

Attorneys Working with Disabled Clients

What attorneys need to know when working with disabled clients in Nashville, Tennessee and throughout the United States:

Your law office just received a phone call from a deaf or hearing-impaired potential client. The potential-client is requesting a meeting to retain your services. The potential-client has also requested that you provide an interpreter for the meeting.

Do you take the meeting and provide an interpreter? If you do, do you pay for the interpreter or the client? Do you pay for the interpreter and then bill the client? Do you have the client come in and just write things down or bring a family member to translate?

What do you do?

The offices of a lawyer are covered by the ADA, regardless of the size of the firm, even if you have fewer than 15 employees and regardless of the type of law you practice, whether civil or criminal. Lawyers have an obligation to ensure they provide regardless of the type of law you practice, whether civil or criminal. Lawyers have an obligation to ensure they provide effective communication to clients with disabilities. Effective communication means providing Auxiliary Aids and Services, which can be different depending on the clients disabilities. The communication must also be effective both ways, from the client to the attorney and from the attorney to the client. The best way to understand what is effective for each client is to ask them. It is important that you pay attention to your client's needs and statements. They may state that writing things down or lip-reading is not effective. Therefore, you can't offer these as options.

The most important thing that attorneys must be aware of is that lawyers are required under the ADA to pay for professional interpretation services. Insisting that a client who utilizes American Sign Language bring a family member or friend to interpret is not proper and also raises issues regarding attorney client privilege. There is also a CART service than can be provided for the hard of hearing, which will assist in reading. These charges cannot be charged back to the client and an attorney cannot increase his or her fees to handle the case of a disabled client.

We have an obligation as attorneys to provide professional, high-quality legal service to each client an potential client regardless of disability. Attorneys and disabled clients should do their best to communicate with each other to achieve this success.

Should you be disabled and require a lawyer for a [personal injury](#), auto accident, wrongful death, slip and fall, or medical malpractice case, please feel free to contact our law firm and speak to one of our lawyers at 615-844-4034. We will be happy to assist you. Or, feel free to complete our Free Case Evaluation form to the right.

Resources:

[42 U.S.C.A. Section 12182](#)

[26 CFR Section 36.104](#)

[American with Disabilities Act](#)