

# GETTING THE CARE YOU NEED

A Guide for  
People with  
Disabilities





# Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Understanding your rights                              | 2  |
| Work with your provider to get the care you need       | 5  |
| What to do if you experience difficulties              | 6  |
| For more information                                   | 7  |
| Appointment Checklist<br>— Scheduling your appointment | 8  |
| Before your appointment                                | 10 |
| During your appointment                                | 11 |
| After your appointment                                 | 12 |
| Your questions   | 13 |

# Getting the Care You Need

## A Guide for People with Disabilities

**Did you know** health care providers are required to offer everyone access to medical services without discrimination on the basis of disability?

You have the right to access **the same medical services as everyone else.**

**This means providers:**

- Shouldn't deny you medical care or services because buildings, exam rooms, or equipment aren't accessible.
- Should give you information in a way you understand.



## You have the right to **reasonable modifications, auxiliary aids, and services.**

### This means providers must:

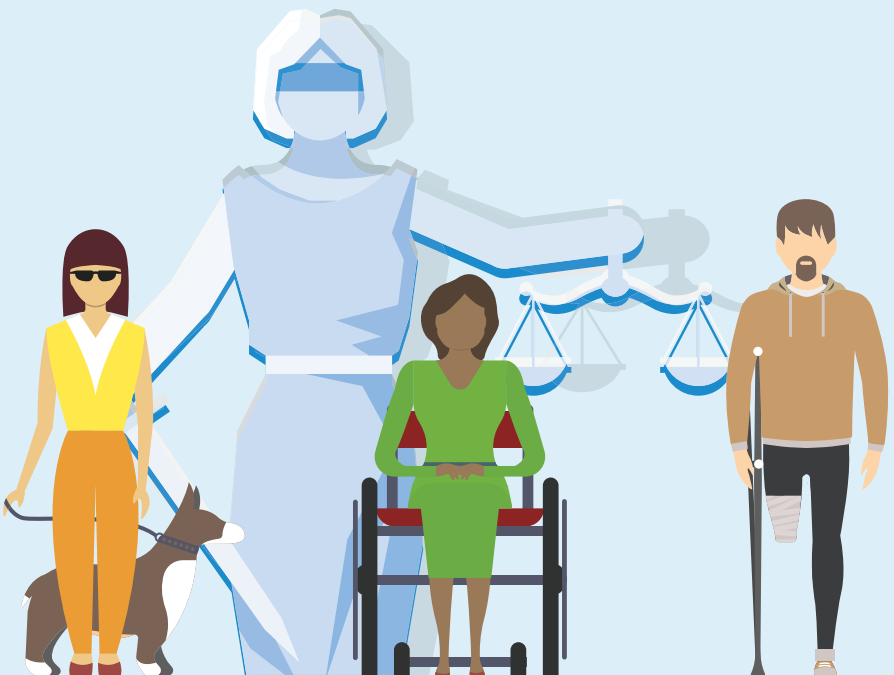
- Provide qualified sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices, or materials in braille or large print.
- Allow a service animal into the inpatient and exam rooms. (Here, a service animal means any dog that is trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.)



## Federal laws **protect your rights** and **prohibit discrimination.**

This means providers aren't allowed to:

- Refuse to serve you, or make you wait longer, just because you have a disability.
- Require you to bring someone to help with interpreting, reading, or other types of assistance.
- Charge you extra fees for braille translation or sign language interpretation.



## Work with your provider to get the care you need.

- **When you make an appointment,** tell the scheduler about your needs for the appointment.
- **At the start of your appointment,** remind staff about your needs. You can ask your provider to make simple changes in the way they interact with you. For example, if you are blind, you may ask your provider to describe what is happening during the exam and give you verbal cues before touching you.
- **During your appointment,** let your provider know about any problems you're experiencing. If you don't feel comfortable doing that, you can let them know in writing or over the phone.



## What to do if you **experience difficulties.**

- **Tell your provider or the office manager** about the issues you experienced and discuss what staff can do to meet your needs.
- **Keep a written or electronic record** of your concerns.
- If you have Medicare and/or Medicaid coverage and you feel a provider treated you unfairly because of your disability, you may **file an anonymous discrimination complaint.**





## For more information about filing an **anonymous discrimination complaint:**

- Call the HHS Office for Civil Rights toll-free **(800) 368-1019** or TDD toll-free **(800) 537-7697**  
Visit: <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr>
- Mail your complaint to:  
**U.S. Department of Health & Human Services,  
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 509F,  
HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201**

## For information about **Medicare bills or claims:**

- Visit **Medicare.gov** or call **1-800-Medicare** (1-800-633-4227).  
TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048



# Getting the Care You Need

## Appointment Checklist for People with Disabilities

**Use this checklist** on the following pages to help you get the care you need before, during, and after your appointment.

### Scheduling your appointment.

**When you call to schedule your appointment,** tell the scheduler about your needs for the appointment and ask what to expect. This will help you and your provider get ready for the appointment.

If the scheduler you talk to isn't located in your provider's office, you can call your provider's office directly to discuss your needs and ask what to expect.

If you choose to schedule your appointment online, try to describe what you'll need in the online form, or follow up with a phone call.



## Scheduling your appointment.

- What can I expect during my appointment?
- How will I get the specific assistance I'll need?  
For example, "I have trouble moving to an exam table, so I'll need help."
- Can I schedule extra time for my appointment?
- How will I access the building, office, exam rooms, bathrooms, scales and equipment?
- What options are available for transportation and parking?
- Is there someone available to assist me when I arrive at the building?
- What forms will I need to fill out, and can I fill them out before my appointment? Are these forms provided in accessible formats?
- What's the best way for me to record what I discuss with my provider? Will a visit summary be provided in an accessible format, or can I use a recording device during the appointment?

## Before your appointment.

**It's important to come prepared** for your appointment. Some things you can do to prepare for your appointment are:

- Write down or record any questions you want to ask your provider.
- Bring your insurance card, a list of your medications and their dosages, and the contact information for your pharmacy and other providers.
- Decide how you'll get to your appointment, and make plans with anyone going to the appointment with you.
- Check the availability of accessible parking, or if you're taking public transit, check the route from your stop to the provider's office.
- Bring a notebook or recorder, or ask a family member or support person to come with you and take notes.

## During your appointment.

**Even when you come prepared**, sometimes things don't go according to plan, or unexpected problems arise.

When this happens, it's important to tell someone. Your provider and the office staff may be able to make changes so you get the care you need. You may find it helpful to:

- Remind staff of the assistance you requested before your appointment.
- Ask for any kind of reasonable modification you may need (like recording the appointment or other auxiliary aids and services).
- Tell someone if you're being asked to do something that's difficult for you.
- Be direct, honest, and specific when telling your provider about your health concerns.
- Ask the questions you brought with you.
- Repeat back what the provider tells you in your own words to make sure you understand.
- Write down or record any new information or next steps, or have your family member or support person take notes.

## After your appointment.

**Follow up with your provider** about any concerns you have that weren't taken care of during your appointment. You may want to ask about:

- Getting a visit summary in an accessible format.
- Any next steps or follow-up appointments your provider recommends.
- How and when to take any new medications.

If you feel you didn't get fair treatment during your visit because you're a person with a disability, you can speak to the office manager.

**If you need to take further action** and have Medicare or Medicaid coverage, you may file a complaint online with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office for Civil Rights (OCR) by: visiting <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr>, calling OCR toll-free **(800) 368-1019** (TDD toll-free (800) 537-7697), or mailing your complaint to **U.S. Department of Health & Human Services**: 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 509F, HHH Building Washington, DC 20201

## Your questions

Question 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Question 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Question 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Your other providers

Provider name, practice name, and phone number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Provider name, practice name, and phone number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Provider name, practice name, and phone number:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Your medications

Medication name and dosage:

\_\_\_\_\_

Medication name and dosage:

\_\_\_\_\_

Medication name and dosage:

\_\_\_\_\_

[go.cms.gov/omh](https://go.cms.gov/omh)

Revised Jan 2020

*Paid for by the U.S. Department  
of Health & Human Services*

