



## Disability History Timeline

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*This timeline is designed to give a 'highlights' view of some events in disability history. It does not include everything that has happened in disability history and, as we know, history is being made every day.*

### 1935

A group in New York City called the League for the Physically Handicapped formed to protest discrimination by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA was a government program to help people get jobs. The league's 300 people -- most disabled by polio and cerebral palsy -- all had been turned down for WPA jobs. The Home Relief Bureau of New York City was supposed to forward their job requests to the WPA, but was stamping all their applications 'PH' for physically handicapped, as a signal to the WPA not to give these people jobs. Members of the League sat in (held a protest by refusing to leave) the Home Relief Bureau building for nine days and went to the WPA headquarters and held a weekend sit-in there. They won a few thousand jobs nationwide for people with disabilities.

### 1939

During World War II Hitler orders widespread "mercy killing" of the sick and disabled. The Nazi euthanasia program was code-named Aktion T4 and was instituted to eliminate "life unworthy of life." Hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities were killed by their doctors and in concentration camps.

### 1941 (August)

Hitler suspends Aktion T4, which had accounted for nearly 100,000 deaths by this time. However, the euthanasia program quietly continued using drugs and starvation instead of gassings.

### 1970

Ed Roberts, the first student with a disability to attend UC Berkley, and his peers at Cowell (UC Berkeley Health Center) formed a group called the Rolling Quads. The Rolling Quads form the first Disabled Students' Program on the U.C. Berkeley campus.

### 1971

Ed Roberts and his associates establish a Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Berkeley, CA for the community at large. The goal of the Center was to help other people with disabilities live in the community. The center was originally in a roach-infested two-bedroom apartment until the Rehabilitation Administration gave them a \$50,000 grant in 1972.

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### **1973**

The Rehabilitation Act was passed by Congress. Part of the law said that if a program got any kind of money from the government, it had to be accessible to people with disabilities. This part was called Section 504. The Rehab Act also gave money to fund Centers for Independent Living in different states based on the way the Center in Berkeley's did its work. The only problem was that the government passed this Act but did not set up policies and procedures (ways to make sure the things described in the law were happening).

### **1975**

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) was passed. This Act gave children with disabilities the right to go to public school to be educated. In the past 30 years, millions of disabled children have been educated under its rules, radically changing the lives of people in the disability community. Students and parents still fight every day to keep this right.

In 1990, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) was amended and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which is what we call it today.

### **1976**

In his election campaign, candidate Jimmy Carter promised that his administration would sign regulations that had received extensive input from affected agencies and the disability community nationwide and which had taken years to finalize.

The Federal Communications Commission authorized reserving Line 21 on television sets for closed captions.

### **April 5, 1977**

Sit-ins, a protest in which people go into a building and refuse to leave, began in ten cities across the country to get rules in place for making sure Section 504 was happening. A group of disabled people took over the San Francisco offices of the Health, Education,

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and Welfare Department to protest Secretary Joseph Califano's refusal to sign meaningful regulations and rules for Section 504. No one expected to live there for almost a month, but they did. The action became the longest sit-in of a federal building in history.

### **April 28, 1977**

The historic demonstrations were successful, and the 504 regulations were finally signed.

### **May, 4, 1977**

The Section 504 regulations (rules) were issued.

### **1980-83**

Sears, Roebuck and Co. began selling decoders for closed captioning for television.

### **1983**

ADAPT started in 1978 and stands for American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit. ADAPT began its national campaign for lifts on buses and access to public transit for people with disabilities. For seven years, ADAPT blocked buses in cities across the U.S. to demonstrate the need for access to public transit.



Many went to jail for the right to ride.

### **1988**

"Deaf President Now" protest at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. Deaf students organized a week-long shutdown and took over their college to demand that a deaf president be hired after the Gallaudet Board of Trustees hired a non-deaf president. On March 13, the college administration announces that I. King Jordan will be the university's



first deaf president.

### **July - September 1988**

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Across the nation, ADAPT takes on the inaccessible Greyhound buses. They protested the fact that Greyhound [a bus system that transports people all around the country] was not accessible for people with disabilities to use.

### 1990 (July)

ADAPT now also stands for "American Disabled For Attendant Programs Today." In a national planning meeting, ADAPT put its focus on the federal and state Medicaid dollars from institutions to housing controlled by people with disabilities and community programs. In other words, they want people to get help in their homes so they can live in the community instead of having to go into an institution or nursing home to get the help they need.

### July 26, 1990

American with Disabilities Act signing ceremony at the White House. This act gave people with disabilities the right to work and created rules so they can get reasonable



accommodations, etc. in the workplace.

In 1990, the Secretary of Transportation, Sam Skinner, finally issues regulations mandating lifts on buses.

### 1999

Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) was created. Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) is an organization created by youth with disabilities for youth to educate society about issues concerning youth with a wide spectrum of disabilities. KASA believes in supporting self-determination, creating support networks and proactive advocacy for all youth with disabilities in our society.

### February 21, 2001



The National Disabled Students Union (NDSU) is a national, cross-disability, student organization. The NDSU was founded in response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision limiting the enforcement of Title I of the 1990 Americans with

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Disabilities Act (Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama et al. v. Garrett et al). NDSU was formed to protest the fact that the Supreme Court said that people with disabilities who work for the state, [state government or state university] cannot sue the state for violations (breaking the rules) of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**July 18, 2004** The first annual Disability Pride Parade marches in Chicago, IL. It was the first national and worldwide parade that was about being **Disabled & Proud!**



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#### Resources:

*Check out these out Disability History/Rights Timelines*

Disability Social History Project - [http://www.disabilityhistory.org/timeline\\_new.html](http://www.disabilityhistory.org/timeline_new.html)

Disability History Timeline -

<http://courses.temple.edu/neighbor/ds/disabilityrightstimeline.htm>

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