



About the Board's Proposed Standards for Medical Diagnostic Equipment

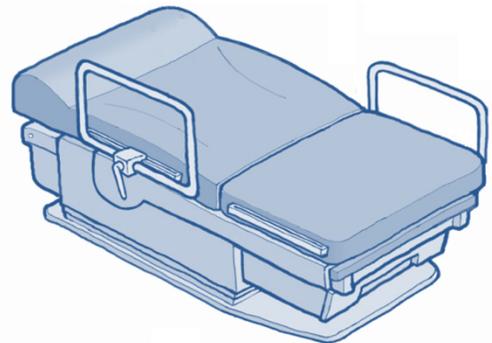
Provided here are answers to common questions about the Access Board's development of new accessibility standards for medical diagnostic equipment, including a proposed version of the standards recently made available for public comment.

Why is the Board developing these standards?

Access to diagnostic equipment has been problematic for people with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids. To address this issue, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 included a provision that called upon the Access Board to prepare access standards for such equipment. The Board, a leading resource on accessible design, has a long history of developing guidelines and standards under various laws that address access to the built environment, information and communication technology, and transit systems.

What do the standards address?

The proposed standards provide design criteria for various types of accessible diagnostic equipment, including examination tables and chairs, weight scales, radiological equipment, and mammography equipment. The proposed standards address equipment that requires transfer from wheelchairs and other mobility aids and include requirements for transfer surfaces, support rails, armrests, compatibility with lift devices, and other features. Equipment that accommodates mobility aids is also covered.



How were the standards developed?

The Board drew upon relevant provisions in its ADA Accessibility Guidelines for buildings and facilities as a basis for the proposed standards, but also consulted available research, industry standards, and other resources. In addition, the Board held a public meeting in July 2010 to gather additional information and input from stakeholders and experts that included demonstrations of diagnostic equipment. The Board prepared the proposed standards in consultation with the Food and Drug Administration and other agencies.

What are the next steps in finalizing the standards?

The Board will review the comments received and finalize the standards based on this input. To enhance outside collaboration and promote consensus, the Board will organize an advisory committee representing stakeholder groups to provide guidance to the Board on how the standards should be finalized. The committee will include representation from disability groups, equipment manufacturers, health care providers, standard-setting organizations, and other interested parties. The Board will issue a notice in coming weeks inviting applications from those interested in serving on the committee. All committee meetings will be open to the public.

Who is required to comply with these standards?

The standards for diagnostic equipment, as issued by the Board, will not be mandatory on health care providers or equipment manufacturers. The Department of Justice (DOJ) may adopt the standards to address access to health care services and facilities under the ADA. The Board is consulting with DOJ in the development of the standards. However, any action by DOJ to adopt the standards as requirements will occur separately from the Board's rulemaking.

Doesn't the ADA already require access for individuals with disabilities to health care?

The ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibit discrimination based on disability and require access to services and facilities, including health care. Health care providers must provide individuals with disabilities full and equal access to health care services and facilities, according to DOJ, which regulates and enforces key requirements of the ADA. DOJ, in cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services, previously issued ADA and Section 504 guidance on access to medical care that includes information on accessible medical diagnostic equipment. This guidance is available on DOJ's website at www.ada.gov. DOJ may adopt the Board's standards, once finalized, in its ADA implementing regulations to establish mandatory requirements for health care providers for accessible medical diagnostic equipment for ADA purposes.

How can I get further updates on the Board's standards for diagnostic equipment?

Those interested in this rulemaking can sign up to receive email updates on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov. Additional information will be posted on the Board's website as it becomes available. Questions should be directed to Earlene Sesker at sesker@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0022 (v), or (202) 272-0091 (TTY).