provide voter registration opportunities at offices that provide state-funded programs engaged in providing services to people with disabilities. (52 U.S.C. § 20506.) These offices or “voter registration agencies” must provide people with disabilities with mail voter registration application forms, assist them with completing their forms, and accept completed forms for transmittal to the state election official. (*Ibid.*) For more information on the NVRA, see the USDOJ’s [Questions and Answers](#).

I. Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984

The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (VAEHA) was intended to improve access to registration facilities and polling places for voters with disabilities in federal elections. (52 U.S.C. § 20101 et seq.) The VAEHA requires state election officials to ensure that all polling places are accessible for people with disabilities or provide an alternative means for voting if an accessible place is unavailable. (52 U.S.C. § 20102.) State election officials must also provide accessible registration facilities and make registration and voting aids accessible for people with disabilities, such as by printing and displaying instructions in large type and providing information to people with hearing disabilities in an accessible manner. (See 52 U.S.C. §§ 20103, 20104.)

III. CALIFORNIA STATE LAW

A. Fair Employment and Housing Act

The Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), like its federal counterparts (ADA Title I and FHAA), prohibits disability-based discrimination in all stages of employment and housing. (Gov. Code, § 12940; Gov. Code, § 12955.) The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is authorized to take individual complaints and investigate and enforce the FEHA to vindicate individual victims’ rights. (Gov. Code, § 12930(f).)

In employment, the FEHA protects job applicants or employees against discrimination by both public and private employers based on disability. (Gov. Code, § 12940.) For more information, see CRD’s fact sheet on [Employment Discrimination Based on Disability](#).

In housing, the FEHA makes it unlawful for landlords, tenant screening companies, property management companies, real estate agents, home sellers, builders, mortgage lenders, and others to discriminate against a person based on disability. (Gov. Code, § 12955.) The FEHA prohibits discrimination in all aspects of housing, including: renting or leasing, sales, mortgage lending and insurance, advertising, practices such as restrictive covenants, and construction. (*Ibid.*) For more information, see the CRD’s fact sheet on [Disability Discrimination](#) in housing.

B. Unruh Civil Rights Act

The Unruh Civil Rights Act (Unruh Act) prohibits disability-based discrimination by business establishments. (Civ. Code, § 51.) The Unruh Act provides that all persons with disabilities are “entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all business establishments of every kind whatsoever.” (Civ. Code, § 51, subd. (b).) “Business establishments” include hotels and motels, nonprofit organizations that have a business purpose or are a public accommodation, restaurants, theaters, hospitals, barber shops and beauty salons, retail establishments, and in some circumstances, public agencies. (See [Discrimination at Business Establishments](#) California Civil Rights Department [as of Sept. 12, 2023].)

The Unruh Act does not apply to “truly private social clubs” or to “membership decisions of a charitable, expressive, and social organization.” (*Warfield v. Peninsula Golf & Country Club* (1995) 10 Cal.4th 594, 599; *Curran v. Mount Diablo Council of the Boy Scouts* (1998) 17 Cal.4th 670, 697.) A violation of the ADA or the FEHA is also a violation of the Unruh Act. (Civ. Code, § 51, subd. (f); Gov. Code, § 12948.) The CRD is authorized to enforce the Unruh Act. (Gov. Code, § 12930(f).) For more information, see the CRD’s website on [Discrimination at Business Establishments](#).

C. Disabled Persons Act

The Disabled Persons Act (DPA) requires that persons with disabilities “have the same right as the general public to the full and free use of the streets, highways, sidewalks, walkways, public buildings, medical facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and physicians’ offices, public facilities, and other public places.” (Civ. Code, § 54.)

The DPA further provides that people with disabilities are entitled to full and equal access to accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of common carriers and modes of transportation, private schools, hotels, and resorts to which the general public is invited, among others. (Civ. Code, § 54.1, subd. (a)(1).) A violation of the ADA is also a violation of the DPA. (Civ. Code, § 54, subd. (c).) A violation of the DPA is also a violation of FEHA. (Gov. Code, § 12948.) The CRD is authorized to enforce the DPA. (Gov. Code, § 12930(f).)

D. Government Code section 11135

Government Code section 11135 (Section 11135) prohibits disability-based discrimination in programs and activities that are conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, are funded directly by the state, or receive any financial assistance from the state. (Gov. Code, § 11135, subd. (a); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, §§ 11153.) A program or activity can include the provision of employment or goods, education, training, health, housing, and financial aid. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 11150.) A violation of the ADA is also a violation of Section 11135. (Gov. Code, § 11135, subd. (b).) Where state law prescribes stronger protections and prohibitions, the programs and activities are subject to the stronger protections and prohibitions. (*Ibid.*) The CRD is generally authorized to enforce Section 11135. (Gov. Code, § 12930(f).)

E. Ralph Civil Rights Act of 1976

The Ralph Civil Rights Act of 1976 (Ralph Act) prohibits “hate violence,” including acts of violence or threats of violence, against a person or their property based on disability among other personal characteristics. (See Civ. Code, § 51.7.) The CRD is authorized to enforce the Ralph Act. (Gov. Code, § 12930(f).) For more information on the Ralph Act, see CRD’s fact sheet [California Law Protects You from Hate Violence](#).

F. California Education Code

The California Education Code incorporates the rights and protections provided in the federal IDEA, including the IEP processes and disciplinary safeguards. (Ed. Code, §§ 56345, 48915.5; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3000.) The California Education Code also prohibits disability-based discrimination in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls students who receive state student financial aid. (Ed. Code, § 220; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 4900.) For more information on the Education Code, regulations, and related laws, see the California Department of Education’s [website](#).

G. Lanterman-Petris-Short Act

The Lanterman-Petris Short Act (LPS Act) was passed in 1967 to “end the inappropriate, indefinite, and involuntary commitment of persons with mental health disorders, developmental disabilities, and chronic alcoholism, and to eliminate legal disabilities” as well as to “provide services in the least restrictive setting appropriate to the needs of each person receiving services.” (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 5000 et seq.) The LPS Act sets out rights and protections for people with mental health disabilities regarding involuntary treatment holds, often referred to as “5150 holds,” and conservatorships for people who are “gravely disabled.” (Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 5150, 5250, 5350.) For more information on patients’ rights during involuntary treatment holds, see the California Department of Healthcare Service’s handbook on [Rights for Individuals in Mental Health Facilities Admitted under the Lanterman-Petris Short Act](#).

H. Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act

The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (Lanterman Act) provides people with developmental disabilities the rights to various services and supports, including those provided by regional centers. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4500 et seq.) It establishes a Bill of Rights for people with developmental disabilities which affords them the same legal rights and responsibilities guaranteed to all other individuals. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 4502.) It also prohibits discrimination against people with developmental disabilities in programs and activities that receive public funds. (*Ibid.*) For more information on the Lanterman Act, see the California Department of Developmental Service’s [consumer’s guide to the Lanterman Act](#).

For questions or comments about this publication, please contact the California Department of Justice’s Disability Rights Bureau within the Civil Rights Enforcement Section at DisabilityRights@doj.ca.gov.

For individual complaints and inquiries, please contact the [California Civil Rights Department \(CRD\)](#), formerly known as the Department of Fair Employment and Housing. Please note that the California Department of Justice, unlike CRD, only pursues systemic violations by local governmental entities or companies directly impacting the general public or large groups of individuals. It does not handle individual complaints or inquiries. It also does not represent individuals, provide legal advice, or provide updates about its investigations and/or litigation, even to individuals who provided information about those matters. It also does not handle cases involving isolated violations of law, matters against state-level public entities, or out-of-state conduct.

To report a complaint to the California Department of Justice, please contact the Public Inquiry Unit (PIU). PIU staff may not respond to every inquiry, cannot answer legal questions or give legal advice, and cannot act as a personal lawyer for individuals who report a complaint. Complaints may be referred to a more appropriate agency.

For more information about reporting a complaint against a business or company to PIU, visit the [Consumer Complaint webpage](#).

For more information about reporting a complaint against another entity to PIU, visit the [General Comment, Question or Complaint webpage](#).