

Disability Awareness: Bias and the Law

Est. Time: 50 Minutes

Objective

Understand the bias toward people with disabilities and the laws in place to protect them.

Overview

Our culture and background experiences influence the way we think about technology, food, religion, and family, and can equally influence how we regard people with disabilities. Often times we can unknowingly form bias towards individuals based on our experiences. Laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have been enacted to protect individuals with disabilities, however there are still negative views regarding providing accommodations that allow individuals with disabilities the same access to education, employment, and community engagement as individuals without disabilities.

For Your Information

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Federal disability anti-discrimination legislation passed in 1990 to guarantee basic civil rights to people with disabilities; similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, national origin, and religion, ADA guarantees equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in areas of employment, transportation, government services, telecommunications, and public accommodations.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Name given in 1990 to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) and used for all reauthorizations of the law that guarantees students with disabilities the right to a free appropriate public education in the least-restrictive environment.

Discussion Topics

1. What biases toward people with disabilities exist today? How might these be eliminated?
2. What specific concerns compel some people to view special education as too costly, burdensome, or ineffective?
3. Why do you think many people consider special education a civil rights issue? Do you agree or disagree?
4. How do ADA and IDEA protect the civil rights of individual with disabilities?
5. When President George H. W. Bush signed ADA into law on July 26, 1990, he stated "Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down." Do you think this has been accomplished? Justify your response.