

Justice Department Reaches Settlement with Blockbuster Inc. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act

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WASHINGTON ([rushPRnews](#))
07/19/10 — The Justice Department today announced a settlement agreement under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with Blockbuster Inc. to ensure equal access to its stores nationwide for individuals with disabilities who use service

animals.

The settlement agreement, which resolves a complaint filed under title III of the ADA by an individual with a disability, requires, among other things, that Blockbuster provide comprehensive training to employees at more than 3,000 retail stores throughout the United States to ensure individuals with disabilities who use service animals have full and equal enjoyment of its goods, services and facilities.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees equal access to individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by service animals, but too often those individuals are subject to discrimination because of misperceptions or a lack of understanding of the law,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division.

The agreement, which will remain in effect for three years, requires that Blockbuster:

- Implement a comprehensive nationwide nondiscrimination policy regarding service animals for people with disabilities;
- Distribute the policy and train employees across the United States on the rights of service animal users and employee obligations to ensure full and equal access to Blockbuster goods, services and facilities;
- Provide the same training to new staff during the hiring process;
- Post its service animal policy on its website and in its stores, and post a “Service Animals Welcome” sign in each of its stores;
- Create a toll-free ADA complaint line;
- Establish, implement, and monitor a grievance procedure for ADA-related complaints from customers;
- Pay \$12,000 in damages to the individual who filed the complaint resolved by this settlement; and
- Pay \$10,000 as a civil penalty.

A service animal is individually trained to work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Service animals – most commonly dogs – perform a wide variety of functions. Examples of these functions include guiding persons who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are

deaf or hard of hearing to sounds, warning persons about impending seizures or other medical conditions, performing a variety of tasks for persons with psychiatric disabilities, and picking up items, opening doors, flipping switches, providing physical support and pulling wheelchairs for individuals with mobility disabilities



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Title III of the ADA prohibits discrimination by retail stores, restaurants, hotels, taxi and bus companies, doctors, hospitals and other private businesses and nonprofit organizations that provide services to the public. Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination by public entities, including state

and local governments and public transportation providers. All of these entities are prohibited from excluding individuals with disabilities from their facilities, services and programs because the individuals use service animals. If any of these entities has a rule excluding pets or other animals, it must make an exception to that rule and permit an individual with a disability to be accompanied by a service animal anywhere on the premises that other customers are permitted to go.

“The ADA’s 20th anniversary is July 26, 2010,” said Assistant Attorney General Perez. “As we celebrate the anniversary of this landmark civil rights law, we are pleased that Blockbuster has affirmed its commitment to ensuring that individuals with disabilities benefit fully and equally from its goods, facilities, and services, including individuals who use service animals.”

More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at the website www.justice.gov/crt . More information about this agreement, the ADA, and ADA rights and responsibilities relating to service animals is available on the ADA home page at www.ada.gov . This information includes two publications specifically addressing access for individuals accompanied by service animals: “ADA Business Brief: Service Animals” and “Commonly Asked Questions About Service Animals in Places of Business.” Those interested in obtaining copies of these documents or additional information may also call the Justice Department’s toll-free ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

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