What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?
The ADA is a federal civil rights law that assures full civil rights to individuals with disabilities, including access to and accommodations in child care settings.

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What exactly does the ADA require child care programs to do?

The ADA requires that child care programs consider making changes in three aspects of their programs.

First, they must make reasonable accommodations and modifications in their policies, practices, and procedures in order to accommodate the individual with a disability unless the modification would fundamentally alter the nature of the program and there are no reasonable alternatives.

Examples of modifications might include:
- Eliminating prohibitions against serving children with disabilities in admission policies; or
- Providing alternative foods at lunch and snack time for children with certain food allergies.

Secondly, child care programs must provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services for effective communication with children with disabilities, when doing so would not constitute an undue financial burden.

Examples of auxiliary aids and services might include:
- Creating a picture schedule; or
- Learning some sign language.

Finally, architectural barriers which prevent access to services must be removed if removal is readily achievable. Readily achievable means easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense.

Examples of barrier removal might include:
- Installing grab bars in toilet stalls; or
- Rearranging tables and chairs to allow a child in a wheelchair to participate in child care.