

## Overview

### Q: What is the Rehabilitation Act of 1973?

A: The [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) is a federal law that prohibits federal, or federally funded, programs, services, and employers from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities equal participation in, and opportunities for, program benefits, services, technology, and employment. The Rehabilitation Act has sections that outline the nondiscrimination laws depending on the type of discrimination and entity.

### Q: How is the Rehabilitation Act different from the Americans with Disabilities Act?

A: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not apply to federal agencies. Instead, the ADA applies to programs, services, goods, and activities offered by state and local governments or places of public accommodations, meaning private businesses open to the general public.

### Q: Does the Rehabilitation Act apply to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)?

A: Yes, the nondiscrimination requirements apply to the VA. The law also applies to the Department of Health and Human Services; the Department of Housing and Urban Development; Department of Defense; National Parks; and other federal agencies or programs and activities that receive federal funds.

### Q: What is Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act?

A: [Section 501](#) prohibits federal agencies from discriminating against people with disabilities in federal employment, including hiring, promotion, training, and employment benefits. Federal agencies must provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, if needed. A [reasonable accommodation](#) is any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. It also requires federal agencies to take affirmative action in the hiring, placing, and advancing of individuals with disabilities.

**Q: What is Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act?**

**A:** [Section 503](#) prohibits disability employment discrimination by federal contractors, including hiring, promotion, training, and employment benefits. Federal contractors must provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, if needed. A [reasonable accommodation](#) is any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. It also requires federal contractors to take affirmative action in the hiring, placing, and advancing of individuals with disabilities.

**Q: What are examples of employment discrimination under Sections 501 and 503?**

**A:** Federal agencies and federal contractors cannot fire, harass, or give unequal pay or benefits to people with disabilities. These employers also cannot request medical information or physical job qualifications from employees or applicants, in most circumstances.

**Q: What is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act?**

**A:** [Section 504](#) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in federal agencies' programs or activities, or programs and activities that receive federal funds. Under Section 504, individuals with disabilities must have an equal opportunity to access the program benefits and services. A program or activity is a service that a federal agency offers or funds. This includes health care, housing, social services, recreation activities, and other services. If a program or service is not accessible, the entity must provide reasonable accommodations so an individual with a disability can access the program or service.

**Q: What is a reasonable accommodation?**

**A:** A reasonable accommodation is a change, adaptation, or modification to a policy, program, or service that allows a person with a disability to fully participate in the program, activity, or service. Reasonable accommodations must be provided unless it would cause an undue financial or administrative burden on the entity or a fundamental alteration of the program, activity, or service.

**Q: Does Section 504 require facilities to be accessible?**

**A:** No, Section 504 does not apply to the accessibility of the building or facility itself. Instead, the accessibility requirements for buildings and facilities are governed by the [Architectural Barriers Act](#) (ABA). The ABA was passed in 1968 and applies to facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with federal funds. The sites, facilities, buildings, and other built elements must meet the ABA's scoping and technical requirements issued by the [U.S. Access Board](#).

**Q: What is Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act?**

A: [Section 508](#) covers electronic devices and technology systems. Specifically, it applies to information and communication technology purchased, owned, or used by a federal agency or federal program. Under Section 508, electronic content and devices used by the public or employees must be accessible.

**Q: What do I do if my rights were violated?**

A: If you believe you were discriminated against because of your disability, it is important to file a complaint. How complaints are filed is based on which section of the Rehabilitation Act you believe was violated. When filing, always keep a copy of the complaint and any relevant documents for your own records.

**How to File Complaints Under the Rehabilitation Act****Section 504**

How to file a complaint alleging a violation of Section 504 depends on the agency. Some agencies are listed below, but the information for filing a complaint with other agencies can be found online. The Access Board has a list of [Section 504 agency contacts](#). Always check the agency's website for instructions on filing a complaint. For information on how to file Section 504 complaints with the appropriate agency, you can also contact the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division at (800) 514-0301.

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (for complaints against VA health centers or other VA-funded programs) – You should file within 180 days of when you think the discrimination occurred. You can file a complaint:

1. By mail: Send a signed letter with details about your complaint. Include as many details as you can. Be sure to at least include these details:
  - Your name, address, and phone number. If you file a complaint for someone else, include both your information and theirs, and how you're related to the person.
  - The VA location where you believe the discrimination happened. Include the location name, address, and telephone number.
  - How, why, and when you think you were discriminated against. Write as much as you can, including the names of anyone involved in the issue.
  - Other people VA can contact to learn more about your complaint. Provide their full names and contact information.

Mail the complaint to:

Office of Resolution Management Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI)  
External Complaints Program  
Attention: External Complaints Program Manager  
1575 I Street, NW, 10th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

For help with filing a complaint with the VA, call (888) 566-3982. Then select option 4.

**[U.S. Department of Defense](#)** (for complaints against the agency's programs and services) – You can file a complaint:

1. [Online](#)
2. By mail (download a form for either an [anonymous complaint](#) or [identifying yourself](#))

Mail the complaint to:

DOD Hotline  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1900

3. Via fax: 703-604-8567 (download a form for either an [anonymous complaint](#) or [identifying yourself](#))

**[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)** (for complaints against medical providers that receive federal funding) – You can file a complaint:

1. [Online](#)

If you have any questions or need help filing a complaint, you can email the Office of Civil Rights at [OCRMail@hhs.gov](mailto:OCRMail@hhs.gov) or call (800) 368-1019.

**[U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)** (for complaints against federally-funded housing providers) – You can file a complaint:

1. [Online](#)

2. Via email: Download the [form](#) and email it to your [local Fair Housing Equal Opportunity \(FHEO\) office](#).
3. By mail: Download and print the [form](#) and mail it to your [local FHEO office](#).
4. By phone: You can speak with an FHEO intake specialist by calling (800) 669-9777.

**[National Park Service](#)** (for complaints against a National Park, National Battlefield, National Memorial, and National Historic Parks) – You can file a complaint:

1. By mail: The complaint must be in writing, signed and dated, and filed no later than 180 days from the date of the alleged discrimination. The complaint should include:
  - Your name, address, zip code, telephone number and email address;
  - The name and address of the alleged discriminatory official(s) and/or public entity;
  - The nature of the complaint; and
  - The date the alleged discrimination occurred.

Mail the complaint to:

Director  
Office of Equal Opportunity Programs  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW, Rm 2505  
Washington, DC 20240

If you have any questions, you can contact the National Park Service, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs [online](#).

## **Section 508**

**[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)** (for complaints with accessing VA technology) – You can file a complaint:

1. By email:

Send an email to [Section508@VA.gov](mailto:Section508@VA.gov). The subject line should say, “Section 508 support request.”

Be sure to include these details:

- Where you found the issue. If you can, include the webpage address (or URL) of the page.

- The type of assistive technology you were using when you found this issue. For example, tell if you were using a screen reader, magnifier, refreshable Braille display, speech recognition software, haptic device, or switch.
- The format you'd like to get any follow-up materials in. Not all reports may result in follow-up materials.
- Your contact information (if you want the VA to contact you, if the Department needs more details).
- Any other information you think will help fix the issue.

**Department of Defense** (for complaints with accessing the Department's technology) – You can file a complaint:

1. [Online](#)

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (for complaints against medical providers that receive federal funding) – You can file a complaint:

1. [Online](#)

If you have any questions or need help filing a complaint, you can email the Office of Civil Rights at [OCRMail@hhs.gov](mailto:OCRMail@hhs.gov) or call (800) 368-1019.

**Department of Housing and Urban Development** (for complaints against federally-funded housing providers) – You can file a complaint:

1. [Online](#)
2. Via email: Download the [form](#) and email it to your [local FHEO office](#).
3. By mail: Download and print the [form](#) and mail it to your [local FHEO office](#).
4. By phone: You can speak with an FHEO intake specialist by calling (800) 669-9777.

For information about filing a complaint against HUD under Section 508, contact the Office of Departmental Equal Employment Opportunity at [EEO@HUD.gov](mailto:EEO@HUD.gov) or by phone at (202) 708-5921.

**National Park Service** (for accessing agency technology) – You can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Interior:

1. By mail:

The complaint must be in writing and mailed to:

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Attn: Director, Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
MS-4359  
Washington, D.C. 20240

### Section 501

To file a [complaint under Section 501](#), the first step is to contact an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Counselor at the agency where you work or where you applied for a job. Generally, you must contact the EEO Counselor within 45 days from the day the discrimination occurred. If you do not settle the dispute with the counselor, you can file a formal discrimination complaint against the agency with the agency's EEO Office. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) outlines the process [online](#). If you disagree with the agency's decision, you can appeal the decision by filing [online](#) with the EEOC.

### Section 503

To [file a complaint](#) under [Section 503](#), you must file within 180 days from the date of the alleged discrimination. If your complaint alleges a violation based on disability or status as a protected veteran, it must be filed within 300 days. You can file a complaint:

1. [Online](#)
2. By mail: Complete and print the [form](#) and mail it to any [Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs \(OFCCP\) District or Area office](#).

Mail the complaint to:

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC, 20210

3. Via fax: Complete and print the [form](#) and fax it to any [OFCCP District or Area office](#).
4. In person: You can file a complaint in-person with any [OFCCP District or Area office](#)

For more information, call or visit any [OFCCP District and Area Office](#) if you have questions about the complaint process, want to discuss your complaint, or would like to learn where to file a complaint.