

# A SHORT HISTORY OF LEGISLATION AFFECTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## **1964 Civil Rights Act:**

In 1964, Hubert Humphrey proposed that people with disabilities should be a protected class along with racial and ethnic minorities under the Civil Rights Act. In order to receive the votes needed for the act to pass, however, people with disabilities were excluded. Even though the final law did not include people with disabilities, disability rights became a national issue for the first time.

## **1973 Rehabilitation Act:**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 has been amended several times to reflect changing attitudes and service needs. Part of the 1973 Act, Section 504, prohibits agencies or organizations that receive federal funds from discriminating against qualified individuals solely on the basis of disability.

## **1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act:**

Until the Education for All Handicapped Children Act passed in 1975, children with disabilities had no specific legal rights to an education. Although some states required services for some students with disabilities, many students were not permitted to attend school at all.

## **1984 The Carl Perkins Act:**

The Carl Perkins Act of 1984 states that schools must inform parents of vocational education opportunities by the time their child is in ninth grade and that students with disabilities shall receive vocational assessments, special services, and career and transition counseling.

## **1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 gives civil rights protection to people with disabilities. It guarantees equal opportunity in:

- Employment
- Private businesses and nonprofit agencies
- Transportation
- State and local government operations
- Telecommunications

**1997 IDEA 1997:**

While retaining the rights that have been included in the law since 1975, IDEA '97 emphasizes outcomes for students with disabilities. The strategy in the '97 amendments involves raising expectations for students, supporting students in general curriculum, supporting parents, and helping states determine outcomes. With the focus on outcomes, school-to-work transition planning gains new importance in IDEA '97.

**1998 The Workforce Investment Act:**

The Workforce Investment Act focuses on meeting the training, education, and employment needs of businesses for skilled workers. It incorporates all work-related programs for all jobseekers (with or without disabilities) at one-stop career centers. These are called Workforce Centers and can meet many job-training needs in an integrated setting.

**2001 New Freedom Initiative:**

President Bush announced the New Freedom Initiative on February 1, 2001, as part of a nationwide effort to remove barriers to community living for people with disabilities. The New Freedom Initiative is a comprehensive plan to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work, make choices about their daily lives and participate fully in community life. The initiative's specific proposals include: promoting full access to community life through swift implementation of the Olmstead Supreme Court Decision; integrating Americans with disabilities into the workforce through implementation of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWWIA); and the creation of the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health.