

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Designation of Responsible Person and Internal Grievance Procedure for the Supreme Court and State Courts System

I. Authority

Federal regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) require public entities with 50 or more employees to designate a responsible employee and adopt grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging noncompliance or complaints alleging any actions that would be prohibited under Title II of the ADA. (28 C.F.R. §35.107)

II. Intent and Purpose

It is the intent of the State Courts System to fully comply with the ADA and to assure equity, fairness, and full participation in the judicial system for persons with disabilities.

The purpose of this procedure is to establish a mechanism for resolving complaints without requiring the complainant to resort to federal complaint procedures. However, complainants would not be required to exhaust this grievance procedure before they could file a complaint at the federal level.

It is the intent of the State Courts System that complainants be consulted and advised, and that communications be maintained, at each step of the grievance process. It is further the intent of the State Courts System to engage alternative dispute resolution techniques whenever necessary and at any point in the grievance process.

III. Definitions

- A. *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*—Public Law 101-336, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.
- B. *ADA Coordinator*—Same as "*Responsible Employee*."

- C. *Disability or Persons with Disabilities*—With respect to an individual, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; a record of such impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment as defined in Public Law 101-336 and 28 C.F.R. §35.104.
- D. *Grievance*—A formal complaint made by a person, or on behalf of a person, alleging that he or she has been subjected to unlawful discrimination, or inaccessibility to facilities, programs, services, benefits, or activities on the basis of a disability.
- E. *Office of the General Counsel*—An operational division of the Office of the State Courts Administrator, Supreme Court of Florida, Tallahassee.
- F. *Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA)*—The administrative office of the Supreme Court of Florida, Tallahassee, which serves as the liaison between the Supreme Court and other court entities and other branches of government.
- G. *Responsible Employee*—An employee designated to coordinate a public entity's efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under Title II of the ADA. These responsibilities include any investigation and/or follow through of any complaint alleging noncompliance or alleging any actions that would be prohibited by Title II of the ADA.
- H. *State Courts System*—All Florida courts at both appellate and trial levels.
- I. *Title II*—The second section of the ADA that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in state and local government services.

IV. Designation of Responsible Person

The ADA coordinator for the State Courts System and the Supreme Court of Florida is:

Debbie Howells
Executive Assistant to the State Courts Administrator
Office of the State Courts Administrator
Supreme Court Building
500 S. Duval Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1900
Telephone: 850-922-4370
Email: ADA@flcourts.org

V. Grievances

A complaint shall contain the following minimum information:

- A. Name, address, and telephone number of the complainant on whose behalf the complaint is being made.
- B. The court facility in which the violation is alleged to have occurred.
- C. A complete statement of the grievance and the facts upon which it is based.
- D. The desired remedy or solution requested.
- E. The names of any witnesses who can provide supportive or relative information.

VI. Procedure for Grievances Relating to the Supreme Court or Office of the State Courts Administrator

- A. Filing
 - 1. Complaints must be filed with the ADA coordinator no later than one hundred eighty (180) days from the date of the alleged violation.
 - 2. The filing deadline may be extended upon a show of good cause.

B. Assessment and Determination of Team Members

1. The ADA coordinator will determine which function(s) of the court is at issue: facilities, programs, services, benefits, or activities.
2. The ADA coordinator will notify the appropriate justice, administrator(s), and Office of the General Counsel of the complaint.
3. A team consisting of the ADA coordinator, the administrator(s), and a member of the Office of the General Counsel shall address the complaint. Individual(s) who are charged in the complaint with alleged discriminatory conduct shall not be a member of the team.

C. Fact Finding

1. The team, or a member of the team, will review the complaint with the complainant.
2. The team, or a member of the team, will interview witnesses who can provide supportive or relative information and complete the fact finding.

D. Test of Legal Sufficiency

1. The team member representing the Office of the General Counsel will determine the legal sufficiency of the complaint.

E. Action

1. If a complaint is legally deficient, the complaint shall immediately be brought to closure.
2. If a complaint is legally sufficient, the team will establish a course of action to resolve the complaint.
3. To the extent necessary, the court will make reasonable modifications to its programs, services, benefits, and activities to ensure future compliance with the ADA.

4. The court may invoke the course of action described in the regulations implementing the ADA (28 C.F.R. §35.164) when modifications would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a service, program, or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens.

F. Closure, Notification, and Records Retention

1. The ADA coordinator shall communicate the results of the investigation and the chosen course of action to the complainant not later than thirty (30) working days from the date the complaint was filed.
2. A record of the grievance shall be maintained for three (3) years; the record shall be located with the Office of the General Counsel.

VII. Procedure for Grievances Relating to Trial Courts or District Courts of Appeal and Received by the ADA Coordinator

A. Filing

1. Complaints may be filed with the ADA coordinator no later than one hundred eighty (180) days from the date of the alleged discrimination.
2. The filing deadline may be extended upon a show of good cause.

B. Assessment and Referral

1. The ADA coordinator will determine which function(s) of the court is at issue: facilities, programs, services, benefits, or activities.
2. The ADA coordinator will notify the chief judge of the appropriate trial court or district court of appeal within three working days of receiving the complaint.
3. The ADA coordinator will notify the Office of the General Counsel of the complaint.

C. Observation of Local Grievance Procedure

1. The grievance procedure adopted by the trial court or district court of appeal involved in the complaint shall be invoked.

D. Role of the Office of the State Courts Administrator

1. The ADA coordinator and the Office of the General Counsel shall be available upon request to assist the trial court or district court of appeal receiving the referral.

E. Closure, Notification, and Records Retention

1. The court receiving the complaint shall communicate the results of the investigation and the chosen course of action directly to the complainant.
2. The court receiving the complaint shall communicate the results of the investigation and the chosen course of action to the ADA coordinator not later than thirty (30) working days from the date the complaint was filed.
3. Notwithstanding records retention at the local level, a record of the grievance shall be maintained for three years; the record shall be located in the Office of the General Counsel.

Adopted in January 1993.

Modified in August 2007 to ensure electronic accessibility and to reflect current contact information.