



COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS CITY OF CHICAGO

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CCHR APPROVES UPDATED DISABILITY RIGHTS REGULATIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS FOR ALL INDIVIDUALS

Revised regulations align with ADA and provides clarity for businesses to become more accessible to people with all types of disabilities

The Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR) Board of Commissioners today approved updated disability rights regulations under the City's Chicago Human Rights Ordinance (CHRO). These newly revised regulations, effective July 1, 2017, are designed to improve citywide accessibility for all residents and visitors through added clarity to existing disability protections. These changes will, in turn, help businesses make their goods and services more accessible for people with all types of disabilities.

This latest action in a series of reforms and regulations by the Emanuel Administration is designed to ensure that people with disabilities can access the wide array of goods and services offered by Chicago businesses and fully enjoy the amenities our city has to offer.

"Our top priority is to ensure that Chicago is inclusive for all people, and these changes are intended to eliminate confusion on the law to make it easier for businesses to serve people with disabilities," said CCHR Chair and Commissioner Mona Noriega. "We believe the clarity will be embraced by businesses, and we are committed to working with them on implementation so they can better serve all of their patrons."

The revised regulations stand to improve citywide accessibility by spelling out what businesses must do to make their facilities, information, goods and services accessible to people with all types of disabilities. It does so, in large part, by adopting the requirements of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which have applied to these businesses since 1992.

The revised regulations specify requirements for businesses, including:

- Provide auxiliary aids and services where needed to ensure effective communication with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing. (I.e. these vary from customer to customer but include things such as sign language interpreters, captioning and use of TTY's and the telephone relay system);

- Allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities to into their establishments;
- Provide documents and other information in alternative formats – such as electronic formats, Braille or large print, when needed by people who are blind or have visual impairments;
- Remove any eligibility criteria that would screen out or tend to screen out people with disabilities who want to gain access to the goods and services they provide;
- And make reasonable modifications to their policies, practices and procedures to ensure that people with disabilities have access to their goods and services. (This may be as simple as reading a menu to a person who is blind, or providing assistance getting objects off high shelves.)

The ultimate goal of this CCHR initiative, developed in partnership with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), is to help make the City of Chicago more accessible for people with disabilities. By providing businesses with a clear and precise set of local rules that govern the actions of covered businesses, the City hopes to encourage greater compliance with the CHRO and to increase opportunities for businesses to work with customers with disabilities.

"The revised regulations supports our goal of ensuring every single person with a disability living in or visiting our city has the resources they need to enjoy the quality restaurants, retail and other services that makes Chicago a top destination to live and visit," said Karen Tamley, Commissioner to the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. "By making the laws easier to understand, our businesses stand to improve their service, and in turn, the likelihood for people with disabilities to live more independently."

To prepare for the launch of the revised regulations, the CCHR has been coordinating efforts with MOPD as well as the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) to reach as many businesses as possible. The revised regulations apply to retail stores, restaurants, theaters, service businesses and commercial entities citywide. Coupled with a comprehensive outreach campaign to help businesses understand and implement the new requirements, the CHRO will better serve residents with all needs, and will avoid adding new or contradictory regulatory burdens to businesses by aligning its mandates with the ADA.

For more information on the new regulations, please visit <http://www.cityofchicago.org/humanrelations>.

For technical assistance on this regulation and the corresponding requirements of the ADA, residents can contact the MOPD's Accessibility Compliance Unit at (312) 744-4441.

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