

Evolution of Federal Disability Legislation

1973-2016

A number of key pieces of federal legislation protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. Building on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the regulations that followed set the stage for legal requirements providing assistive technology (AT) devices and services and ensuring more equitable outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Rehab Act
1973



Rehabilitation Act 1973

Mandates accommodations in federally funded employment agencies and higher education facilities

Requires federal electronic information be accessible to people with disabilities

EHA
1975



Education for All Handicapped Children Act 1975

Holds state and local educational agencies accountable for providing educational services to students with disabilities

Ensures the legal rights of students with disabilities and their parents are protected

Tech Act
1988



Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act 1988

First law to define AT devices and services and promote the availability and quality of AT devices and services to all individuals

Provides states with federal funding to develop training and delivery systems for AT devices and services

Requires states to develop technology-related programs and services for individuals with disabilities of all ages

ADA
1990



American with Disabilities Act 1990

Provides civil rights to citizens with disabilities

Protects people with disabilities against discrimination including equal access to employment, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications

IDEA
1990



Individuals with Disabilities Act 1990

Ensures students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in a least restrictive environment monitored by an individualized education program or individualized family service plan

Tech Act
1998



Assistive Technology Act 1998

Extends federal funding to improve the provision of AT to individuals with disabilities

NCLB
2002



No Child Left Behind 2002

Protects students with disabilities from exclusion from accountability tests

Encourages testing accommodations, if necessary

AT Act
2004



Improve Access to Assistive Technology for Individuals with Disabilities Act 2004

Ensures continued existence of funding for assistive technology (removes annual reauthorization)

Requires states provide direct aid to individuals with disabilities to ensure they have access to technology they need

IDEIA
2004



Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004

Requires schools consider AT devices and services as part of a student's IEP to maximize accessibility

Mandates all children with disabilities residing in a state be identified, located, and evaluated for services

HEOC
2008



Higher Education Opportunity Act 2008

Requires education preparation programs include training on the integration of technology consistent with UDL principles

ESSA
2015



Every Student Succeeds Act 2015

Ensures access to the general education curriculum, accommodations on assessments, and concepts of UDL for students with disabilities

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