



Department of Justice

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Justice Department Reaches Settlement with District of Columbia Over City's Homeless Shelter Program

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department announced today announced a settlement with the District of Columbia to improve accessibility for individuals with disabilities in the City's homeless shelter program under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

"This agreement will ensure that the homeless shelter program in the nation's capital is accessible to individuals with disabilities," said Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Justice Department is committed to continued vigorous enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act."

The terms of the settlement require the District to increase the accessibility of its shelter program by:

- Developing a comprehensive plan to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to the District's homeless shelter facilities;
- Implementing specific policies, practices and training to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equivalent access to all services and activities of the shelter program;
- Improving notice and procedures to ensure that shelter applicants and residents are aware of their rights under the ADA;
- Enhancing effective communication with shelter applicants and residents who have disabilities related to speech, vision or hearing; and
- Enhancing oversight of private contractors and subcontractors that provide homeless shelter services in the District;

As part of the settlement, the District must take public comments on the plan, hold at least one public hearing and then submit the plan to the Department for final approval. The District is also required to take interim steps to enhance the accessibility of shelter facilities while the plan is under development.

The Justice Department initiated its investigation after receiving complaints alleging widespread ADA violations in the District's shelter program. According to a January 2008 survey conducted by a contractor who administers the District's shelter program, 23 percent of the District's homeless residents have a physical disability, 19 percent have a severe mental illness, and two percent have HIV or AIDS.

More information about this settlement and the ADA is available at the Justice Department's toll-free ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 or (800) 514-0383 (TTY), and via the ADA Web site at <http://www.ada.gov>.

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