

Asking for a Disability Accommodation

To get help in court because of a disability, ask as far ahead of your court date as you can. To ask:

- Use the “Accommodation Request” form, when possible;
 - You can get the form from a clerk or the Judicial Branch website at www.courts.maine.gov/ada. Give the form to the clerk or email it to accessibility@courts.maine.gov or mail it to the Court Access Office.
- Email accessibility@courts.maine.gov; or
- Call the Court Access Office at 207-822-0718 (Maine Relay 711).

When asking for help because of your disability, include:

- That you have a disability and what it is;
- your court date and the court where your case is located;
- the exact help you need; and
- why you need that kind of help.

Do not send any medical records or medical documents to court until asked.

You will be asked for medical information only if needed to decide reasonable accommodations. Any medical information that is given will be kept confidential and shared only as needed to make an accommodation decision or as required by law.

Animals in Court

Service animals are welcome in Maine state courts. A service animal is a dog, or can be a miniature horse, that has been trained to do work or perform specific tasks for a person with

a disability. Pets are not allowed in the courthouse. Dogs providing comfort, therapy, or emotional support are not service animals required to be admitted by the ADA, because they are not trained to do specific work or tasks for a person with a disability. Comfort, therapy, and emotional support dogs will be admitted into the courthouse only as an accommodation if requested in advance by contacting the Court Access Office or the Court and when approved by the judge.

Jury Service for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities are encouraged to participate in jury service and, because of the importance of jury service to our system of justice, are not automatically excused from jury service.

A person with a disability who is contacted for jury service may request a reasonable accommodation by writing their request on their jury qualification questionnaire or the disability accommodation request form, by calling the clerk’s office, or by contacting the Court Access Office.

A person with a disability may request to be excused from service by contacting the clerk’s office and providing a doctor’s note or other supporting documentation from a medical provider to be excused from jury service.

Contact

**Administrative Office of the Courts
Court Access Office**

P.O. Box 4820, Portland, ME 04112-0792
accessibility@courts.maine.gov
(207) 822-0718 or Maine Relay 711

For more information about accommodations for people with disabilities, visit www.courts.maine.gov/ada

Court Services for People with Disabilities: How to Ask for Accommodations



www.courts.maine.gov

The Maine State Courts and the ADA

The Maine state courts respect your rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA). Every courthouse has accessible parking, routes, courtrooms, and restrooms for people using personal mobility devices like walkers, manual wheelchairs, and powered wheelchairs.

The Maine Judicial Branch will also assist people with disabilities so that they can be in, and use, the courts effectively and meaningfully. Courts will arrange for aids and services at no cost to people with disabilities so that they can access their court events. The courts can also modify (adjust) court practices, within reason, to help a person because of their disability. This help is also known as “reasonable accommodation” or “disability accommodation.”

Who Can Get Disability Accommodations?

The court can arrange for aids or services or modify court practices for a person who has a **physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities, like walking, seeing, hearing, or speaking.**

Access to Court Facilities

The court promises access to courthouse parking, entry, courtrooms, and restrooms. Please contact the clerk or Court Access Office at accessibility@courts.maine.gov or 207-822-0718 (Maine Relay 711) with questions about coming to the court in person.

If you believe you are not able to appear in court **in person** because of your disability, you may ask the court to attend by Zoom or phone. To do this you need to fill out the form Motion for Alternative Format for Court Proceeding (MJB form CR-CV-FM-260), provide a copy of the completed form to the other parties in your case, and file it with the clerk (either in person or by mail) **before** the date of your court event.

If you believe you are not able to appear in court **on your court date**, for any reason including medical reasons, you may ask the court to postpone your court date. To do this you need to fill out the form Motion to Continue (MJB form CR-CV-FM-JV-PA-PC-286), provide a copy of the completed form to the other parties in your case, and file it with the clerk (either in person or by mail) before the date of your court event.

Forms are available on the Maine Judicial Branch website or from any clerk’s office.

Aids and Services

Aids and services for the court may include:

Devices to help you hear, known as “assistive listening”—please ask a clerk or marshal about accessing these devices when you arrive;

Formats like large print, Braille, digital, or audio;

Captioning for court events, by Computer Access Real-time Translation (CART) or closed captioning [CC];

Sign language interpreters; and

Permission to use a personal support person.

How Much Help You Can Get in Court

Courts will provide reasonable accommodations and make reasonable modifications to its services, but the law does **not** require the Judicial Branch to act in a way that would:

- Change the nature of court services;
- cost too much;
- be too hard to put in place, or could not be put in place; or
- change what the law requires in a case.

Even for people with disabilities, the courts:

- **Do not** have attorney services, do not do legal research, do not give legal advice, and do not give legal interpretation;
- **do not** have wheelchairs, hearing aids, and eyeglasses or other personal equipment;
- **do not** assemble wheelchairs, do not help with pushing wheelchairs, cannot adjust personal hearing aids, and cannot provide other personal attendant care;
- **do not** give rides to and from the courthouse or other personal services;
- **do not** have readers for personal use or study;
- **cannot** postpone the date of a court event, by way of a written “motion to continue,” more than once without **compelling** good cause shown; and
- **cannot** extend deadlines set by law.