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Protection & Advocacy, the ADA National Network, and the Next 25 Years

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the [ACL Blog](#) is featuring guest posts from disability community leaders and highlighting how ACL programs continue to advance the ADA's promise of inclusion and civil rights for people with disabilities.

Protection and Advocacy: A Foundation for Disability Rights

By Curt Decker, Executive Director, National Disability Rights Network

“A snake pit.”

That’s how Sen. Robert Kennedy described Willowbrook, a state institution for people with developmental disabilities on Staten Island, in 1965. Seven years later, [Geraldo Rivera, then a young investigative reporter with ABC News in New York City, smuggled cameras into Willowbrook](#). For the first time, Americans were able to see the filthy, squalid conditions in which children and adults with developmental disabilities were forced to live receiving very little services and supports.

These broadcasts galvanized the state’s senior senator, Jacob Javits, to action and the [Protection and Advocacy \(P&A\) network](#) was born...

Today, P&As continue to monitor, investigate, and attempt to remedy abuse and neglect in all facilities that care for people with disabilities. But over the years, Congress has broadened the work of the P&As. P&A agencies now have the authority to provide legal representation and other advocacy services to all people with disabilities wherever they reside on a range of issues.

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The ADA National Network: Celebrating and Improving

By Robin Jones, Director, Great Lakes ADA Center, Department of Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago

- What is the ADA?

- Are we required to provide a sign language interpreter at a public meeting?
- How many inches off the ground does a toilet paper dispenser have to be?
- Are we required to provide someone with a private office?

These are just a few of the questions that ADA National Network members respond to on a daily basis. No question is a bad question. They only serve as reminders of the need for awareness and education that still exists in our local communities.

The 25th anniversary of the ADA is a time for reflection and celebration. It is also a time to look back at the strategies that have (and have not) worked to promote compliance with the ADA and consider the work that lies ahead.

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