

U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE SETTLES ADA CASE

WITH CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT ON AGING

Deirdre M. Daly, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that the U.S. Attorney's Office has reached a settlement with Connecticut's State Department on Aging to ensure equal access for individuals with disabilities, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA").

The agreement resolves an ADA complaint filed by an individual who is deaf, alleging that the State Department on Aging failed to provide effective communication during certain programs and meetings by failing to make available sign language interpreters or appropriate auxiliary aids. The State Department on Aging is working cooperatively with the Department of Justice to develop and amend its policies and practices to ensure compliance with the ADA and the Department of Justice's implementing regulations.

"Individuals who have disabilities must not be denied equal access to the services offered by the State of Connecticut due to their disability," said U.S. Attorney Daly. "The State Department on Aging has fully cooperated with our investigation, which confirms the Agency's commitment to ensure equal access to its program and services for all customers including those with disabilities. We commend the Department for voluntarily agreeing to enter this settlement agreement and ensuring effective communication with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing."

The ADA requires "public entities," including state and municipal agencies, to ensure effective communication with qualified individuals with disabilities. Under this agreement, a person who is deaf or hard of hearing will be able to benefit from the same services as every other person. For individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, auxiliary aids include qualified sign language or oral interpreters, use of relay services, computer-assisted real time transcription, and, for simple communications, the exchange of written notes.

The settlement agreement requires the State Department on Aging to develop and amend its policies, practices and training to ensure interpreter services are provided to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Specifically, it requires the Department to:

- Ensure its policies and practices are nondiscriminatory, and provide effective communication for people with communication disabilities, including the provision of sign language interpreters

- Post a notice of the policy in public areas

- Train staff on the policies

- Ensure that appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including qualified interpreters, and specifically tactile interpreters, are made available to all individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing

Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of discrimination can file a complaint with the U.S. Attorney's Office at 203-821-3700, or by visiting www.ada.gov. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at www.justice.gov/crt. Additional information about the ADA can be found at www.ada.gov, or by calling the Department's toll-free information line at (800) 514-0301 and (800) 514-0383 (TDD).

This matter was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ndidi N. Moses with the assistance of the Disability Rights Section of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division.

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