



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Connecticut

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, August 6, 2021

## **Institute of Living Settles ADA Complaint, Ensures Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals**

Leonard C Boyle, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that the government has reached a settlement agreement under the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") with the Institute of Living at Hartford Hospital, on behalf of itself and its professional emergency room and managed mental health center within Hartford Hospital. The Institute of Living is a mental health center that specializes in comprehensive patient care, research and education in the fields of behavioral, psychiatric and addiction disorders whose services are provided to the public.

This matter was initiated upon receipt of a complaint filed with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut by Disability Rights Connecticut. Disability Rights Connecticut filed the complaint on behalf of a complainant who is profoundly deaf. It is alleged that the complainant went to the Hartford Hospital Emergency Room and was then transferred to and treated by the medical staff at the Institute. On multiple occasions, the complainant requested a sign language interpreter during her several days of admission to understand treatment options and to attend group therapy sessions, and to understand and sign documents provided to her during her stay. She was not provided with a qualified interpreter and was not able to participate in group therapy sessions to treat her depression and suicidal ideations. The complainant also could not communicate with her treating psychiatrist and did not fully understand why she had been admitted into the hospital.

Title III of the ADA requires places of public accommodation, including hospital facilities, to take steps to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not excluded, segregated or otherwise treated differently due to the absence of auxiliary aids and services, such as qualified interpreters. The regulations to Title III prohibit places of public accommodation from requiring an individual with a disability to bring another individual to interpret for him or her. The regulations to Title III similarly prohibit places of public accommodation from charging a surcharge to individuals with disabilities for measures, including auxiliary aids and services like interpreters that are required to provide the individual with a disability with nondiscriminatory treatment under the ADA.

The settlement agreement resolves the complaint based on the above allegations that the Institute of Living violated Title III of the ADA by failing to provide effective communication to the complainant. The settlement agreement requires the Institute to provide free of charge appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including

qualified interpreters, at all of its patient facilities to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing whenever it is necessary to ensure effective communication for those individuals. The Institute will provide ADA training to all staff members. In addition, the Institute will compensate the complainant in the amount of \$10,000.

The ADA authorizes the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate complaints and undertake periodic reviews of compliance of covered entities. The Justice Department is also authorized to commence a civil lawsuit in federal court in any case that involves a pattern or practice of discrimination or that raises issues of general public importance, and to seek injunctive relief, monetary damages, and civil penalties.

“This case demonstrates this office’s commitment to protecting the rights of those who are deaf or hard of hearing, and ensuring that these individuals are able to effectively communicate with health care professionals.” stated Acting U.S. Attorney Boyle. “I thank the Institute of Living at Hartford Hospital for their cooperation during this investigation and for addressing these ADA issues without the need for litigation.”

This matter was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Brenda M. Green of the District of Connecticut in coordination with the Disability Rights Section of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division.

Any member of the public who wishes to file a complaint alleging that the office of a health care provider or any other place of public accommodation or public entity in Connecticut is not accessible to persons with disabilities may contact the U.S. Attorney’s Office at 203-821-3700.

Additional information about the ADA can be found at [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov), or by calling the Justice Department’s toll-free information line at (800) 514-0301 and (800) 514-0383 (TTY). More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at [www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt).

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**Topic(s):**

Civil Rights

Disability Rights

**Component(s):**USAO - Connecticut

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