



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT



The signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990, marked the single greatest milestone in the civil rights movement for individuals with disabilities by granting people with disabilities equal access to opportunities offered all citizens.

In short, the ADA prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including:

- ★ jobs
- ★ schools
- ★ transportation
- ★ government services
- ★ all public and private places that are open to the general public

It's about more than physical access, however. The ADA signified a sea change in attitudes toward people with disabilities.



Justin Dart, father of the ADA, marching for civil rights with other people with disabilities.

“Before the ADA, they used to call us invalids. But we’re not invalids. We’re not in-valid. We are very valid.”

—Patrick Shivers, Tacoma, WA

The Law of the Land: Integration, Not Segregation

In a 1999 landmark lawsuit that tested the institutional bias of placing individuals with developmental disabilities into large congregate care facilities (*Olmstead v L.C.*), the Supreme Court held that under the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than in institutions.

At the time, Washington State was on the verge of signing in support of the state of Georgia, against the plaintiffs, until disability advocates rose up to demand that our state change its position. It did. And the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. *Olmstead* firmly established the ADA as the bedrock of disability rights throughout the country and here at home.

Almost everything we advocate for in Washington State is framed by the ADA and the *Olmstead* decision:

- ★ living in the community instead of institutions
- ★ earning livable wages in regular jobs instead of sheltered workshops
- ★ inclusive education, free from restraints and seclusion

Each of these areas continues to see debate and resistance as advocates push for public policies that adhere to the ADA. So, while we celebrate the achievements of the ADA, there is more work to do to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the same opportunities as all citizens.

DISABILITY RIGHTS ARE CIVIL RIGHTS