

Major Win in NYPD Access Case

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In 2016, Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York (DIA) signed onto a lawsuit against the NYPD (New York City Police Dept.) over access to their station houses.

The suit states that of the 77 precinct stations operated by the police department, the majority “contain one or more architectural barriers to people who use wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility devices.”

The suit also contends that “police stations are not merely centers for issues concerning response to criminal activity, but also act as a hub for a wide range of community affairs.” Ignoring this lack of access to police stations denies the rights of people with disabilities to an important part of their community.

Some of the barriers cited in the complaint include steps at entrances, stairs as the only access to upper floors, unreasonable or unsafe alternate routes, absence of signage for alternative routes and bathrooms that are not ADA compliant and are inaccessible for wheelchair users.

After more than three years, Federal Judge Valerie Caproni has ruled in a partial summary judgment that the NYPD has “made little progress eliminating physical barriers to access to NYPD’s police stations.” While the judge praised the NYPD for taking steps toward making its station houses accessible since the lawsuit was filed, she found it “inexplicable” that the NYPD has not sought “input from critical stakeholders” in the disability community.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees people with disabilities the right to state and local government programs. The ADA was passed 30 years ago and there is clearly no reason why a public space, like a police precinct, is not accessible to all citizens.

Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) is the law firm representing Disabled In Action (DIA), the Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled (BCID) and several individuals in this lawsuit. In a press release on the DRA website, they say “the ruling requires that any remedy to the inaccessibility of precinct stations include the input of the disability community. The plaintiffs and the NYPD must meet and submit a joint letter by March 12, 2020, describing their efforts to reach a solution.”

Here Is The Point

Disabled In Action was created in 1970 because a young college graduate sued New York City to open its doors to a teacher with a disability. Today, 50 years later we still need to sue the City for equal access to police precinct houses.

DIA has been in this fight for a long time. We filed the first ADA Title III lawsuit in 1992. In addition to the NYPD access suit, we are currently in court with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority on several access issues and just won a federal lawsuit guaranteeing that New York City will finish building and properly maintain all of its curb cuts.

To the young members of this community who believe the fight for equal rights is done, it is time to wake up and read *Able News* and a few other newspapers. There are lots of places that will not become accessible unless we demand it. Gov. Cuomo will continue to target this community with budget cuts aimed at consumer directed personal assistance and serve his big money donors in the nursing home industry. It's time to get informed, get involved or get left out.