

# LEGAL RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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## ACCESS TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



**CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**PUBLIC RIGHTS DIVISION**

CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT SECTION | *DISABILITY RIGHTS BUREAU*



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# ACCESS TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

This publication provides an overview of state and federal laws that set requirements for physical accessibility of both public and private buildings and facilities. This publication also describes an individual's options when they have experienced discrimination regarding physical accessibility.

This publication is provided for informational purposes only and is based on the law at the time of publication. Laws are subject to and regularly do change. The facts of each individual 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. Individuals should also independently check for updates in the law that may be applicable in any given situation.

## I. FEDERAL AND STATE LAW

Both federal and California laws contain accessible design standards to achieve the goal of increasing physical access and removing architectural barriers for people with disabilities. There are laws that cover both public and private buildings and facilities. Many of these laws are applied to buildings and facilities based on the date of construction and/or alterations.

### A. Federal Law

#### 1. The Architectural Barriers Act

In 1968, Congress passed the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) (42 U.S.C. § 4151 et seq.), requiring certain federal agencies to set standards for design, construction, and alteration to ensure buildings and facilities are accessible and usable by people with disabilities. (*Ibid.*) The ABA generally 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 that have received federal funding. (See [About the U.S. Access Board: Architectural Barriers Act \(ABA\) of 1968](#) U.S. Access Bd. [as of Jul. 6, 2024].) The standards cover a variety of facility elements including doors, 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 accessible design standards required by the ABA. (42 U.S.C. §§ 4152-4154a.) Every covered building that is designed, constructed, or altered after the effective date of the standards issued under the ABA must comply with the standards. (42 U.S.C. § 4155.) For more information about standards issued under the ABA, see the U.S. Access Board's guidance on [ABA Accessibility Standards](#).

#### 2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, or any program or activity conducted by any federal executive agency or the United States Postal Service, including any state or local governments, universities, and private organizations. (29 U.S.C. § 794.) Various federal agencies have implemented regulations pursuant to Section 504 that outline accessibility requirements. For example, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has regulations that prohibit discrimination in housing and that require the agency's programs and facilities to be accessible by people with disabilities. (24 C.F.R. §§ 8.4, 8.20-8.33.) The U.S. Department of Education has regulations that require accessibility in existing facilities as well as new construction. (34 C.F.R. §§ 104.21-104.23.) The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Labor also issue Section

504 regulations that set out accessibility requirements and architectural standards for accessible design and construction. (45 C.F.R. §§ 84.21-84.23; 29 C.F.R. §§ 32.26-32.28.)

### **3. Americans with Disabilities Act and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design**

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. §§ 12131 et seq. (Title II on government programs) and 12181 et seq. (Title III on businesses).) Buildings and facilities covered under the ADA may also need to comply with the [2010 Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design](#) in new construction, alterations, and additions. U.S. DOJ has published a [Guidance on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#). U.S. DOJ has published further ADA compliance information for both local governments and businesses at the [ADA Technical Assistance webpage](#).

### **4. The Fair Housing Amendments Act**

The federal Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) requires that all new covered multifamily dwellings designed and constructed after March 13, 1991, be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. (42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(3)(C).) Multifamily dwellings subject to this requirement are buildings with four or more units if the buildings have at least one elevator, and ground floor units in other buildings with four or more units. (42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(7)(A), (B).) The statute, its regulations, and HUD guidance set out requirements aimed at making buildings accessible for people with disabilities, including accessible building entrances, common areas, doors, routes throughout the dwelling, light switches, reinforced walls for grab bars, kitchens, and bathrooms. For more guidance on accessible design and construction, see [HUD's Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines](#), [HUD's Fair Housing Act Design Manual](#), and [Joint Statement of HUD and the DOJ on Accessibility \(Design and Construction\) Requirements for Covered Multifamily Dwellings Under the Fair Housing Act](#).

## **B. State Law**

Multiple state laws prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities, and some set minimum requirements for developers to design and construct facilities that are accessible to, and usable by, people with disabilities.

### **1. Government Code section 11135**

California Government Code section 11135 (Section 11135) governs programs and activities that are conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, or that are funded directly by the state, or that receive any financial assistance from the state. (Gov. Code, § 11135.) For those programs and activities, Section 11135 grants full and equal access to people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. (Gov. Code, § 11135, subd. (a).) Section 11135 also incorporates the Americans with Disabilities Act and its implementing federal rules and regulations for covered programs and activities. (Gov. Code, § 11135, subd. (b).) Where state law provides stronger protections and prohibitions than federal law, the programs and activities subject to Section 11135 must follow those stronger requirements. (*Ibid.*)

Section 11135 regulations require that covered facilities be readily accessible and usable to people with disabilities if construction or alteration commenced after the effective date of implementing regulations. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, §§ 14340, 14341.) Covered facilities must comply with state and federal accessible design standards designated in the regulations. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 14342.)

## **2. Government Code section 4450 et seq.**

California Government Code section 4450 et seq. requires that all buildings, structures, sidewalks, curbs, and related facilities, constructed in California with state, county, or municipal funds, or the funds of any political subdivision of the state, be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. (Gov. Code, § 4450.) The State Architect develops proposed building standards that must be approved and adopted by the California Buildings Standards Commission. (Gov. Code, § 4450, subd. (b).) State building standards must at least meet the accessibility requirements of the federal Accessibility Guidelines prepared pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act. (Gov. Code, § 4450, subd. (c).)

The effective date of this law is November 13, 1968, meaning any covered buildings or facilities constructed on or after that date must comply with its requirements. Additionally, any covered buildings or facilities constructed prior to November 13, 1968, shall comply with the required accessibility provisions of Section 4450 et seq. when alterations, structural repairs, or additions are made to the building or facility. (Gov. Code, § 4456.) This only applies to the area of specific alteration, structural repair or addition and does not mean that the entire structure or facility is subject to the requirements of section 4450 et seq. (*Ibid.*) Any covered buildings and facilities shall conform to the building standards published in the California Building Standards Code relating to access for persons with disabilities and the other regulations adopted pursuant to Section 4450 that are in effect on the date of an application for a building permit. Those not requiring a building permit shall comply with the building code standards and regulations in effect at the time construction is commenced. (Gov. Code, § 4451, subd. (c).)

The Director of the Department of General Services (DGS) enforces Government Code section 4450 et seq. where state funds are utilized for any project or where funds of counties, municipalities, or other political subdivisions are utilized for the construction of elementary, secondary, or community college projects. (Gov. Code, § 4453, subd. (a).) Where funds of counties, municipalities, or other political subdivisions are utilized (except for the construction of elementary, secondary, or community college projects), the respective governing body is responsible for enforcement. (Gov. Code, § 4453, subd. (b).)

For public accommodations or facilities constructed in this state with private funds, a building department responsible for the enforcement of this part of the law may grant an exception to the literal requirements of the accessibility standards or permit the use of other methods or materials. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19957.) But an exception can only be granted when it is clearly evident that equivalent facilitation and protection are thereby secured. (*Ibid.*)

Any unauthorized deviation from building standards published in the California Building Standards Code relating to access by people with disabilities and the other regulations adopted by the State Architect pursuant to Government Code section 4450 must be fully corrected within 90 days after discovery of the deviation. (Gov. Code, § 4452.)

An example of an accessible design standard required by the Government Code is braille symbols to mark elevator buttons and floor numbers on elevator doors. (Gov. Code, § 4455.5.) Other scoping and technical requirements are outlined in the California Buildings Standards Code.

## **3. Health and Safety Code section 19955 et seq.**

California Health and Safety Code section 19955 et seq. requires public accommodations and facilities constructed in California with private funds to adhere to the accessibility provisions of Government Code section 4450 et seq. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19955.) This part of the Health and Safety Code defines “public accommodation or facilities” as a building, structure, facility, complex, or improved area that is used by the general public and includes auditoriums, hospitals, theaters, restaurants, hotels, motels, stadiums,

and convention centers. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19955.) All passenger vehicle service stations, shopping centers, offices of physicians and surgeons, and office buildings constructed in California with private funds must also adhere to the accessibility provisions of Government Code section 4450 et seq. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19955.5.) In all of these buildings, when sanitary facilities are made available for the public, clients, or employees, they must also be made available for people with disabilities. (Health & Saf. Code, §§ 19955, 19955.5.)

The Health and Safety Code also requires that any curb or sidewalk intended for public use that is constructed in California with private funds shall conform to the accessibility provisions of Government Code section 4450 et seq. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19956.5.) This includes any curb or sidewalk that after construction with private funds will be turned over to a city or county for public use. (*Ibid.*)

Any alterations, structural repairs, or additions made to an existing public accommodation that was constructed prior to July 1, 1970 and is not exempted by Health and Safety Code section 19956 (described below) is also subject to the accessibility provisions of Government Code section 4450 et seq. (Health & Saf. Code, §§ 19955, 19959.) This only applies to the area of specific alteration, structural repair, or addition and does not mean that the entire building or facility is subject to this code section. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19959.)

Except as otherwise provided by law, buildings and facilities subject to Health and Safety Code section 19955 et seq. shall conform to the state accessible design standards that are in effect on the date of an application for a building permit. (Gov. Code, § 4451, subd. (c).) Buildings and facilities that do not require a building permit shall conform to the state accessible design standards that are in effect at the time construction is commenced. (*Ibid.*)

It is the responsibility of city and county building departments to enforce the statutory requirements of both Health and Safety Code section 19955 et seq. and Government Code section 4450 et seq. (Health & Saf. Code, §19958.) “Building department” is defined as the department, bureau, or officer charged with the enforcement of laws or ordinances regulating the erection or construction, or both the erection and construction, of buildings. (*Ibid.*)

#### **a. Exceptions**

There are exceptions to these accessibility provisions in certain types of buildings, and, under certain circumstances, a local building department may grant an exemption.

The Health and Safety Code sets out specific exceptions for privately funded multistory buildings. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19956.)

A building department may grant an exception to the literal requirements of the standards and specifications required by this part of the Health and Safety Code or permit the use of other methods or materials, where there is practical difficulty, unnecessary hardship, or extreme differences. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19957.) But an exception can only be granted when it is clearly evident that equivalent facilitation and protection are secured. (*Ibid.*)

#### **4. California Building Standards Code**

In addition to the general state access statutes above, California regulations provide a comprehensive set of requirements covering almost all important areas of accessibility for persons with disabilities. The California Building Standards Code (CBSC) (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24) sets scoping and technical requirements for all new construction and rehabilitation projects in the state, with a particular focus on accessibility for

people with disabilities in Chapters 11A and 11B.<sup>1</sup> (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, §§ 1101A et seq., 11B-101 et seq.) In addition to the state standards, the CBSC must require facilities to conform to at least the same level of accessibility as the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.), the [Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards](#), and the Architectural Barriers Act. (Gov. Code, § 4459, subd. (c).)

### a. Definitions and Application

The CBSC sets specific accessibility requirements that apply to buildings and facilities covered by the state laws outlined in this publication. Chapter 11A of the CBSC sets out accessibility requirements for the following:

1. All newly-constructed covered multifamily dwellings
2. New common use areas serving existing covered multifamily dwellings
3. Additions to existing buildings, where the addition alone meets the definition of a covered multifamily dwelling
4. New common-use areas serving new covered multifamily dwellings
5. Where any portion of a building is considered a new building for determining the application of Chapter 11A of the CBSC

(Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, § 1101A.1.)

Chapter 11A generally does not apply to public accommodations such as hotels, motels, and public housing. (*Ibid.*) Chapter 11A states that newly constructed covered multifamily dwellings, which can also be defined as “public housing,” shall be subject to the requirements of Chapter 11A and Chapter 11B of the CBSC. (*Ibid.*) However, the Division of the State Architect’s 2022 California Access Compliance Advisory Reference Manual states that since the CBSC Chapter 11B amendments adopted in the 2019 Intervening Code Cycle effective July 1, 2021, Chapter 11A is no longer applicable to public housing. ([2022 California Access Compliance Advisory Reference Manual](#) (January 1, 2023) Cal. Dept. of Gen. Services, at pp. 26-27 [as of Jan. 13, 2025].)

Chapter 11B of the CBSC sets out accessibility requirements for public buildings, public accommodations, commercial buildings, and public housing. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, § 11B-101 et seq.)

A “public building or facility” is a building or facility or portion of a building or facility designed, constructed, or altered by, on behalf of, or for the use of a public entity subject to Chapter 1, Section 1.9.1.1. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, §§ 202, 11B-106.5.)

“Place of public accommodations” means a facility operated by a private entity whose operations affect commerce and fall within at least one of the fifteen different categories listed in the CBSC definition. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, §§ 202, 11B-106.5.)

“Commercial facilities” means facilities whose operations will affect commerce and are intended for non-residential use by a private entity. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, §§ 202, 11B-106.5.) “Commercial facilities”

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1 All citations to the CBSC contained in this publication are to the 2022 California Building Standards Code with July 2024 Supplement. The CBSC is updated on a triennial basis. Recent versions are available through the Department of General Services website. The website also includes a list of publishers that offer copies for purchase as well as a list of libraries where the CBSC can be accessed for free. Additionally, local building departments may also have a copy available to the public.

do not include: (1) Facilities covered or expressly exempted from coverage under the Fair Housing Act of 1968, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-3631); (2) Aircraft; or (3) Railroad locomotives, railroad freight cars, railroad cabooses, commuter or intercity passenger rail cars (including coaches, dining cars, sleeping cars, lounge cars, and food service cars), any other railroad cars described in section 242 of the Americans with Disabilities Act or covered under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or railroad rights-of-way. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, §§ 202, 11B-106.5.)

“Public housing” is defined as housing facilities constructed or altered by, for, or on behalf of a public entity, or constructed or altered as part of a public entity’s program to provide housing pursuant to United State Code of Federal Regulations, 28 CFR Part 35, Section 35.102(a), including but not limited to the following:

1. One- or two-family dwelling units or congregate residences
2. Buildings or complexes with three or more residential dwelling units
3. Homeless shelters, group homes, halfway houses, and similar social service establishments
4. Transient lodging, such as hotels, motels, hostels, and other facilities providing accommodation of a short-term nature of not more than 30 days duration
5. Housing at a place of education, such as housing on or serving a public school, public college, or public university

(Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, § 202.)

For more information and guidance on accessible design standards for public housing, see the Division of the State Architect’s [Guide to Public Housing Regulated by Chapter 11B of the California Building Code](#) which outlines both state and federal accessibility standards applicable to public housing.

#### **b. New Construction and Alterations**

Both chapters 11A and 11B set standards for newly constructed buildings as well as additions to and altered portions of existing covered buildings. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, §§ 1101A.1, 11B-201.1.)

Chapter 11A’s standards do not apply to alterations, repair, rehabilitation, or maintenance of multifamily dwellings constructed for first occupancy on or before March 13, 1991. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, § 1101A.2.) Covered multifamily dwellings shall be maintained in compliance with accessibility standards in effect at the time of construction. (*Ibid.*) Apartments constructed prior to March 13, 1991, shall be maintained in compliance with accessibility standards in effect at the time of construction. (*Ibid.*) Additions shall be subject to the requirements of Chapter 11A, provided the addition, when considered alone, meets the definition of a covered multifamily dwelling found in Chapter 2 of the CBSC. (*Ibid.*) New common use spaces serving existing covered multifamily dwellings shall be subject to the requirements of Chapter 11A. (*Ibid.*) All existing public use areas, public accommodations, and public housing must comply with Chapter 11B. (*Ibid.*)

Chapter 11B sets specific standards for additions and alterations to existing buildings that fall within its scope. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, §§ 11B-202.2, 11B-202.3, 11B-202.4.) For alterations under Chapter 11B, where the enforcing authority determines compliance with applicable requirements is technically infeasible, the alteration shall provide equivalent facilitation or comply with the requirements to the maximum extent feasible. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, § 11B-202.3.) The details of the finding that full compliance with the requirements is technically infeasible shall be recorded and entered into the files of the enforcing agency. (*Ibid.*) Additionally, an alteration that decreases or has the effect of decreasing the

accessibility of a building or facility below the requirements of new construction at the time of alteration is prohibited. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, § 11B-202.3.1.)

The specific design and construction requirements in both Chapters 11A and 11B are wide-ranging, covering specific elements of a building such as parking facilities, entrances, signage, and stairs as well as types of facilities such as multistory buildings, restaurants, and amusement rides.

## 5. The Fair Employment and Housing Act

In the housing context, the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) also requires developers to design and construct covered housing projects with certain accessible features. (Gov. Code, § 12955.1.)

The FEHA requires housing developers to design and construct covered multifamily housing in a manner that allows access to, and use by, people with disabilities, by requiring them to provide, at a minimum, certain specified features. (Gov. Code, § 12955.1). The FEHA's accessible design requirements apply only to "covered multifamily dwellings" (*ibid.*), which means buildings that consist of at least four condominium units or at least three rental apartment dwelling units if the buildings have at least one elevator, or ground floor dwelling units in a dwelling with at least four condominium units or at least three rental apartment dwelling units if the building does not have an elevator. (Gov. Code, § 12955.1.1.)

The FEHA sets forth how such dwellings must be accessible to persons with disabilities, including, for example, by having at least one building entrance on an accessible route, accessible doors, public and common areas, light switches, electrical outlets, etc. (Gov. Code, § 12955.1, subd. (a).)

## 6. State Resources for Accessibility Compliance

The State of California offers several resources to facilitate compliance with state and federal accessible design standards. For example, the Division of the State Architect (DSA) webpage on [Access Compliance Reference Materials](#) includes informational materials ranging from DSA's Access Compliance Advisory Manual to a guide on accessible design standards for public housing. DSA also offers the [DSA Academy](#), which is training open to the public on topics including the building code and accessibility.

Additionally, a state-certified expert known as a Certified Access Specialist (CASP) can advise developers and conduct inspections with regard to accessible design. For more information regarding CASp property inspection, see the [Division of the State Architect website](#). As required by law, at the same website, the State Architect maintains a list of CASps and a list of CASp inspected businesses. (See Gov. Code, § 4459.7.) A CASp inspection may also provide small businesses some protections against technical accessibility violations. The Division of the State Architect outlines these protections in the [Business Owners Frequently Asked Questions](#) section of its website.

The California Department of Justice has also compiled a list of [Resources for Small Businesses Regarding Physical Barriers and Accessible Design Standards](#).

## II. COMPLAINTS

An individual who believes they have been discriminated against under the laws described in this publication may have options to file complaints with a 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.

## **A. For Violations of Federal Law**

For violations of the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), an individual may file a complaint with the U.S. Access Board. This includes complaints of an accessibility barrier at a building or facility covered by the ABA, such as U.S. post offices, Veterans Affairs medical facilities, national parks, Social Security Administration offices, federal office buildings, U.S. courthouses, and federal prisons. For more information about filing a complaint, visit the [Filing an Architectural Barriers Act Complaint website](#).

For violations of the nondiscrimination provision of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a complaint may be filed with the United States Department of Justice. (Exec. Order No. 12250, 45 Fed.Reg. 72995 (Nov. 2, 1980); see also [Disability Rights Section](#) U.S. Dept. of Justice [as of Jan. 13, 2025].) A lawsuit may also be filed in federal court. (29 U.S.C. § 794a(a)(2).)

If a person feels that they have been discriminated against under the ADA, they may file a complaint with the United States Department of Justice or they may file their own lawsuit. (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000a-3(a), 12188; 28 C.F.R. § 36.501 et seq.) More information on how to file a complaint is available on the [U.S. Department of Justice website](#).

For violations of the Fair Housing Amendments Act and its implementing regulations, they may file a complaint with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). (42 U.S.C. §§ 3610, 3612.) For more information about how to file a complaint, see [HUD's website](#).

## **B. For Violations of State Law**

If an individual believes they have experienced discrimination under Government Code section 11135 or the Fair Housing and Employment Act, they may file a complaint with the California Civil Rights Department (CRD). (Gov. Code, §§ 12980, 12930; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 14050.) CRD is authorized to receive and investigate individual complaints and enforce these laws on behalf of individuals. (See Gov. Code, § 12930, subd. (f).) Information about how to file a complaint can be found at the [CRD website](#). The individual may also file a private lawsuit. (Gov. Code, §§ 11139; 12989.1.)

The district attorney, the city attorney, the county counsel if the district attorney does not bring an action, or the Attorney General may bring an action to enjoin a violation of Government Code section 4450 et seq. (Gov. Code, § 4458.)

Any person may bring a written appeal regarding action taken by the building department of the city, county, or city and county in enforcement of the requirements of Health and Safety Code 19955 et seq. to the local appeals board. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19957.5.) The district attorney, the city attorney, the county counsel if the district attorney does not bring an action, the Department of Rehabilitation acting through the Attorney General, or the Attorney General may bring an action to enjoin a violation of Health and Safety Code 19955 et seq. (Health & Saf. Code, § 19958.5.)

Local building departments are responsible for enforcing the CBSC within their respective jurisdictions. (Health & Saf. Code, §§ 18931.6, 18949.27; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 24, § 103; also see [Access Compliance Reference Materials](#) Div. of the State Architect [as of Jan. 13, 2025] (“The building official overseeing plan review and approval is the one to consult when there are questions regarding compliance with the building code.”).)

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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](mailto: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 regarding systemic violations of law by local governmental entities or companies, 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](#).