



Public Accessibility Policy (Section 504)

Section: Governance and Operations	Attachment(s):
Policy #:	
Effective Date: May 15, 2018	
Adoption Date: September 9, 2017	
Revision Dates: May 15, 2018	
Issuing Department: Centre County Planning and Community Development Office	
Responsible Officer: Centre County Administrator or Designee	
Required Policy Review Period: Every five (5) years	

Section 1: Policy Statement

Centre County Government, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, codified as 29 U.S.C. 794, as amended in 1974, Section 111, Pub L. 93-516, 88 Stat. 1619 (Dec. 7, 1974); and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 36.202(c), will promote the elimination of discrimination on the basis of disability.

Section 2: Overview

Section 504 protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination by a local government receiving federal financial assistance.

A qualified individual with a disability is defined in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as “an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity.”

A disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities include: caring for one’s self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, and learning.

Section 3: Provisions

To promote an environment supportive of individuals with disabilities, Centre County Government will provide:

- Program Accessibility -- No one may be denied access solely by reason of disability;

- Program Benefits -- Benefits may not be denied solely because of disability;
- No Support to Discrimination -- Provide no assistance or support to entities that discriminate;
- Equal Rights and Privileges -- Disabled individuals may not be denied equal treatment;
- Physically Accessible Sites -- Programs, activities, and workplaces must be physically accessible;
- Public Accommodations -- Service dogs who are accompanied by an individual with a disability will be allowed, as long as the service dog does not disturb the actual (not perceived) ability of County staff to provide their service.
- Administrative Accommodations -- Alternatives or modifications will be made as needed and as authorized by the Board of Commissioners.

Section 4: Procedures

a. Designation of a Section 504 Officer

The Board of Commissioners of Centre County designates the County Risk Manager as the Section 504 Officer to oversee Centre County Government's compliance efforts through the following phases.

b. Self-Evaluation

Centre County Government will complete a self-evaluation of facilities, administrative practices, and employment practices ("Report"). This Report will include all facilities owned, leased, borrowed or rented by Centre County Government in which the County conducts services and programs. The evaluation team will involve a person with a disability to accurately reflect the needs of disabled individuals. Following review and acceptance by the Board of Commissioners, the Report will be made available upon request.

c. Modifications of Policies and Practices

If the Report finds that existing policies and practices negatively affect individuals with disabilities, Centre County Government will modify the appropriate policy or practice to prevent discrimination.

d. Transition Plan

In the event that Centre County Government's facilities and programs cannot be made accessible by making administrative or programmatic changes, structural changes may be necessary. A transition plan ("Plan") outlining those changes will be developed and reported to the Board of Commissioners. The Plan will identify steps required to complete the structural modifications, a schedule of implementation for the modifications, and estimated budgetary expenses for the modifications. Before work commences, the Board of Commissioners will formally approve the Plan and take whatever action may be required under the County Code to implement the modifications.

e. Longevity

Upon acceptance of the Report and completion of the Plan (if any), the Centre County Risk Manager will report to the Board of Commissioners that the County is in compliance with the Report and Plan and such modifications/changes will remain in effect until such time that a County facility or process changes

or a change in law, either of which necessitates another self-evaluation as determined by the Board of Commissioners. This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years.

f. Filing a Complaint

Any person who believes that he or she has been discriminated against or any representative of such a person is afforded the opportunity to file a complaint with the County.

Verbal communication with the County department head responsible for the objectionable program, service or facility is the first step in this process. Should verbal communication not be successful, a complaint may be filed in writing to the County Administrator using the Centre County Accessibility Complaint Form.

The Centre County Accessibility Complaint Policy provides for the timely, respectful and thorough review of a complaint upon receipt of a fully completed Centre County Accessibility Complaint Form. Directions for submittal of a written complaint are included on the Accessibility Complaint Form.

The form is available on the County website <http://www.centrecountypa.gov/> and from the County Administrator or Designated 504 Officer at the following address:

Centre County Government
420 Holmes Street
Bellefonte, PA 16823

Email: accessibility@centrecountypa.gov Phone: 814-355-6700

Section 5: Definitions

Accessible: Refers to a site, facility, work environment, service, or program that is easy to approach, enter, operate, participate in, and/or use safely and with dignity by a person with a disability.

Service animal: Any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability and is under their direct control.

Section 6: Related Policies / Forms / Documents:

Accessibility Complaint Policy and Accessibility Complaint Form

Centre County Language Access Policy

Repealer:

All prior policies and/or directives or parts of policies and/or directives that are contrary to the provisions of this policy are hereby repealed to give this policy full force and effect.