

JUSTICE NEWS

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Justice Department Signs Agreement with City of Atlanta to Ensure Civic Access for Persons with Disabilities

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department today announced an agreement with the city of Atlanta to improve access to all aspects of civic life for persons with disabilities. The agreement was reached under Project Civic Access (PCA), the department's wide-ranging initiative to ensure that cities, towns and counties throughout the country comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The department has conducted compliance reviews with certain localities in all 50 states, helping to improve the lives and broaden opportunities for millions of Americans with disabilities.

"Civic access is a basic and critical civil right, and it ensures individuals with disabilities can play productive, fulfilling roles in their communities," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. "City officials are to be commended for making this commitment to fulfill the ADA's promise of equal access to city programs and services."

PCA was initiated to ensure that persons with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in civic life, a fundamental part of American society. As part of the PCA initiative, Justice Department investigators, attorneys and architects survey state and local government facilities, programs and services in communities across the country to identify the modifications needed for compliance with ADA requirements. The agreements are tailored to address the steps each community must take to improve access. This agreement is the 174th under the PCA initiative and the 13th agreement reached this year.

"Like other communities throughout the United States, Atlanta still has some work to do to achieve full ADA compliance," said Assistant Attorney General Perez. "This agreement sets out a realistic plan with specific steps and reasonable timeframes for the city to get there."

Under the agreement announced today, the city of Atlanta will take several important steps to improve access for individuals with disabilities, such as:

- Making physical modifications to its facilities so that parking, entrances and routes into facilities, parking lots, public telephones, restrooms, service counters and drinking fountains are more accessible;
- Making specific modifications to improve access to city parks and tennis courts;
- Officially recognizing Georgia's telephone relay service and training staff to use the relay service to ensure effective communication for people who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Continuing to ensure that 9-1-1 emergency service calls placed by persons with disabilities who use text telephones (TTYs) are answered as quickly as other calls, that such calls are monitored for timing and accuracy, and that employees are trained and practiced in using a TTY to make and receive calls;
- Implementing a plan to improve the accessibility of city sidewalks and provide for the installation of accessible curb ramps throughout Atlanta;
- Ensuring that the city's official website is accessible to persons with disabilities, including individuals who are blind or have low vision;
- Ensuring equal access to emergency management services for persons with disabilities;
- Developing a method for providing information for interested persons with disabilities concerning the existence and location of the city's accessible services, activities and programs;
- Installing signs at inaccessible entrances to facilities directing persons with disabilities to accessible entrances;
- Posting, publishing and distributing a notice to inform members of the public of the ADA's provisions and their applicability to the city's programs, services and activities; and

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- Posting, publishing and distributing a notice to inform members of the public of the ADA's provisions and their applicability to the city's programs, services and activities; and
- Adopting a grievance procedure to deal with complaints of disability discrimination relating to city programs and services.

Today's settlement agreement was reached under Title II of the ADA, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities by state and local governments. The agreement will remain in effect for three years. The department will monitor compliance with the agreement until required actions have been completed.

Atlanta is the capital and most populous city in the state of Georgia. With a 2008 estimated population of 537,958, it is the urban core of one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the United States. According to Census data, more than 22 percent of people living in Atlanta are individuals with disabilities.

People interested in finding out more about the ADA, today's agreement, the Project Civic Access initiative, or the ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Governments can access the ADA home page at <http://www.ada.gov> or call the toll-free ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 or (800) 514-0383 (TDD).

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Civil Rights Division