

# Preface



Established in 1880, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is the oldest civil rights organization in the United States. Throughout these many years, the mission of the NAD has been to preserve, protect, and promote the civil, human, and linguistic rights of deaf and hard of hearing people in this country. The NAD has advocated for equality on behalf of deaf and hard of hearing individuals by seeking to implement and enforce various statutes, regulations, policies, and practices that are designed to eradicate discrimination. There have been many victories in the creation of rights for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, but equality remains an elusive goal on many fronts. Litigation has become necessary to secure rights that are often already accorded in legislation but not recognized or given in many areas of life. For this reason, the NAD founded the National Center for Law and Deafness (NCLD) in 1976.

The NAD hired its first attorney, Marc Charmatz, in 1977, and in the nearly four decades since then, the NCLD (now the Law and Advocacy Center) has grown to succeed in many areas of law: special education; higher education; employment; housing; access to state and local government services; access to professional services, including health, mental health services, financial, and legal services; captioning on many levels (television, movie theaters, schools, public accommodations, sports stadiums, the Internet, and more); transportation; and telecommunications. The legal

staff of the NCLD wrote the first editions of *Legal Rights* to document the areas where deaf and hard of hearing people had successfully secured rights under the law.

This sixth edition of *Legal Rights* is being published a decade and half after the last edition, and many of the chapters required a major overhaul. This edition includes new rights provided by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, as well as the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) and several rulings and orders from the Federal Communications Commission. New technologies have transformed how communication access is provided, and laws and regulations have adapted to recognize new means of communication such as videophones, Internet streaming services, and numerous new forms of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and many more.

This book is a testament to all those lawyers and advocates who came before us to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing people achieve true equality in all aspects of life. All of us at the National Association of the Deaf share this new book with the hope that it will be useful and helpful to everyone—deaf and hard of hearing individuals, parents and family members, teachers, interpreters, allies and friends, advocates, attorneys, legislators, and policy makers.

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