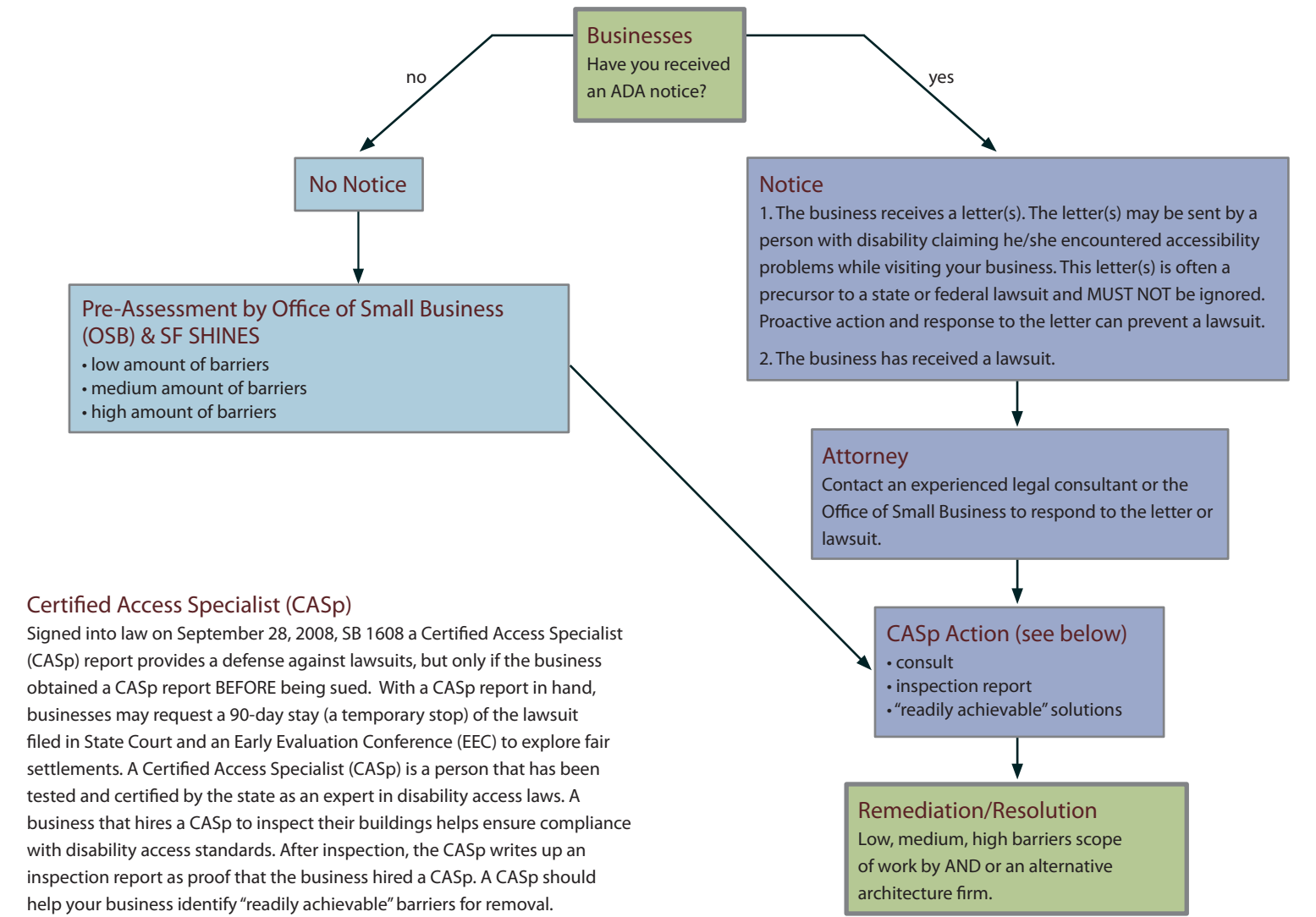


# PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS FROM POTENTIAL ADA LAWSUITS



**Certified Access Specialist (CASp)**  
Signed into law on September 28, 2008, SB 1608 a Certified Access Specialist (CASp) report provides a defense against lawsuits, but only if the business obtained a CASp report BEFORE being sued. With a CASp report in hand, businesses may request a 90-day stay (a temporary stop) of the lawsuit filed in State Court and an Early Evaluation Conference (EEC) to explore fair settlements. A Certified Access Specialist (CASp) is a person that has been tested and certified by the state as an expert in disability access laws. A business that hires a CASp to inspect their buildings helps ensure compliance with disability access standards. After inspection, the CASp writes up an inspection report as proof that the business hired a CASp. A CASp should help your business identify "readily achievable" barriers for removal.

## COMPLIANCE VS. LAWSUIT

Compliance is a recommended investment as not only will your business be less vulnerable to drive-by lawsuits, but you gain a growing market of seniors, families with baby strollers, and persons with disabilities. Cost will depend on the type of alterations, and on what is affordable at the present and future. If you decide to do nothing and rely on "luck" that you will not be sued, consider the potential costs of being an "unlucky" defendant. The reality today is that more ADA lawsuits are targeting small stores and minority-owned businesses because they are likely to settle rather than incur the costs and risks of litigation. The average cost to comply with a plaintiff's requested barrier removal is less than \$4,000, according to amicus curiae brief filed in the Ninth Circuit of Appeal, *Jerry Doran v. Del Taco, Inc.* Fighting a lawsuit including paying a settlement may cost around \$30,000, according to OSB. Investing in Certified Access Inspection and "readily achievable" compliance before a lawsuit is the best way to protect your business from expensive lawsuits.

## BUSINESS RESOURCES

Office of Small Business  
City Hall, room 110  
1 Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-554-6134, [www.sfgov.org/osb](http://www.sfgov.org/osb)

Certified Access Specialists  
[www.sfgov.org/osb](http://www.sfgov.org/osb)

Asian Neighborhood Design  
1245 Howard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-575-0423, [www.andnet.org](http://www.andnet.org)

SF Shines - Office of Economic Workforce Development  
City Hall, room 448  
1 Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-554-6969, [www.oewd.org](http://www.oewd.org)

San Francisco Bar Association  
The Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) program offers businesses legal assistance from their panel of experienced lawyers.  
[www.sfbabar.org/lawyerreferrals/index.aspx](http://www.sfbabar.org/lawyerreferrals/index.aspx)

## BUSINESS RESOURCES

Department of Justice ADA Guide for Small Businesses  
Business Briefs  
[www.ada.gov/business.htm#anchor-bbriefs](http://www.ada.gov/business.htm#anchor-bbriefs)

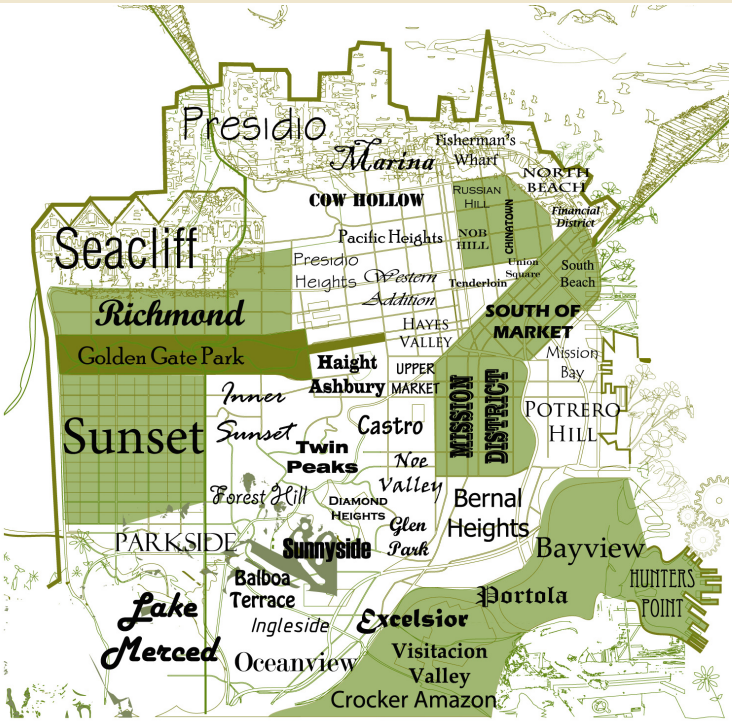
ADA Guide for Small Businesses  
[www.ada.gov/publicat.htm#Anchor-ADA-35326](http://www.ada.gov/publicat.htm#Anchor-ADA-35326)

DOJ toll-free ADA information line  
800-514-0301

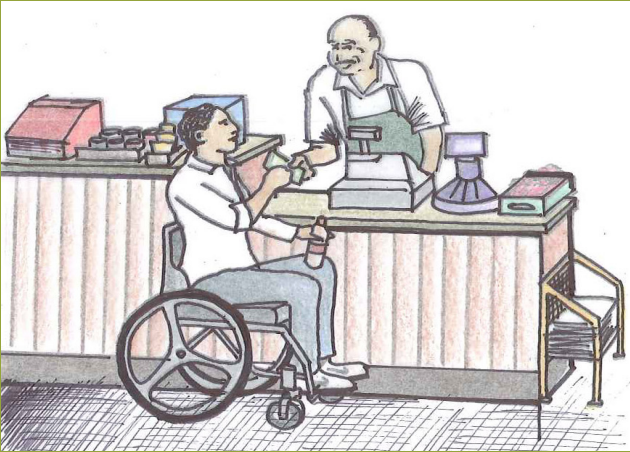
Department of Building Inspection - Technical Services Division  
DBI staff persons are available to review state access requirements. Visit 1660 Mission Street, 4th floor to request a review of your business plans.  
415-558-6084, [www.sfgov.org/dbi](http://www.sfgov.org/dbi)



# A Guide to Disabled Accessibility Compliance



## San Francisco



**AsianNeighborhoodDesign**  
1245 Howard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-575-0423, [www.andnet.org](http://www.andnet.org)

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# DISABLED ACCESSIBILITY

## Two Sets of Access Laws

There are two different bodies of law in California that regulate disability access: a state building code, and a federal civil rights law. The state building code requirements for access are located in the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 2, and are commonly referred to as Title 24.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a sweeping federal civil rights law which prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. Specifically, Title III of the ADA requires public accommodations to provide goods and services to people with disabilities on an equal basis with the rest of the general public. The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) enforces the ADA.

Being compliant to the regulations of one law does not relieve your responsibilities to be compliant with the other set of laws.

## Non Compliance

If the building is not compliant with California Title 24, the citizen complaint is routed to the Department of Building Inspection (DBI). DBI will send staff to visit the site and perform an inspection, and if necessary, the inspector will initiate actions to require the owner to correct the problem.

If the citizen's complaint is ADA driven, the plaintiff can take the business to civil court for remedy. The federal ADA does not have an "inspection" mechanism, and private lawsuits can be filed directly in federal courts by those who believe their civil rights have been violated.

## Who is Required to Remove Barriers?

Barriers are defined by the ADA as obstacles to accessibility. Such obstacles make it difficult — sometimes impossible — for people with disabilities to do the things most of us take for granted — things like going shopping, working, dining in a restaurant or taking public transit. If your business provides goods and services to the public, you are required to remove barriers if doing so is "readily achievable." Such as business is called a public accommodation because it serves the public. If your business is not open to the public (no adjacent retail or open to tours), but is only a place of employment like a warehouse, manufacturing facility or office building, then there are fewer requirements to remove barriers. Such a facility is called a commercial facility. While the operator of a commercial facility has different requirements to remove barriers, you must comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design when you alter, renovate or expand your facility.

## Readily Achievable

"Readily achievable" means easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense. Determining if barrier removal is readily achievable is, by necessity, a case-by-case judgement. "Readily achievable" is based on factors including review of the overall nature of the business and its financial statements.

This document is intended as informal technical guidance. It is NOT legal advice and does not replace the professional advice or guidance that an architect, CASp or attorney knowledgeable in ADA requirements can provide.



## LOW BARRIERS

obstacles to accessibility that are minor, and most likely can be “readily achievable”

### A. Service Counter Height and Visibility

A portion specified by local codes of the counter must be between 28" - 34" above the floor.

## B. Path of Travel Clearance

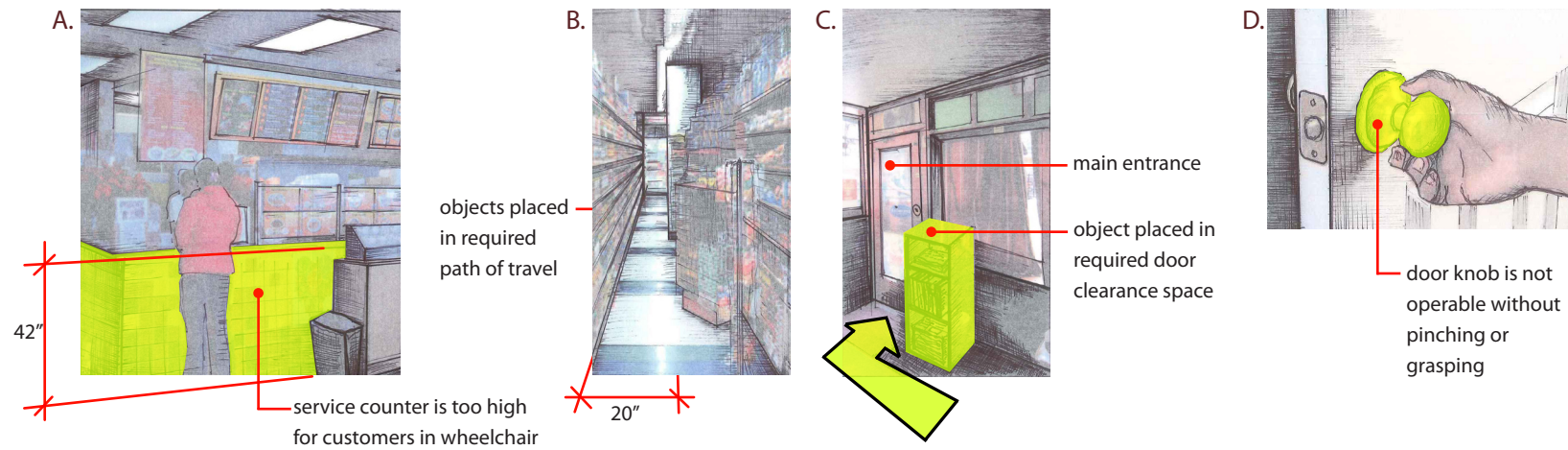
All aisles to public zones must be at least 36" wide and remain unobstructed.

### C. Door Clearance

The pull side of doors must have a clearance specified by local codes.

## D. Door Hardware

All doors must be operable without action of pinching or grasping.



## MEDIUM BARRIERS

obstacles that require more attention,  
and likely professional guidance

### A. Step at Entrance

The entrance must be accessible for occupants in wheelchairs, with sloping and clearance requirements specified by local codes.

## B. Restroom Vanity Clearance

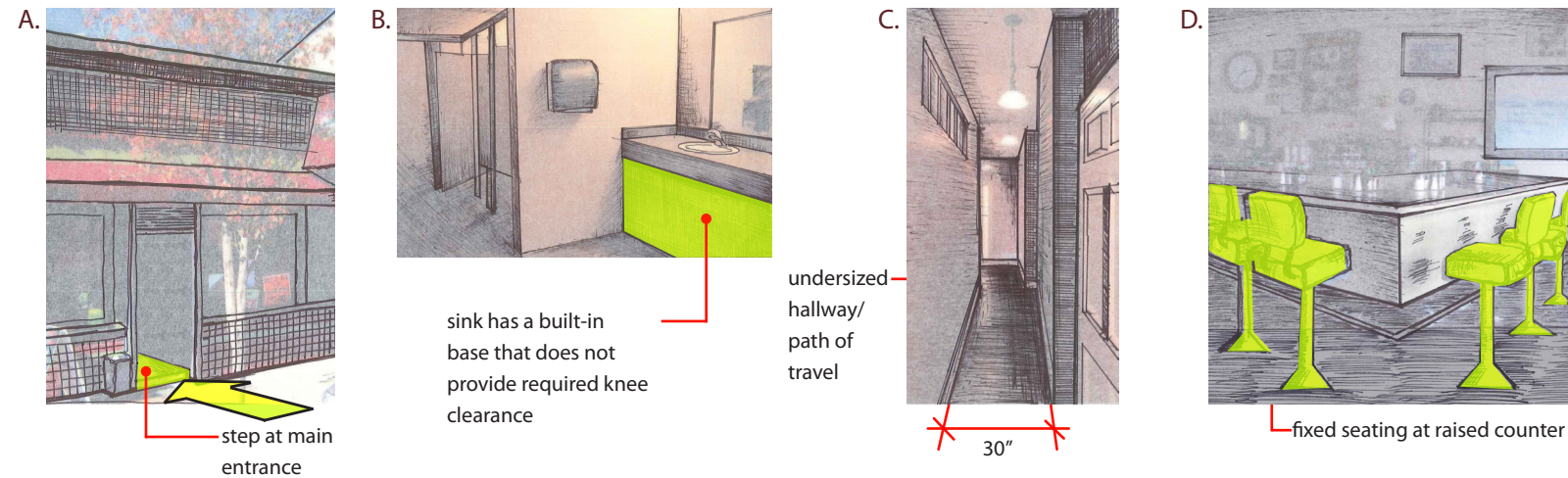
The sink must provide knee clearance specified by local codes.

### C. Undersized Path of Travel

All aisles to public zones must be at least 36" wide.

### D. No Accessible Seating

A portion specified by local codes of seating must be accessible.



## HIGH BARRIERS

obstacles that require a lot of attention,  
and definite professional guidance

### A. Multiple Steps at Entrance

The entrance must be accessible for occupants in wheelchairs, with sloping and clearance requirements specified by local codes.

## B. Step in Dining/Customer Space

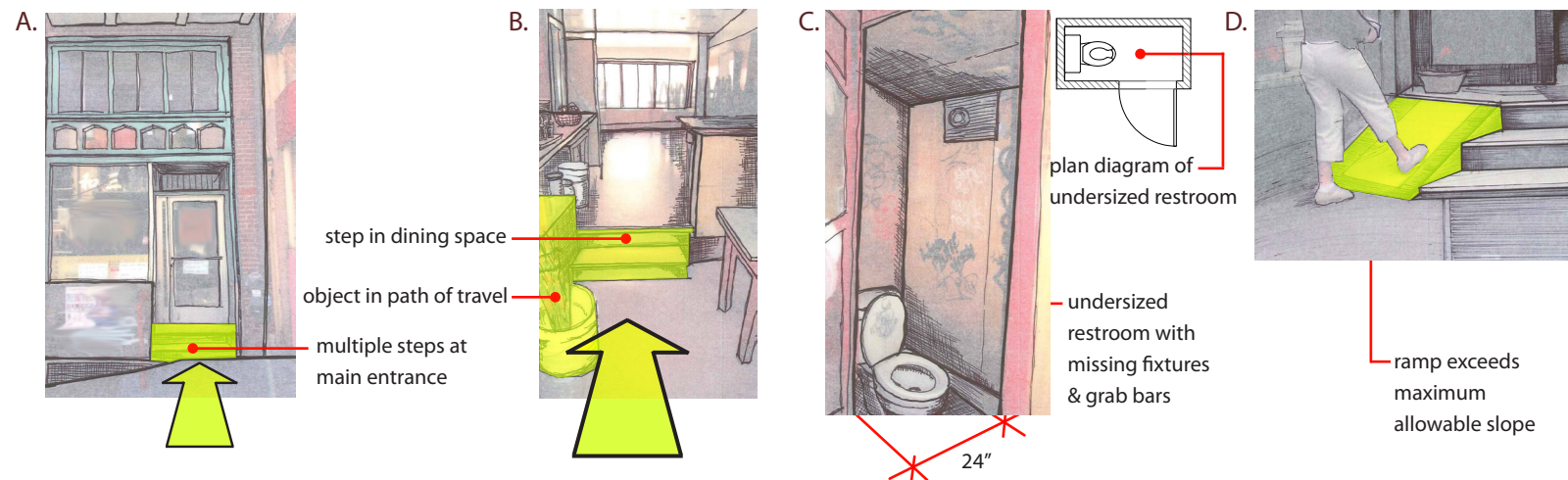
Public zones must be accessible for occupants in wheelchairs, see note A.

### C. Undersized or Lack of Restroom

The correct number of accessible restrooms must be provided.

### D. Ramp Exceeds Maximum Slope Allowed

Businesses must be accessible for occupants in wheelchairs, see note A.



## ADA COMPLIANCE

barriers are minimized  
or removed

### A. Compliant Entry

The entrance is accessible by stairs and a compliant ramp.

## B. Path of Travel Clearance

All aisles to public zones, including seating, restrooms, and food pick-up are at least 36" wide and remain unobstructed.

### C. Compliant Counters

Service counter is between 28" - 34" above the floor.

### D. Compliant Restroom

The accessible restroom has the required fixtures, dimensions and clearances/

